

THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A FIRST YEAR ADJUSTMENT AND
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR NCAA DIVISION I STUDENT-ATHLETES IN A
UNIVERSITY SETTING
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation documents the process of designing, implementing, and conducting a formative evaluation of an adjustment and developmental program for first year student-athletes in a Division I university setting, utilizing Maher's (2012) Program Planning and Evaluation framework. This program was provided to eight first year, out of season, student-athletes from the men's wrestling and women's gymnastics teams. The program's purpose was to provide student-athlete participants with knowledge, skills, and abilities to facilitate the transition from high school academics and athletics to those of the college level. The program was implemented in the form of nine weekly workshops during September through December 2011. The formative evaluation of the program was conducted based on Maher's (2012) framework which focused on obtaining information about how the program was implemented, identifying its strengths, and delineating areas for improvement. The evaluation of the program also sought to explore the reactions of the participating student-athletes, their coaches, and the university's Assistant Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Development. The results of the formative evaluation indicated that the program participants found it personally beneficial in areas of academic, athletic, and personal functioning. One coach and the Assistant Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Development provided verbal feedback about the program, and indicated that they believed it useful for the participants. Participants indicated scheduling and voluntary attendance were problematic for one of the participating teams, and the coach stated that the belief that more practice of skills would be useful. The overall documentation of the implementation and evaluation of the program were it revealed that it was needed, practical, and useful. Limitations are noted, and

recommendations are provided for future design, implementation and evaluation of the program.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Overview

Introduction

This dissertation describes the process used in designing and implementing a first year student-athlete adjustment and development program for Division I student-athletes from one men's team and one women's team at a university in the Northeastern United States. The Program Planning and Evaluation Framework of Dr. Charles Maher (2012) was used as the basis for the design and implementation of program, which was intended to facilitate the transition from high school academics and athletics to those of college for the student-athlete participants.

The Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (Maher, 2012) includes various phase, as applied to the project. The Clarification Phase elucidates the need, context, and target population for which the program is intended. The Design Phase involves documenting the essential program design elements based on the information gathered in the first phase. The Implementation Phase entails monitoring the program, ensuring that it is operating according to the design, with necessary modifications. Finally, the Evaluation Phase assesses gathered data to make judgments about the worth of the program as a basis for continuous development and improvement.

This dissertation documents the process used by the consultant, the author of this dissertation, with the Office of Student-Athlete Development at the university, utilizing information gathered from the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development and from the participating teams' coaches in regards to the needs of

student-athletes that participated in the program. The student-athletes who were part of the program worked on developing the skills that would help them transition to the university and their athletic teams from high school settings. The evaluation of the program was formative in nature, focused on gathering formation for the continued development of the program, not for making summative judgments about it.

The target population was determined by interviews with the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development, and the student-athletes that would best benefit from the program were determined to be those in their first semester at the university. Due to the large number of incoming student-athletes, two teams were chosen for this project, based on both being “out of season” and willing to participate. The participants were members of the women’s gymnastics team and the men’s wrestling team who were in the first semester of their first year of college.

The needs of the participating student-athletes in the above domains were determined to be knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) in areas related to academic and athletic performance and their transition to the university environment. Specifically the areas of time management, critical thinking and problem solving, reading and study skills, goal setting, health and wellness, major and career planning, and use of transferrable skills were included as parts of the program.

Informed consent was received before the participants began the program, which was implemented for nine weeks from September through December of 2011 for approximately sixty to seventy-five minutes per session. The author of this dissertation provided instruction through lecture, discussion, and informational handouts. Due to

scheduling restraints and confidentiality concerns, the first year student-athletes met in a group form only with other first year members of their team.

A formative evaluation of the program occurred as the program proceeded and at the end of nine weeks using Maher's Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (2012). The specific tasks involved with the evaluation of the program included asking student-athlete participants to complete feedback forms in regards to their experience in the program as well as comment and note about program implementation maintained by the author. Such a formative evaluation took place in order to:

1. Understand the extent to which individual student-athletes learned and are able to acquire and use developmental KSAs.
2. Identify limitations in ability to learn and utilize adjustment KSAs and develop ways to address them.
3. Determine what aspects of the program the athletes found to be most successful.

The information gathered has been used to make some conclusions about the strengths, limitations given the form of the program, and areas for program improvement for future progression.

Scope

The scope of this dissertation encompasses six chapters. The first chapter—the current one—provides an introduction and overview of the project. The second chapter consists of a review of relevant literature: student-athlete background information, transitional issues commonly experienced by college student-athletes, academic strategies, relevance of this project to student-athletes, and relevance of the knowledge,

skills and abilities provided in the program. The third chapter describes the process of how the consultant approached her role, the organization's context, and the participants. The fourth chapter includes details of the development of the program, while chapter five includes the evaluation process and results. The sixth chapter includes a summary and conclusions.

The program's relevance is related to difficulties experienced by student-athletes when transitioning from high school to college (Wilson, 2005). Research indicates that students are at the highest risk of leaving college in their first year than in any other (Tinto, 1993), and the first year has been argued to be the most difficult in regards to adjustment (Giddan, 1988). College student-athletes have been identified as likely to struggle with higher levels of stress than non-athletes due to the combination of athletic and academic requirements (Wilson, 2005), and are hypothesized to be linked to attempts to balance social, leisure, and athletic lives (Parham, 1993; Valentine & Taub, 1999). The stressors of being a student-athlete can lead to negative impacts on the overall well-being of these students (Wilson & Pritchard, 2005), and Broughton and Neyer (2001) argue that academic, personal, and athletic development should take priority over solely maintaining athletic eligibility and progress towards graduation. The inherent difficulties associated with beginning an academic career combined with those of an athletic career are the primary reasons this program is relevant to the identified first year student-athlete population.

The target population for this dissertation, first year student-athletes from both men's and women's Division I teams, is known to be vulnerable to transitional issues resulting from lack of knowledge and skills and the stressors of athletic demands. The

intent of the program was to address these matters to increase their knowledge, skills, self-awareness, and confidence in navigating the first semester of college.

Interest and support was expressed for the program from different student athlete resources, and this was indicative of the relevance of such a program as well. When the program was suggested to the Assistant Director of the Office of Student-Athlete Development, it was indicated that a similar program has been desired in the past and not designed or implemented due to a lack of personnel and time. The potential for insight into what is perceived to be usefully included in a developmental program has been approved and provided with collaboration by the Assistant Director of the Office of Student-Athlete Development and the Assistant Director of Intercollegiate Athletics. Additionally the head coaches of the men's wrestling and women's gymnastics team indicated a strong interest in having their incoming first years participate in the program.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

First year Students' Transitional Needs

The need to address the transition for first year students to college has existed in many forms throughout the evolution of higher education (Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005). In this regard, Giddan (1988) contended that the first year of college is the most difficult period of adjustment faced by students. Tinto's retention theory model (1986, 1997) focused on student attrition, and he found that students were most likely to leave college after their first year compared to any year afterwards (1993). This indicates the importance of early intervention in a student's college career in order to address the vulnerability of first year students.

Tinto (1997) also emphasized that academic and social integration were critical for student retention, and this concept along with campus resources (Barefoot, 1993), wellness issues, and academic information (Cone, 1991) have been integrated into many first year experience programs and courses. Integration into the new environment is often the goal of collegiate administrators, and this integration has been the focus of numerous programs and research in student personnel services. The needs of incoming student-athletes will be discussed utilizing results of research and study of prior attempts to address the first year transition.

Review of studies that examined the effectiveness of first year student orientation and/or transitional programs, among undergraduate student populations, indicated that they are beneficial for the populations being addressed. The perceived and actual

benefits of a first year seminar course for first year students have been the main pursuit of these studies. As described by Odell (1996), an eight-week long orientation program for students was correlated to higher grades and lower percentages of academic difficulty in those that participated in the program. Lang (2007) assessed the impact of a first year experience course on academic performance, persistence, and graduation rates of first year students, and it was indicated that students that completed the course achieved a higher mean GPA in the first semester, more semesters enrolled in college, and higher graduation rates than students that did not take the course. All of these results indicate that such a program can be quite effective in easing the transition to college via education and training in knowledge, skills, and abilities related to success in a university setting.

Specific knowledge, skills, and abilities included in such programs vary, but usually involve many of the same topics. Dembo and Seli (2007) argue that motivation (goal setting and self-talk), methods of learning (active learning strategies), use of time (time management), and monitoring performance are all skills of self-management that are conducive to academic achievement. These skills and their instruction have been indicated to be most useful in the goal of transitioning students in the first year of college, and are therefore included in most programs with these goals.

College Student-Athletes

A review of research specific to first year student-athletes has revealed that there is limited information available about programs that have been developed and implemented to address student-athletes' transition to the university setting. There is some research that indicates that student-athletes may need assistance with the process of

entering their first year of college. Shulman and Bowen (2001) argue that student-athletes are more likely to struggle due to preferential treatment received in the admission process, and this could lead to academic difficulties if such discrepancies are not addressed. If athletes prioritize sports over academics, they may gain entrance into college, but can be at risk of struggling due to inadequate academic preparation.

The study of psychology in relation to sports is credited to have begun with the researcher and practitioner Coleman Griffith in the 1920s, when he taught a course, established a research facility, and provided consultation to athletic teams (Moran, 2004). Sport psychology as a field studies exercise and competitive athletics (Moran 2004). More recently, sport psychology has taken an applied perspective by focusing on life skills, performance enhancement, and clinical interventions (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993). This holistic perspective focuses on the lifespan of an athlete as they pursue both athletic and non-athletic accomplishments (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004), and requires professionals to look beyond an athlete's execution of their sport activities to provide services for increased development and performance.

In terms of the general functioning of student-athletes in college, it has been indicated that they may experience greater levels of stress than other students because of the combination of increased athletic and academic stressors during their first year of college (Wilson, 2005). Challenges like maintaining eligibility, managing injuries, dealing the demands of training and competition, nutritional concerns, self-esteem, career development issues, upcoming retirement from sport, and substance abuse all have the possibility to arise for student-athletes (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). These and other stressors may also increase the difficulty experienced by student-athletes due to

confronting issues of balancing social and leisure lives while attempting to maintain a peak physical condition (Parham, 1993; Valentine & Taub 1999).

Student-athletes function as normal students, but have additional requirements that may include: practices, weightlifting and strength training, team meetings, fundraising, and many other things (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). Wilson and Pritchard (2005) argued that the combination of these activities could lead to stress that negatively impacts overall well-being. The potential for the additional requirements leading to struggle and difficulty in the areas of academics, athletics, and personal life are of importance when working with this population. These factors lead to student-athletes being a distinctive population at colleges, and indicate that their needs and potential problem areas could exceed those of the normal population when attempting to be successful in their college and academic careers (Broughton & Neyer, 2001).

Due to the difficulties discussed above, Broughton and Neyer (2001) argue that academic, personal, and athletic development should be of primary concern over simply maintaining eligibility and movement towards graduation. They have suggested that the areas of academic advising, life skills development, clinical counseling, and performance enhancement would all be included in a pragmatic approach to work with college student-athletes (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). A life skills development approach including drug and alcohol education, communication skills training, time management, career development, and appropriate relationships would be included (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). Finally, Broughton and Neyer (2001) indicated that clinical counseling would address issues not related to sport or academics while performance enhancement would assist in developing both physical and psychological skills.

When implementing a program, it has been indicated that it will have more success if staff, coaches, athletic department personnel, and the athletes' community provide support for it (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). The recognition of the value of the program will not only provide encouragement for the student-athletes to attend, it will indicate the potential benefit they could derive from them as well. Additionally, appropriate assessment and treatment of academic, athletic, and personal needs have been indicated to be important aspects of a successful program (Broughton & Neyer, 2001).

Student Identity Development

According to Arthur Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993), students in college have major developmental tasks to establish their identity. Seven vectors of identity were argued to exist, with the first four—developing competence, regulating emotion, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, and developing mature interpersonal relationships—being the first to accomplish in the first half of a college career (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Valentine & Taub, 1999). Utilization of developmental models for the creation of a program can allow the consultant to be aware of potential issues being experienced by students, and can be elaborated upon with the knowledge of the challenges that are additionally faced by student-athletes (Broughton & Neyer, 2001).

The first vector, competence, when applied to student-athletes, would focus on developing skills for the classroom and athletic events, maintaining and continuing to develop physical skills, and building interpersonal competence (Valentine & Taub, 1999). Ideally, student-athletes would receive support from their teams, classrooms,

advisors, and athletic support personnel to assist in their self-exploration and development in these areas, but there are many obstacles to this process. Members of faculty may possess negative attitudes towards student-athletes, any privileges they possess, and any special accommodations they may have to provide for them (Valentine & Taub, 1999). According to Nelson (1983), advisors or counselors for student-athletes can address the potential academic difficulties athletes can encounter in a negative classroom environment by working with them to create specific goals for their educational experience (Valentine & Taub, 1999).

The second vector, managing emotions, focuses on learning to identify, express, and control emotions (Chickering and Reisser 1993; Valentine & Taub, 1999). Areas such as aggression, anxiety, depression, fear, guilt, shame, and positive emotions are all included in the theory (Chickering and Reisser 1993). According to Parham (1993), feelings of frustrations and helplessness associated with sport, or lack of opportunity to progress within it, can be seen as a major obstacle for college student-athletes. Athletics may heighten an athlete's need to learn emotional regulation, and this can be influenced by athletic experience along with those of the normal collegiate experience (Chickering and Reisser 1993; Valentine & Taub, 1999).

The third vector of relevance for students in the early part of their college career, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, has been focused on a student being able to independently address problems as they arise while recognizing and accepting interdependence (Chickering, 1969). Valentine & Taub (1999) suggest that student-athletes should be guided towards independent and divergent thought to help foster independence, and that professional guidance should be provided to ease this process.

The psychoeducation of student-athletes as they begin a collegiate athletic and academic career would ideally be oriented towards encouraging growth and development in the realm of identity as well as fostering the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to succeed in their multiple areas of involvement. Self-awareness would be facilitated in order to assist student-athletes gain knowledge of their own areas in need of improvement and gain the skills necessary to begin thinking critically, independently, and pragmatically (Petitpas & Champagne, 1988).

Student-Athlete Transitions

Career transitions are stages of change that can normal or atypical during an athlete's competitive career (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté, 2009). During transitions change in routine, location, needs, et cetera will occur, and can result in disruption (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993). Danish, Petitpas, and Hale (1993) argued that these changes can be referred to as critical life events, and that athletes will experience many more than the average person due to advancement in competitive level, injuries, coaches coming and going, and their inevitable retirement from sport. Athletes will inevitable experience transitions in and out of their sport, but many critical life events may coincide in both realms (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004).

According to Pearson and Petitpas (1990) there are numerous transitions that athletes face. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) further argue that developing identity is the developmental focus of athletes as they enter college, and there is potential for incompatibility of this process with the requirements of continued participations in athletics. Additionally, athletes may not have motivation to explore their identity beyond

the one they have in their sport due to the privileges and regulation that are associated with participation in a college sport (Petitpas & Champagne, 1988). The required time, physical and psychological intensity associated with participation in sports do not create an environment that promotes a desire for personal growth and development.

Transitions were described as being more or less difficult according to their predictability and the athlete's ability to plan and prepare for them (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990). Additionally, an athlete's evaluation of changes as positive and welcomed also affects the amount of stress that is generated. The amount of experience, adaptability, and social/emotional resources possessed by an athlete can influence the development of problems. Barriers to utilizing coping skills for a successful transition, as identified by Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté (2009), may be influenced by internal and external factors such as interpersonal conflicts, difficulty combining study and athletics, and lacking competence in different areas. Preventative programs to help student-athletes acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) have been identified as possible ways to increase their success.

Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté (2009) discussed the transition from junior to senior sports as being one of the most significant in an athlete's career. For a college student-athlete this transition occurs in conjunction with the transition from high school academics to those of college. It was argued that student-athletes are often ambitious to succeed, but may be hindered by anxiety and doubt, resulting in psychological vulnerability (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté 2009). Due to the salience of the transition from high school to college, additional support for student-athletes before and during this transition can be seen as quite necessary.

The demands upon student-athletes in their first year begin not only in their sport, but also in the classroom. Leaving the high school environment, which is teacher-directed, for college and student-managed learning may lead to a culture shock (Dembo & Seli, 2007). The previously discussed lack of sufficient academic preparation and new environment creates risk for struggling and difficulty. According to Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté (2009), assisting athletes in preparing for and coping with transitions should be of primary concern, and successful coping with transitions allows athletes more success in sport and in endeavors beyond athletics.

Student-Athletes and the NCAA

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a “membership organization composed mainly of four-year higher education institutions and collections of institutions known as conference” (NCAA, 2010), and it was originally founded to protect student-athletes from danger and exploitation. The core values of the Association are to promote academic and athletic experience balance, integrity, the pursuit of excellence in both athletics and academics, the role of intercollegiate athletics in higher education, respect for institutional autonomy, and presidential leadership of intercollegiate athletics at many different levels. The NCAA is the body that takes responsibility for the establishment, maintenance, and enforcing of rules and regulations designed to support and protect student-athletes.

Many rules and regulations exist that have specific requirements for student-athletes to be considered eligible to train and compete. For example, Proposition 48 was passed in 1983 by the NCAA in order to create an established grade point average and

standardized test score requirements for all students beginning their first year of college. Its creation was intended to provide and increase standards for academic eligibility through a standardized national eligibility clearinghouse.

The criteria to be considered eligible for athletic participation at NCAA institutions have continued to evolve since the inception of the clearinghouse. In 2003, Divisions I and II student-athletes' requirements underwent "major academic reforms, and were increased to needing to complete 40% of their academic requirements by the end of their second year, 60% after their third year, and 80% at the end of their fourth year (NCAA, 2010). Based off of this information, it can be stated that the academic demands upon eligible student-athletes are quite rigorous, and they must meet certain academic milestones to participate in their sport.

Transferable Skills

According to Maher (2012), a skill is the application of steps, techniques, and procedures. Elite level athletes have invested thousands of hours of training over many years to reach their level of expertise (Price, Morrison, & Arnold, 2010). Additionally, Ericsson (1996) has suggested that extensive quantity and high intensity training are necessary for an athlete to reach an "expert" level of performance. This participation in sport provides them with athletic expertise, and with this comes the expansion of the skills necessary to become a successful athlete.

Balance in an athlete's life can be beneficial in numerous ways. As argued by Price, Morrison, & Arnold (2010), the benefits of having multiple areas of their lives in order provide positive mental health and associated increases in athletic performance.

They also indicated that an athlete might develop skills that can be transferred from one area to another by participating in activities outside of their sport. Skills that transfer across settings can include: organizational skills, adaptability, dedication, perseverance, performing when under pressure, being able to set and reach goals, having communication skills, meeting challenges and/or deadlines, and being self-motivated (Danish & Petitpas, 1993; McKnight et al., 2009). These skills have been described as transferring from sport to other activities, but Price, Morrison, & Arnold (2010) have suggested that these skills could also transfer from outside endeavors to athletic pursuits as well. They have argued that an athlete will have the most benefit athletically if they have balance and success in other areas of their lives as well.

The mobility of skills from sport to academics, to outside careers, and back has promising implications for student-athletes. If they are primed to take inventory of skills they already possess, a student-athlete could utilize knowledge, skills, and abilities they for success in multiple venues. It is important for athletes to know that they possess skills that can be valuable in multiple areas (McKnight et al., 2009). Transferrable skills from both inside and outside of sport such as goal setting, time management, stress management, career planning, and emotional regulation (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté, 2009) may all be utilized for athletes' benefit, but only if they are aware of their presence (McKnight et al., 2009).

Danish, Petitpas, and Hale (1993) emphasized that it is not sufficient for athletes to be aware of the transferrable skills they possess—they must know how they learned the skills and in what context. Learning a skill is not sufficient for most people, and a new skill must be attempted, practiced, and implemented regularly to become effective.

Using skills in areas unlike the ones in which they were learned may not occur naturally, and athletes may need support and prompting to attempt transferring skills across areas (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993). Danish, Petitpas, and Hale (1993) advise preparing for difficulty and setbacks when an athlete attempts applying a skill to a different area to prevent and address frustration that may occur. Even if an athlete has experience practicing a skill, the unfamiliarity of using it in an unfamiliar area could lead to difficulty. The instruction of these skills is intended to provide the KSAs necessary for future athletic and life success, and their implementation should be facilitated throughout a developmental program's process.

Time Management

According to George, Dixon, Stansal, Gelb, and Pheri (2008) time-management skills are a crucial predictor of personal and academic success. Times spent studying, sleeping, in leisure activities, and awareness of how this time is actually used are all related to the grade point average that may be received. The relationship between use of time and college student's grades is notable, and therefore one that has been investigated further.

Research conducted by Macan, Shahani, Dipoboye, & Phillips (1990) indicated that when college students have a perception of control over the way they spend their time, they also have a more positive perspective on their ability to get things accomplished and levels of stress. Indicators of a person's perception of managing time included setting short goals and prioritizing activities along with using a tool for daily planning. The link between the use of different tools to assist with accurate perception of

time can be seen as a good indicator of how these tools can be taken advantage of by college students early in their careers.

Britton & Tesser (1991) argued that time management differences can account for the differences in achievement in college students. They predicted that their research would indicate that students with well-developed and effective time management strategies would accomplish more academically and therefore have higher grade point averages. Their research also resulted in data that suggested that self-reports of effective time management were related to academic success and accomplishment. They implied that short-range planning skills are the most highly related to getting higher grades in college and use of organizational strategies assists in this accomplishment.

These results offer support for utilization of time management skills for success. The reduction of stress and increase in productivity are key in the lives of college students, and the addition of skills to assist in managing time can be extremely valuable in the first semester of college.

Motivational Strategies: Goal Setting and Self-talk

Locke (1996) defines a goal as “the object or aim of an action,” and goals can be ideas or objects/conditions a person pursues. Goal setting was originally investigated in the organizational psychology field, and was deemed more effective than vague or general instruction to “do your best” (Latham & Locke, 1979). Goals provide a course of pursuit, guidelines for effort needed, and incentive for persistence (Locke, 1996).

Achieving set goals can be a predictor of academic and personal success in college students (George, Dixon, Stansal, Gelb, and Pheri et al, 2008). Danish, Petitpas, and

Hale (1993) argued that people shape their environments, and that teaching athletes goal setting can be an effective way to empower them.

Specific approaches to setting goals can be influential in an individual's ability to accomplish them and potentially perform better on various tasks. Setting goals can focus and direct athletes toward relevant actions, elicit commitment, provide incentives for persistence, break large problems into smaller components, develop plans for accomplishing these smaller components (sub-goals), increase confidence, and also potentially increases self-satisfaction—which all can be effective in improving athletic performance (Mellalieu, Hanton, & O'Brien, 2006; Moran, 2004).

According to Locke and Latham (1985), athletes' success in sports depends on skill and motivation, and goal setting is a technique to assist athletes accomplishing both. The process of setting a goal influences the direction of activity, activation of effort, persistence, and motivation to utilize strategies to accomplish tasks (Locke & Latham, 1985; Locke, 1996). Additionally, a person will be more likely to believe they can accomplish a goal when they have the capability to accomplish it via KSAs already possessed (Locke 1996). If a person is not capable of attaining the goal they have set, they may need additional training or to adjust the parameters of their goal.

“SMART” goal setting (Maher 2012; Moran, 2004) is based off of the SMART acronym that provides principles for effectively setting a goal. Each letter provides guidelines for the process of setting a goal. “S” is for specific, “M” is for measurable—can be measured, “A” is for attainable—can be accomplished, “R” is for relevant—why is the goal important to the person, and “T” is for timely—the goal has a limited period of time to be pursued. The importance of a goal being specific, relevant to the athlete,

achievable and positive, clearly stated and measurable, and time-specific is inherent (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993; Maher, 2012). Goals are best set without ambiguity, and the clarity provided by a goal that is "specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely" allows the athlete to pursue what they want more effectively. Additionally, potential setbacks and barriers should be assessed and addressed to maintain motivation to pursue the goal even if it needs to be altered or restated (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993).

The difficulty of a goal is of importance when it is being created. The more difficult a goal is while still being attainable, the more likely a person is to achieve it (Locke, 1996). According to George, Dixon, Stansal, Gelb, and Pheri (2008), using goals that are clearly defined is correlated with personal and academic success. These results indicate that utilization of a process of making goals clearly defined and meeting them may be of importance for students as they enter college. Additionally, a goal must continually increase in difficulty over time in order to accommodate for the skills a person will inevitably acquire (Locke & Latham, 1985). Goals additionally create motivation to plan ahead for circumstances, and this planning may be of more value than the planning a person may do without goals (Locke, 1996).

Goal specificity is also extremely important for success in and out of sports. Quantifying or itemization of what is to be accomplished with a goal regulates performance, and therefore contributes to commitment to the goal (Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke & Latham, 1985; Locke, 1996). The rationale and importance of the goal to the individual should also be established during the process of setting a goal (Locke & Latham, 1985). Finally, goals must be based on what the person really wants and on what

the person is capable of doing (Locke, 1996). Additionally, the person pursuing the goal must have an active role in setting it (Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke & Latham, 1985).

When failure to meet a goal occurs, the inability to accomplish the desired outcome can be framed as an opportunity for gaining insight into what KSAs might be needed (Locke, 1996). The way in which someone uses internal dialogue can be useful for increasing performance. Positive self-talk can be used to increase performance through verbal reinforcement (Dembo & Seli, 2007). According to Moran (2004), hostile or negative self-talk is never helpful to the person that is anxious or dealing with difficulty. It is recommended that student-athletes focus on encouraging themselves and instructing themselves on what to do (Moran, 2004), and stay goal-oriented even in the way they speak to themselves.

Academic and Study Skills

Knowledge of the requirements of courses (Dembo & Seli, 2007) can be combined with an active approach to learning by understanding what instructors expect. Course syllabi and the class atmosphere can provide information and cues about the best ways to approach the coursework. According to Dembo and Seli (2007), the way in which students engage in their study leads to successful learning. Simply reading and rereading is not sufficient for ideal learning, and active participation in study is key to learning and retaining information.

The relevance of concentration both in and out of sport to student-athletes is evident, and it is best for athletes to practice and prepare themselves to concentrate when necessary. Distraction can be the result of both internal and external factors (Moran,

2004)—external factors coming from the world around the athlete and internal ones being thoughts and feelings. It has been argued that athletes may perform better in stressful situations if they practice tolerating them (Maynard, 1998; Moran, 2004), and this is supported in some cognitive psychology research.

Critical Thinking and Emotional Regulation

To provide a well-rounded developmental program, an understanding of normal development (as previously discussed) is necessary, but an ability to identify normal, dysfunctional, and optimal development of student-athletes' psychological functioning is also essential (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993). Critical thinking and use of coping skills are necessary skills and abilities for student-athletes to possess, especially as they encounter athletic and non-athletic transitions and demands (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004). Wylleman, Alfermann, and Lavallee (2004) have recommended therapeutic approaches such as cognitive restructuring, stress management, and emotional regulation as effective interventions for transitioning student-athletes.

Critical evaluation of thoughts requires initial monitoring and awareness of the thoughts that first arise in different situations, also known as “automatic thoughts” (Beck, 1995). According to Beck (1995), once identified, automatic thoughts should be evaluated for their functionality and potential distortions. Distortions in thought can be understood as extremes or misrepresentation of situations. Once distortions have been identified, and more rational responses can be created for better evaluation of situations in the future (Beck, 1995).

Regulation of emotion is connected to being able to pragmatically evaluate and address a problem situation. Problem solving can be a strategy for addressing ambiguous and difficult situations. Actively addressing problems before, during, and after they occur is a strategy that encourages more practical approaches to difficult situations (Beck 1995).

Relaxation is another component of regulating emotion (Beck, 1995). It can reduce anxiety and provide an emotional state that is conducive to the athlete being able to think effectively. In addition to relaxation, mindfulness training (Persons, 2008) can be utilized to change the relationship an athlete has with their thoughts by having them observe their thoughts without allowing them to be considered true or accurate.

Anxiety

Anxiety can occur in both students and student-athletes. According to Moran (2004), cognitive anxiety is defined by an athlete worrying or expecting negative outcomes about an upcoming situation or performance and then being absorbed in thinking that is not relevant to the task ahead of them. Among many causes of anxiety, importance of competition, perfectionism, being afraid of failing, and insufficient confidence may all be related to dysfunction in thinking and performance in athletes (Moran, 2004). Additionally, anxiety may have varied influence on the ability of an athlete to perform their best (Moran, 2004).

Coping with anxiety, or enduring pressure, can be problem solving focused or emotional-regulation focused, and the controllability of a situation may determine the best approach (Moran, 2004). According to Moran (2004), if a situation is under the

control of the athlete, problem-focused approaches are best, but when the athlete has limited or no control over the situation, emotion-focused intervention is best.

Pre-performance routines are behaviors or sequences that athletes perform, usually before activity, for increased performance (Moran, 2004). These routines can be described as focused mental/physical preparation for an event. They may be beneficial, but superstitious rituals may arise, and revision may be necessary to maintain their effectiveness, and they may be combined with positive self-talk to improve performance (Moran, 2004).

CHAPTER III

Relevant Background and Contextual Information

This chapter focuses on clarifying the circumstances associated with the context of the organization. It describes the interest in the program by the client and/or additional stakeholders, and the likelihood that a program would have the appropriate environment to meet the needs discussed. The information was gathered using Maher's (2012) framework, and will provide information about the organizational context in order for the program clarification, design, and implementation to be as accurate and effective as possible.

Background Information

Client and Key Stakeholder. The Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development was responsible for the Life Skills initiative for approximately two years prior to the program, and this individual was the primary client. The Life Skills initiative is further discussed in the "Circumstances" section of the AVICTORY section.

Additional Stakeholders. The Associate Athletic Director of the university and the two team coaches were additional stakeholders.

Organization. The Division of Intercollegiate Athletics at the Division I University was the primary organization for this project.

Target Population. Active members in the two Division of Intercollegiate Athletics teams--wrestling and gymnastics-- in their first year of college were selected as

the target population. Demographic and additional information about this target population will be provided in Chapter IV.

Organizational Context. The organization's readiness to implement a program of the kind described in this dissertation was assessed using the AVICTORY aspect of Maher's framework (2012). AVICTORY stands for the organization's *Ability* to commit resources (time, money, information, etc.) to the program, the *Values* held by stakeholders in the organization, understanding the *Ideas* about the target population held by the organization, determining the *Circumstances* within the organization related to its structure and direction, determining if the *Timing* of a program is suitable, understanding the degree of *Obligation* felt by stakeholders to programmatically address the needs of the target population, determining potential *Resistance* to the program in the organization, and assessing the *Yield* (benefits) for the target population anticipated by organizational members.

Ability. The Division of Intercollegiate Athletics did not have the ability to commit resources of funds or personnel for a first year student adjustment program. Stakeholders, though, were willing to provide time for consultation and office materials for presentation of program information.

Values. The belief within the organization was that the adjustment and transition program would have a positive effect for many first year student athletes.

Ideas. Within the Life Skills initiative an adjustment and transition program had been given consideration, but had not been developed. The Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development was willing to consult and provide information about concerns expressed in regards to transitioning from high school to college academics and

athletics. This individual indicated that he had the desire to address the issue of transition, but that his office did not possess the resources. Concerns expressed by the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development were coping skills, problem solving skills, time management skills, and socializing to their new environment.

Circumstances. The Life Skills initiative was a new addition to the Athletic Development office, and appeared to have extensive support for its goals and missions among stakeholders. The Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development described this initiative as incorporation of programming and counseling with the goals of providing student-athletes with information and tools to make helpful decisions in the areas of career, personal finance, leadership, civic involvement, and healthy lifestyle decisions.

Obligation. The Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development expressed feelings of responsibility to addressing adjustment during the first year of college in student athletes, and expressed full commitment to his support of the development of a transition adjustment program.

Resistance. The organization appeared to have no resistance to the program. The consultant was directed to the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development for assistance with execution of the program without difficulty.

Yield. The Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development expected to gain insight on the perceived value of an adjustment program for first year student athletes for potential development and implementation of a similar program in the future.

The organizational context was established based off of the university's athletic department. The Division of Intercollegiate Athletics at the university appeared aware

and interested in the needs of the target population, and was supportive of the program with the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development as the point person. The needs delineated were not seen as being addressed programmatically, according to reports from the Associate Athletic Director of the university and the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development.

A formative evaluation of the program was scheduled to take place during the program and at the end of nine weeks. Charles Maher's framework of program evaluation (2012), involving twelve steps was used. The twelve interconnected steps include: 1) Identifying the client Determining the client's need for program evaluation, 2) Place the program to be evaluated into "evaluable" form, 3) Delineate program evaluation questions, 4) For each program evaluation question, 5) Specify the data collection variable, 6) Describe the data collection methods, instruments and procedures, 7) Describe the methods and procedures for data analysis, 8) Specify program evaluation personnel and responsibilities, 9) Delineate guidelines for communication and use of program evaluation information, 10) Construct program evaluation protocols, 11) Implement the program evaluation, and 12) Evaluate the program evaluation. Each of these steps is included in the Program Evaluation Plan in chapter five.

CHAPTER IV

Description of the Clarification, Design, and Implementation Phases

This chapter describes the process of clarifying, designing, and implementing the program according to Maher's (2012) framework. Each phase is discussed in order of occurrence, and is expounded upon accordingly.

Clarification Phase

The Clarification Phase of the program took place in order to gain understanding of the needs of the target population for the program, and the relevant stakeholders, i.e. the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development and the athletic teams' personnel, in order to plan the program to add value to the target population's current state. This phase has two steps: 1) specifying the target population and 2) examining its needs.

Target Population. The first aspect of this phase was to specify the target population. Toward this end, the program consultant met with the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development and the Assistant Athletic Director to gain clarity of the target population via discussing the population that would be best served by the program. It was determined that the program should be implemented with at least one men's and one women's team, and that the teams would be able to best participate if they were not actively participating in their competitive season. Additionally, after discussion, it was decided that student-athletes that had not been involved with the university before would be most appropriate for the program. Teams with coaching personnel that were willing to participate and encourage their student-athletes to do so as well were

considered the best for recruiting, and student-athletes needed to be active members on the team's rosters to be considered. Finally, the student-athletes needed to be registered for at least 12 credits at the university to have a "full-time" student status. It was determined that 4 men on the men's wrestling and 4 women on the women's gymnastics teams met all these criteria, and first year student-athletes from these two teams that were in their first semester of college at the university were the target population.

The participants from the wrestling team included three men from New Jersey, and one from New York. Three of them were undecided about their intended majors, while the fourth reported an intended major of sports management. The number of credits taken, i.e. the rigor of their course load for the semester, was 12, 13, 15, and 16. None of the participating wrestlers had any credits from Advanced Placement or other college courses applied to their academic record when they began at the university. All had partial athletic scholarships; three were using personal loans; one utilized federal loans; and two were receiving financial assistance from their parents.

The participants from the gymnastics team included two women from Pennsylvania and two from New Jersey. Two were undecided about their intended major; one intended engineering; and one intended political science or exercise science. The number of credits taken by two was 12; one was taking 14; and one was taking 16 credits. None of the participating gymnasts had any credits from Advanced Placement or other college courses applied to their academic record when they began at the university. Two of the women were receiving full athletic scholarships; one receiving a partial athletic scholarship; and two utilizing federal loans to finance their educations.

Student-Athletes' Needs. The needs of the student-athletes from the two teams were initially evaluated by comparing the perceived current knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) they currently possessed and the KSAs which the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development and team personnel desired them to possess. It was indicated that the student-athletes needed to know how to navigate the university's academic requirements, maintain athletic performance, and also address issues that arise during the transition from high school to college. These were elaborated upon as including study skills, transferrable skills, critical thinking skills, goal-setting, and emotional regulation.

After the program began, and the student-athletes were on campus, ongoing assessment of the student-athletes' needs took place by asking them on a weekly basis to share their thoughts and desires anonymously. Each week the consultant handed out the "Student Athlete Weekly Feedback and Evaluation Form" and pens, and asked the student-athletes to provide information about what they believed to be areas of need. The requested information varied by week and team. The members of the wrestling requested information for time management in week 1. The members of the gymnastics team provided the following requests by week: week 3—stress management, week 5—goal setting again, week 6—major and career planning, and week 7—emotional regulation.

The information from interviews and weekly feedback from the participants was used to understand the needs of the student-athletes. It was determined that the concerns and needs of the target population were in the areas of academic strategies, performance enhancement, and emotional regulation/critical thinking. The consultant during the Design Phase of the program has utilized this information in the Design Phase.

Design Phase

The Design Phase occurred in order to document elements of the program's design based on the information gathered in the Clarification Phase. It involved description of essential features of the program such as: purpose, goals, and goal indicators; components, phases, and activities; personnel; development and implementation schedule; budget; program evaluation plan; and any other relevant program design elements. There are four steps in the Program Design Phase: 1) Describe the program purpose and goals, 2) Consider program design alternatives, 3) Develop the program, and 4) Document the program design.

Statement of Program Purpose. The program purpose was developed via integration of the reported needs of the student-athletes, the collaborative program design, and the availability of participating parties. First year student-athletes from Men's Wrestling and Women's Gymnastics participated as separate groups in the program over the course of nine non-consecutive weeks. The program was designed to take place during the first semester of their first year at a Division I NCAA institution to gain knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) related to academic and athletic development and success. Through the program, each athlete was to become informed and skilled in KSAs that are conducive to transition from high school to college.

Program Goals. The consultant met with the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development to discuss his thoughts and ideas in order to define the role of the consultant and factors he believed needed to be addressed—to gain clarity. From this meeting, and from other activities such as literature reviews, goals were determined. Three goals were developed:

1. To acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that assist in adjustment to and transition into the athlete's new academic and athletic environments in the areas of academic strategies, performance enhancement, and emotional regulation/critical thinking
2. To have understand the KSAs and utilize them successfully in their environment
3. To provide a setting for discussion among student-athletes of transitional issues and development of the athlete as a person

These goals were discussed with the coaches and the participants to ensure that the goals would address their perceived needs in regards to transitioning to the university.

Program Design Alternatives

The design of the program focused on the consultant meeting with the participants weekly. The first deliberation of this prospect was if the two teams would meet together or separately. The difficulty of scheduling the two teams combined with potential inability to maintain confidentiality between teams led to the decision that the consultant would meet with each team separately.

The location for the sessions was determined according to availability of space in the university's study rooms. The consultant requested an area with sufficient tables, chairs, and a whiteboard for presentation and illustration of concepts, and two different study rooms were reserved for her use throughout the semester.

The next area to consider was the amount of time that could be feasibly required of the student-athletes to attend. Initially, the consultant requested ninety-minute sessions, but due to the limited availability of the study rooms, and limited space in the

student-athletes' schedules, sessions were reduced to a maximum of seventy-five minutes. This amount of time was sufficient, and the consultant ensured that there was sufficient time for discussion and questions at each meeting.

Finally, the frequency of the meetings was determined to be most effective at once per week, according to availability and feedback from athletic personnel. The consultant decided to design the program to take place weekly. It was determined that this would provide support throughout the semester and provide a consistent time for developing the desired knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs).

Using the program design alternatives as a guideline, the program was designed to take place once a week, for up to seventy-five minutes, in study rooms in a university athletic center, with the consultant and members from each participating athletic team. Each session was to discuss, teach, and attempt KSAs for an improved adjustment to the demands of collegiate athletics and academics.

Development of the Program

The development of the program by the consultant focused on KSAs established according to interviews with the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics personnel and implications of the relevant literature. The areas of time management, critical thinking and problem solving, reading and study skills, goal setting, health and wellness, major and career planning, and use of transferrable skills have been indicated as important in the process of being academically successful. These KSAs are also important for athletic success as well. The intersection of the two was decided to be potentially helpful for the program's participants.

The KSAs for the developmental program were constructed for presentation utilizing visual, auditory, and active learning strategies. Presentation of materials, group discussion of topics, and feedback were all elements of the program's design. The consultant made use of handouts; worksheets; whiteboards and dry erase markers; and study room on the university's campus to implement the KSAS. Feedback for the program was obtained through anonymous forms—after obtaining informed consent—administered weekly to student-athletes participating and at the end of the program to the student-athletes, the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development, and team personnel.

The budget for the project was limited, and the university's athletics department would not provide funding for the project. However, the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development did agree to perform printing and copying of materials for the program. The number of print-outs and copies, office supplies, and other materials for the program would add up to approximately \$15 for the program, to be taken care of by the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development for the consultant.

The process of acquiring the KSAS was addressed with the introduction of topics on a weekly basis. The program was originally designed to take place over ten weeks, and the program design initially reflected this. The program implementation discussion will elaborate upon the actual sequence of KSA presentation.

In the first week, informed consent was obtained prior to receiving demographic information from the participants. Additionally, introductions to the program and the consultant occurred, and the student-athletes were informed of the seventy-five minutes per week, over ten weeks, program length. Participants were also to be informed that they

would be able to utilize time spent participating in the program to fulfill required “study hall” hours as incentive for participation. Finally, instruction on reading and utilizing syllabus were included in the first session.

Time management was to be introduced next as a basis for establishing consistency and a manageable routine. Many of the other topics would not be able to be introduced or addressed if the student-athletes were not able to gain awareness of how to meet all of their required daily activities. This rationale was utilized to encourage awareness of the amount of time spent in required activities, the amount of time available for restructuring, and the encouraging of implementing a time-management device.

After time management was introduced, the topic of goal setting was to be covered. Goal setting in this program was a tool for motivation and breaking down desired events or actions into manageable sub-goals. SMART (specific, manageable, attainable, relevant, and timely) goal setting will be given as an example for setting a useful goal, and then the student-athlete participants were asked to utilize a worksheet for setting athletic and academic goals. The worksheet included places for each element of SMART; and places for potential sub-goals, interfering factors, and the goal’s relationship to long-term goals.

In the fourth week of the program, study and academic skills were to be presented. Reading strategies, study structure, and managing time while studying were all topics for this week. The student-athletes were to learn and discuss how to create a structured study session, reading for comprehension, taking study breaks, and utilizing multi-sensory study methods.

Week five of the program was to utilize time to discuss health and wellness. Included topics were sleep habits, ensuring that meals are eaten (utilizing time management strategies), information about alcohol and drug use, and introducing mental focus and stability.

Week six of the program was designed to follow-up on the study strategies KSAs from week four by adding in test-taking strategies, and also introducing performance anxiety management. These topics were to be connected to week seven's critical thinking and problem solving skills KSAs. Skills for pragmatic decision making and forming solutions to problems were to be taught and practiced utilizing both academic and athletic examples.

In the eighth week of the program, planning for academic and future career progress was to take place. This was to include planning the course of the student-athlete's academic pursuits (i.e. declared major, internships pursued, and any other experiences sought) for preparation after they have completed their college and athletic careers. In addition to educational planning, career interests and desires were to be discussed and explored.

The ninth week of the program was to inform the student-athletes of the skills they possessed that could be transferrable. After presentation and discussion of what transferable skills are, the potential utilization these skills were to be discussed. The connection between the skills they possessed in and out of sport and their potential usefulness in other areas was the focus of discussion, and this was to be linked to their goals for the future.

In the tenth week, the program is designed to review skills learned, and facilitate discussion about any areas that were unclear. Additional discussion of overall experience of transitions at the university was to occur, and finally all participants would anonymously complete an overall evaluation of the program. During this week, team personnel and the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development would also be asked to anonymously fill out a program evaluation form.

Documentation of the Program Design. After the development of the developmental program, the documentation of the design was created through use of a Microsoft Word document by the consultant. The document was to provide the structure in which the consultant would work, and included all elements necessary to the program.

Program Implementation Phase

The implementation phase of program design occurred in order to ensure that the program operated as anticipated and that any necessary changes were made as the program progressed. It examined the program, and documented if it was implemented according to the design. It also documented the actual progression of the program as it took place.

This program was implemented over the course of ten weeks and nine sessions, in a small classroom located in one of the university's athletic facilities. The program sessions were implemented during the first half of the 2011-2012 school year. The fall semester ran from September 25 to December 11 2011. Each week, the consultant met with student-athletes, disseminated program materials, and administered forms for the student-athletes to complete. The consultant allotted seventy-five minutes for each team's meeting, seeing the members of the wrestling team first, then those from the gymnastics

team. The program began with eight student athletes participating. The attendance rate varied throughout the nine weeks of the program, and the impact of attendance will be further discussed in the formative program evaluation.

The first session provided an informed consent to the athletes, gathered demographic information via an information form, reviewed how to utilize a syllabus, introduced structuring study time, and signed an informed consent form. Participants were requested to track the way they spent their time—i.e. practices, lifting, classes, personal care, and study time— between the first and second session. All student-athlete participants attended session one.

Session two consisted of having participants examine the amount of time spent with mandatory activities and how much time they had leftover during the week after completing required activities. This self-monitoring was utilized for each individual to personalize the study structuring instruction provided. Structuring study time for increased retention and organizing materials was discussed via planning on working on topics over specified, scheduled amounts of time. All the student-athletes from the gymnastics team and one student-athlete from the wrestling team attended session two. The consultant made modifications to the amount of time spent in the session with the wrestler, due to a lack of additional participants. All student-athletes in attendance completed session feedback forms.

The third session included instruction for setting SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) goals, setting short-term, sub-goals, in order to reach long-term goals, and then practicing the skills via setting athletic and academic goals. All the student-athletes from the gymnastics team and one student-athlete from the wrestling

team attended session three. Again, modifications to time were made due to lack of attendance by student-athletes from the wrestling team. All student-athletes in attendance completed session feedback forms.

The fourth session consisted of instruction for managing stress via diaphragmatic breathing, mindfulness exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation. The consultant provided rationale for these strategies, instruction for how to properly execute them, and then guided then guided practice occurred. All the student-athletes from the gymnastics team and one student-athlete from the wrestling team attended session four. Again, modifications to time were made due to lack of attendance by student-athletes from the wrestling team. All student-athletes in attendance completed session feedback forms.

The fifth session involved reviewing the goals that were set in session three, and introduced problem-solving techniques. Revising and adjusting goals when they were not being accomplished was introduced, and steps for addressing a problem with pragmatic thinking were taught and practiced. Two student-athletes from the gymnastics team attended session five, and the consultant provided the review and problem-solving strategy work that they requested. This modification to the program's planned schedule was made according to the request of the student-athletes in attendance, and the consultant's observation of the lack of attendance overall. None of the student-athletes from the wrestling team attended session five. All student-athletes in attendance completed session feedback forms.

In the sixth session procrastination and motivation were discussed. Instruction of the factors that contribute to procrastination, ways to utilize study structuring to combat it, and utilization of positive self-talk was provided. Three student-athletes from the

gymnastics team attended, and none of the student-athletes from the wrestling team attended session six. All student-athletes in attendance completed session feedback forms.

In session seven problem solving was revisited, as per request of the student-athletes in attendance, and majors and career options were presented and discussed. Four student-athletes from the gymnastics team, and zero from the wrestling team attended. All student-athletes in attendance completed session feedback forms.

In the eighth week of the program, the consultant arrived on time for the sessions, and none of the student-athletes from either the gymnastics or wrestling team attended. The consultant was texted by one member of the gymnastics team, and was informed that the student-athletes from that team would not be in attendance due to a team fundraising commitment. All student-athletes in attendance completed session feedback forms.

The eighth session consisted of disseminating information about and discussing cognitive strategies for critical thinking, strategies for emotional regulation, and physical self-care. Cognitive distortions were introduced as “thought traps”, and the participants practiced identifying and restructuring thought processes. Additionally, information was provided about substances that are commonly abused in college (alcohol and illegal drugs), and physical self-care introduced and discussed. Two student-athletes from the gymnastics team and zero from the wrestling team attended session eight. One of the student-athletes in attendance reported that she would not attend the final session, and completed both the weekly evaluation and the overall program evaluation. The one other student-athlete in attendance completed a session feedback form.

The ninth and final session reviewed cognitive skills—problem solving, goal setting, thought restructuring, and positive self-talk—, answered any questions or concerns, and concluded the program. Two of the student-athletes from the gymnastics team and zero from the wrestling team attended the ninth session. Both of the student-athletes completed weekly feedback forms and program evaluation forms.

The program was disseminated according to the consultant's outline, but variation occurred due to the consultant modifying weekly topics in order to better meet the queries of the student-athlete participants (see Table 1). All information provided was included in the original outline, and often variation took place in the form of review of concepts and practice of skills. The perceived benefits of the program are presented and discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

Formative Program Evaluation

Program Evaluation Plan Format

A program evaluation is the process of making judgments about the worth or merit of a human services program, and the plan for evaluating the program uses protocols—specification of how an evaluation question will be answered—that allow data to be gathered and analyzed (Maher 2012). The evaluation of this portion of the program was seen as a formative endeavor with the primary focus on gathering information to continue to develop the program, not to make summative judgment about it. First, the participating student-athletes were administered the Participant Information Form (Appendix II) The form was designed to be handed out at the beginning after the Informed Consent Form. The intent of this questionnaire was to obtain descriptive information about the program's participants. This form was administered to all four student-athletes from the men's wrestling team and all four student-athletes from the women's gymnastics team.

The second questionnaire used was the Student-Athlete Weekly Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II). This form was administered each week to establish their perception of the information presented and discussed weekly. This form was administered in person each week that the developmental sessions occurred. In the week one of the program, both teams completed four forms. In weeks two through four, one form was completed weekly by one participating wrestler, and four were completed weekly by the participating gymnasts. In weeks five through nine, no wrestlers attended sessions, and therefore no completed forms were collected from those participants. The

gymnasts completed two forms in week 5, three forms in week 6, four forms in week 7, the forms in week 8, and two forms in week 9.

The third questionnaire used was the two-page Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II). This form was administered to determine perceived benefits, learning, and use of KSAs presented through the program. It was designed for administration after the final session took place. The information gathered will be used to determine the participant's subjective opinions of the program and its usefulness. Three wrestlers were administered this form via the Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development. The fourth wrestler left the team and was unwilling to provide feedback about his experience. Three gymnasts completed the form, and the fourth did not attend the last session to complete it.

Finally, the, the two-page Athletic Personnel Program Feedback and Evaluation Form were administered to gain insight into the perceived benefits and improvements in the first year student-athletes in the opinion of the team personnel. Neither head coach completed the form due to a lack of availability to meet with the consultant. However, the head coach of the gymnastics team provided information, via a brief interview, with the consultant. The Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development was interviewed about his opinion of the program and its benefits to supplement this lack of information.

Evaluation Phase Activities

The twelve activities of the Evaluation phase included: identifying the client with concerns about the development and improvement of the program; determining the needs

for the program evaluation; placing the program into a form that is “evaluable;” the program evaluation questions; data collection variables; data collection methods; methods and procedures for data analysis; specifying program personnel and their responsibilities; define guidelines for communication and use of evaluation information; construct the program evaluation; and evaluate the program evaluation.

Client. The Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development was the primary contact for the program’s implementation, as well as the client for the formative program evaluation. He was invested in the program due to interest in continuing its implementation in the future.

Need for Program Evaluation. The Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development wanted to know what KSAs the student-athletes learned and were able to implement. He wanted this knowledge to gain insight into appropriate implementation and instructional methods. He expected to acquire this knowledge via the data gathered from the evaluation.

Purpose of the Formative Program Evaluation Plan:

The purpose of the formative program evaluation was threefold:

1. To gain an understanding of how well individual athletes have learned and are able to implement developmental KSAs
2. To identify limitations in ability to learn and utilize adjustment KSAs and develop ways to address them
3. To gain understanding of what approaches the athletes found to be most successful

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions for the formative evaluation were delineated in order to gather information about the value of the program. These evaluation questions were used to inform conclusions and decisions about the program's utility, strengths, and limitation. The questions below were created to investigate these concerns and to provide results in a useable format.

1. Who participated in the program?
2. How was the program implemented?
 - o Frequency—how often meetings were held
 - o Intensity—what information was covered
 - o Time Frame—over what time period the program ran
3. What have been the reactions of the participants, the director of the Student-Athlete Development Office, and athletic teams' personnel?
4. To what extent have the participants made progress towards the goals of the program?

Program Evaluation Protocols

Protocols for the formative evaluation of the program will be delineated below in order to provide an organized worksheet for gathering answers to the four program evaluation questions listed above. Each protocol is set up according to Maher's (2012) guidelines, and will include the following: (1) the program evaluation question that it is addressing, (2) data collection variables, (3) data collection methods, instruments, and procedures, (4) methods and procedures for data analysis, and (5) a program evaluation protocol for each program evaluation question.

Protocol 1. Question 1—Who participated in the first year student-athlete developmental program?

Data Collection Variables. Relevant characteristics of the participating athletes are indicated. The characteristics are defined as the following:

- Major
- Number of credits being attempted
- High school cumulative GPA
- Geographical origins
- Advanced Placement (AP)/college course credit received prior to beginning the fall semester at the university—where it was taken, grade/score received, and number of credits transferred
- Athletic team
- Scholarship and financial aid status—full /partial athletic scholarship, full/partial academic scholarship, federal/personal loans, parental contributions, or “other” to be listed

Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Procedures. The data collection procedure included providing each student athlete with the “Participant Information Form” (Appendix II) for completion at the beginning of the first meeting.

Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis. The data received were descriptive of high school GPA, course credit received prior to attending the University, their athletic team and activity status, and how they are financing their education.

Guidelines for communication and use of evaluation results. Data is narrated and organized in a table.

Personnel and Responsibilities. The program consultant under the office of Student-Athlete development was responsible for collecting, analyzing, and organizing the data.

Protocol 2. Question 2—How was the program implemented?

Data Collection Variables. The following variables were monitored and recorded throughout the implementation of the program

- Frequency—how often meetings were held
- Intensity—what information was covered
- Time Frame—over what time period the program ran

Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Procedures. The data collection procedure included the consultant monitoring and keeping track of implementation in a Microsoft Word document.

Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis. The data gathered were descriptive of the dates of each team's sessions, the topic covered by the consultant and in group discussion, and the length of each meeting.

Guidelines for communication and use of evaluation results. The data is narrated and organized as descriptive statistics using a table.

Personnel and Responsibilities. The program consultant under the office of Student-Athlete development was responsible for collecting, analyzing, and organizing the data.

Protocol 3. Question 3—What have been the reactions of the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office and athletic team personnel to the first year student adjustment and development program?

Data Collection Variables. The following variables were included:

- o Thoughts, feelings, and perceived benefits of the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office, and team personnel in regards to the adjustment and development program implemented in the fall semester of 2011

Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Procedures. The data collection procedure included the allocation, completion, and collection of a questionnaire, the Athletic Personnel Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II). This form utilizes opinions on the observed use, on a 1-10 (1=disagree, 10=agree) scale, of: time management, syllabus comprehension, goal setting, study and test skills, knowledge of diverse issues, transferrable skills, and ability to discuss issues of importance. There is an area for any additional comments any personnel may want to add.

Data collection included performing interviews with the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office and the head coach of the women's gymnastics team to gather data about their thoughts, feelings, and perceived value of the program.

The data collection procedure will include the allocation, completion, and collection of a questionnaire, the Athletic Personnel Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II). The Athletic Personnel Feedback and Evaluation Form was handed out in hard copy form and was to be anonymously completed by the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office and athletic team personnel after the last team

sessions of the fall semester. They were allowed time to complete the forms, but they were not returned to the consultant.

The interviews took place with the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office and the head coach of the gymnastics team over thirty minutes of a meeting scheduled after the last program meetings. Time was set aside to ask questions and receive answers that were carefully and anonymously recorded.

Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis. The data gathered was the verbal responses of the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office and the women's gymnastics team's head coach. The questionnaires were to allow observed and estimated use of program components, but they were not returned. Narratives were gathered according to topic and frequency. The information gathered will be used for future improvement and development of the program.

Personnel and Responsibilities. The athletic personnel were responsible for completing and submitting forms, and then for participating in the interview with the consultant. The consultant was responsible for distribution, collection, and organizing the forms and the information contained within them. The consultant was also responsible for recording and organizing responses from interviews.

Guidelines for communication and use of evaluation results. After data collection was complete, the consultant created a master response list that has responses grouped according to topic and frequency for presentation.

Protocol 4. Question 4—To what extent have the participants made progress towards the goals of the program?

Data Collection Variables. The following variables were included:

- Self-report of use, on a 1-10 (1=disagree, 10=agree) scale of: time management, syllabus comprehension, goal setting, study and test skills, knowledge of diverse issues, transferrable skills, and ability to discuss issues of importance. There was also an area for any additional comments each participant may have wanted to add.

Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Procedures. The data collection procedure included the allocation, completion, and collection of a questionnaire, the Student Athlete Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II).

The Student Athlete Feedback and Evaluation Form was handed out in hard copy form and anonymously completed by student-athletes in the last team session of the fall semester. They were allowed time to complete the forms, and will then submit them to the consultant.

Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis. The data gathered was the responses and evaluations of two first year wrestlers and three first year female gymnasts. The questionnaire allowed narration and estimation of use of program components. Narratives were gathered from two members of the gymnastics team according to topic and frequency.

Guidelines for communication and use of evaluation results. The consultant created a master response list that grouped topics according to frequency for presentation. Basic topics and ideas will be provided in written form to the Director of the Student-

Athlete Development Office, and team personnel during scheduled meetings. The information gathered will be used for future improvement and development of the program.

Personnel and Responsibilities. The student-athletes were responsible for completing and submitting forms. The consultant was responsible for distribution, collection, and organizing the forms and the information contained within them.

Formative Program Evaluation Results

The student development and transition program was evaluated based on the program evaluation plan noted above, using self-report questionnaires designed by the consultant specifically for the two teams participating. The data gathered and presented below indicate that the student-athletes that attended all sessions, the head gymnastics coach, and the Assistant Director of Student-Athlete Development believe there has been a positive increase in KSAs consistent with facilitation of academic and athletic successes. Narratives indicated predominantly positive experiences of the program with some suggestions for future approaches to providing the program. The results and suggestions provided by the student-athletes, Assistant Director of Student-Athlete Development, and the head gymnastics coach will be further examined and discussed in Chapter VI.

Protocol 1—Who participated in the first year student-athlete developmental program? Protocol 1 was designed to gain an understanding of the demographic composition of the individuals that participated in the developmental program. The variables for data collection were explanatory of relevant characteristics of the participants from the men's wrestling and women's gymnastics teams at an NCAA Division I university. These characteristics included:

- Major
- Number of credits being attempted
- High school cumulative GPA
- Geographical origins
- Advanced Placement (AP)/college course credit received prior to beginning the fall semester at the university—where it was taken, grade/score received, and

number of credits transferred

- o Athletic team
- o Scholarship and financial aid status—full /partial athletic scholarship, full/partial academic scholarship, federal/personal loans, parental contributions, or “other” to be listed

The method of data collection involved having each student-athlete in attendance at the first scheduled developmental sessions complete the Participant Information Form (Appendix II). The student-athletes were informed to not put their names on the forms, and that they did not have to provide any responses they did not wish to share. Eight student-athletes submitted a form for an overall participant response rate of 100%. All eight participants answered questions 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7. Seven people answered question 3, and question 6 was left blank by all participants, indicating that no one “transferred or earned any Advanced Placement or other college course credit to be applied.”

Their responses indicated the first year student athlete participants were comprised of the anticipated four active members of the women’s gymnastics team and four active members of the men’s wrestling team (Table 1). Five participants indicated their geographical origin to be New Jersey, one indicated they were from New York, and two participants reported being from the state of Pennsylvania (Table 2). Seven student-athletes reported their high school grade point averages. The participants’ grade point averages from high school ranged from 2.1 to 4.1 (2.1, 3.0, 3.4, 3.7, 3.78, 3.99 4.1), with the average being 3.44 (Table 3). Five of the eight participants indicated that they had not decided upon an intended major, and were considered “Undeclared.” Of the other three student-athletes’ intended majors, one was Engineering, one was Political Science or

Exercise Science, and one was Sports Management (Table 4). The participating student-athletes' credits being attempted during their first semester of college ranged from 12 to 16 credits (12, 12, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16), with the average number of credits being 13.75 (Table 5). None of the participants indicated having credits from Advanced Placement or other college courses transferred or earned prior to beginning their first semester at the University (Table 6). All eight participants completed information about how they were financing their education (Table 7). Two were receiving full athletic scholarships, one was financing their education solely through federal loans, two were receiving a partial athletic scholarship combined with federal loans, one was receiving a partial athletic scholarship combined with personal loans, one was receiving a partial athletic scholarship combined with personal loans and parental contributions, and one was receiving a partial athletic scholarship combined with personal loans, parental contributions, and federal loans.

Protocol 2—How was the program implemented? Protocol 2 was designed to gain an understanding of how the program was implemented in contrast to how it was actually designed. The data collection variables were the frequency of the sessions, what information was covered during the session, and over what period of time the program ran. The consultant recorded the data for this protocol weekly.

The program was designed to be implemented once a week for seventy minutes over ten weeks. Both head coaches appeared enthusiastic about the program, and both agreed to encourage their student-athletes to attend every session. Over the semester, the sessions took place once a week, and averaged 65 minutes per week. The four student-athletes from men's wrestling team attended the first session, one attended the following three sessions, and then none of them attended the final five sessions. The consultant was informed after the semester ended that the team had been required to participate in a club wrestling season, and this contributed to the lack of attendance. The four members of the women's gymnastics team attended in varying numbers for a total of nine weeks, except for one in which they were required to work a team fundraiser.

The information covered in the sessions was designed to provide knowledge, skills, and abilities to navigate challenges in academics, athletics, emotional regulation, and personal interests. As discussed in the implementation phase, the program was provided in order to provide multifaceted KSAs to assist in successful transition from high school to college academics and athletics.

At the end of each session, student-athletes were provided the Student Athlete Weekly Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) to anonymously provide a reaction to the session. They were instructed to "Include your thoughts, feelings, what you have

learned, what you would like to learn more about, and any other ideas” in any format they wished. Table 8 lists the comments provided. Each week the participants’ experiences appeared to be appropriately consistent with the material presented, and indicative of positive beliefs about the benefits of each session.

Protocol 3—What have been the reactions of the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office and athletic team personnel to the first year student adjustment and development program? Protocol 3 was designed to gather and understand the reactions the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office and team personnel had to the program as a whole. The perceived benefits of the program were to be evaluated in addition to the student-athlete's perceptions and self-report of utilization of KSAs provided as a part of the program. The evaluation was designed using two questionnaires, which were distributed via hard copy. The Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) were administered to all four gymnasts and two wrestlers, and the Athletic Personnel Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) was provided to both team's head coaches. Data for this protocol was gathered from five of the six athletes that participated via the Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form and an interview with the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office.

The Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) was provided to one participant during week 8 and received during week 9, given to two gymnasts during the ninth session, and given to two wrestlers after the program was completed (62.5% total return rate, 75% gymnast, 50% wrestler). The Athletic Personnel Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) was given to the men's wrestling head coach, the women's gymnastics head coach, and the assistant coach of the women's gymnastics team. None of the coaches completed the form (0% return rate), but the women's gymnastics head coach provided feedback via a short interview. Additionally,

the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office provided oral feedback about his perceptions of the program.

The response rate for the male student-athletes was higher than anticipated, and this could be related to different reasons. The original plan for evaluation included providing a hard copy of the evaluation form to all participants during the final session, but the wrestlers did not attend any sessions after the fourth week. This lack of participation and minimal response from the student-athletes or team coaches led the consultant to believe that it would not be possible to obtain feedback from them. The consultant was able to obtain two feedback forms via assistance from the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office.

The female student-athlete response rate was close to what was expected. One gymnast did not attend the final session, nor did she complete the program evaluation form when provided to her at a later time. The other three returned the form with feedback and suggestions. Comments provided on the second page of the form were utilized for feedback. The following will elaborate on the responses provided by the student-athlete participants.

Feedback for the program was very positive overall, and there were some suggestions for improvement in the future. The Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office reported that the program was “really great,” and that he was anticipating it being extremely helpful in the future. The oral feedback from the gymnastics head coach indicated that he believed the gymnasts were doing well, but that he wished for more application of critical thinking skills outside of the weekly sessions. Suggestions for improvement in future programs from the student-athletes included “It

would be better if it were one on one so you could come up with your own times to go,” and “Talk to the coaches so the freshmen have to go...make it mandatory to go.” The Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office suggested that the program could be offered as longer sessions over 3-4 weeks instead of over the entire semester for student-athletes participating in sports that begin their competitive season in the fall. The statements provided in response to “Other Comments” were written by 5 student-athletes, and have been listed by topic of either perceived benefits (Table 9) or suggestions for future improvement (Table 10). The statements of perceived benefit indicate that three of the participants derived value from the program, and believed that they had benefitted personally from their participation. The suggestions for future improvement indicated that scheduling and prioritization were areas the student-athletes believed would benefit from modification.

Protocol 4—To what extent have the participants made progress towards the goals of the program? Protocol 4 was designed to gather information about the subjective experience of the participating student-athletes' progress made towards the goals of the program. The goals of the program were:

1. To provide knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that assist in adjustment to and transition into the athlete's new academic and athletic environments in the areas of academic strategies, performance enhancement, and emotional regulation/critical thinking
2. To have individual athletes understand the KSAs and utilize them successfully in their environment
3. To provide a setting for discussion among student-athletes of transitional issues and development of the athlete as a person

The student-athletes were given the Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) and athletic personnel were given the Athletic Personnel Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) to evaluate the progress they believed had been made towards the program goals.

The Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) were administered to all four gymnasts and two wrestlers, and the Athletic Personnel Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) was provided to both team's head coaches. Data for this protocol was gathered from page one of the forms that were used for protocol 3— from five of the six athletes that participated via the Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form and interviews with the Assistant Director of the Student-Athlete Development Office and the head women's gymnastics coach.

The Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) was provided to one participant during week 8 and received during week 9, given to two gymnasts during the ninth session, and given to two wrestlers after the program was completed (62.5% total return rate, 75% gymnast, 50% wrestler). The Athletic Personnel Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Appendix II) was given to the men's wrestling head coach, the women's gymnastics head coach, and the assistant coach of the women's gymnastics team. None of the coaches completed the form (0% return rate).

The Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form utilized a one to ten scale of agreement with statements. One indicated complete disagreement; five indicated a neutral response—neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and a ten indicated complete agreement with statements regarding: time management, syllabus comprehension, goal setting, study and test skills, knowledge of diverse issues, transferrable skills, and ability to discuss issues of importance. There was also an area for any additional comments each participant may have wanted to add.

The statements and student-athlete participant responses are indicated below and listed in Table 11:

1. I use a time management device (such as a planner or calendar) regularly.

One student-athlete responded with a 5, one answered with a six, one answered a seven, one answered nine, and one answered with a ten. Their responses indicate that 80% believed they used this tool. This question indicates progress towards goals one and two, providing KSAs and student-athlete utilization of KSAs.

2. I know how to read and understand a syllabus

One student-athlete responded with a five, one with a seven, and three with a ten. In this case, 80% responded favorably towards having attained these KSAs, and indicates progress made towards goals one and two.

3. Setting goals is a normal part of my academic and athletic routines

Two student-athletes responded with 6, and three responded with ten. In regards to utilizing goal setting, 100% of the student-athletes responded favorably. These responses also indicate progress towards goals one and two.

4. I have increased my study skills

Two student-athletes responded with seven, two with eight, one with a nine indicating that 100% believe their study skills have increased. These responses also indicate progress towards goals one and two.

5. I have increased my ability to take tests

Three student-athletes responded to this item with a seven, two an eight, and again 100% indicated positive increase in this area and progress towards goals one and two.

6. I have learned about the contributions that come from human diversity.

One responded with a five, one with a six, two with a nine, and one with a ten. These responses indicate 80% of respondents believe they acquired this knowledge, and that progress was made towards goals one and two.

7. I know how to structure my education for my future career

Two responded with five, one seven, one nine, and one ten. These responses indicate that 60% believe that they have the KSAs in this area, and progress towards goals one and two.

8. I know what skills from athletics can transfer to academics, daily life, and my future career

One responded with six, one with a seven, one with a nine, and two responded with ten. 100% of respondents indicated that they believe they have acquired transferable skills KSAs, and this indicates progress towards goals one and two.

9. I was able to discuss topics that were important to me and that were relevant to my transition to college academics and athletics

One responded with six, one with a seven, one with a nine, and two responded with ten. This indicates that 100% of respondents believe that they were able to discuss issues of personal concern, and these responses indicate progress towards goal 3.

The feedback provided by the participants indicates that the majority of the student-athletes that participated believe they benefitted from the program via receiving, understanding, and successfully utilizing KSAs assisting with the adjustment to and transition into their new academic and athletic environments in the areas of academic strategies, performance enhancement, and emotional regulation/critical thinking. Responses also indicated that opportunities for discussion and processing KSAs and personal concerns were perceived as valuable.

CHAPTER VI

Discussion and Summary

This chapter closes the dissertation with a discussion of the program's strengths and limitations, and then recommendations based upon these implications. The feedback obtained in regards to implications for future redesign of the program will be discussed and elucidated. Finally, a summary of the dissertation is provided.

Discussion

Program Strengths. There were aspects of the program evaluation that were indicative of strengths in its implementation. The formative evaluation indicated that the program was successful in its goals of understanding the extent to which student-athletes learned, acquired and used developmental KSAs, identifying and addressing limitations in their ability to learn and utilize adjustment KSAs, and determining what aspects of the program student-athletes found to be successful.

The overall indications of the program's utility were that the program elements were appropriate—the material presented, the format of the program, and the method of gathering feedback from the participating student-athletes—in providing the student-athletes that attended with KSAs for transition to the demands of college athletics and academics. The feedback provided indicated that the format, content, and setting of the program were described as needed, helpful, and useful. The student-athlete participant

feedback also indicated that the environment provided a safe space for learning and self-exploration. The participation, willingness to request review of topics, and volunteering of topics for skill practice provided by the student-athletes from the gymnastics team were signs of involvement and engagement in building and utilizing the program's KSAs.

Program Limitations. The program evaluation clarified limitations in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program. The primary feedback indicative of limitations from wrestling student-athlete participants was in the area of scheduling program sessions. Student-athletes from the wrestling team wrote that they would prefer to have had individualized times to meet with the consultant one-on-one to better fit their schedules. The initial design of the program made use of a group format, based off of the needs assessment. The potential benefits of the student-athletes meeting in a group of their peers was confirmed by the positive feedback from the women on the gymnastics team, but individual sessions could be taken into consideration in order to consider how to best provide the program's materials to student-athletes that could benefit from it.

In addition to scheduling restraints, the participation of men on the wrestling team—both in participants not returning to the program sessions and not completing weekly or final feedback instruments—limited the amount of feedback that was gathered in regards to the effectiveness of the program for male student-athletes. The limited contact with the wrestlers can be deduced as an indication of the fruition of the possibility of not getting the full buy-in of the coaches for the team. The wrestling team began pre-season competition while the program was being provided, unbeknownst to the consultant, and information about changes in student-athletes' schedules and availability was proven to be a crucial element in the ability to implement the program as intended.

Finally, the program has concerns in the area of external validity. In essence, case study approach of the program planning and evaluation occurred, and the limited number of student-athlete participants (N=8) were chosen based off of their presumed availability in their team's off-season and the fact that one team was composed of women and the other composed of men. In addition to these limitations, these student-athletes are only from two different sports, all from the Northeastern United States (New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania), and all students at the same university. Finally, a control group of student-athletes that were also not in season and in their first year at the university was not used. The results documented in this dissertation are only representative of the impact of the program in this context, and cannot be generalizable to other sports, teams, or student-athletes.

Recommendations. In order for future implementation of similar programs to occur, a number of steps should be taken. First, a qualified individual with training in program planning and evaluation should be utilized for any program redesign and implementation. This person should proceed with their own assessment of the needs of whichever teams included, staff, and student-athletes that are to be provided with the program. This person would benefit from knowledge in the areas of academic success, athletic performance, and personal development in order to address all the previously discussed areas of need that have been established for this population. Finally, knowledge of the requirements related to being a Division I student-athlete should be part of this person's background in order for them to have willingness for flexibility and endurance when working with this population.

Second, obtaining key stakeholders' support and collaboration will be required for

successful implementation. As noted in the limitations of this program, support from stakeholders can influence the involvement and feedback from student-athlete participants. Not only will initial support be necessary, but also continued support and reinforcement of active participation and use of KSAs provided by the program will be needed. These supports could provide structure and encouragement to student-athletes in order to assist in meeting program goals with all that participate. In summary, whoever continues to provide the program will need to establish this support, or consider another option for implementation if it is not readily available.

Summary

This dissertation detailed the process of developing, implementing, and formatively evaluating a program to assist first year student-athletes at a NCAA Division I university. The dissertation utilized Maher's (2012) Program Planning and Evaluation model to structure the program. The program was implemented over the course of ten weeks in the fall semester of 2011. The results of the formative evaluation indicate that the majority of student-athlete participants of the program were provided with KSAs for practicing time management, reading a university syllabus, setting academic and athletic goals, increasing study skills, test-taking skills, value of human diversity, knowledge of educational and career planning, transferable skills, and open discussion of individual concerns regarding the transition from high school to college academics and athletics. Limitations of the program included support from key stakeholders (the head wrestling coach), providing the program within the wrestling team's schedule, and lack of external

validity as related to only using two teams—one of women, one of men, and a lack of a control group.

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Tables

Table 1

Athletic Team # of Student-Athletes

Women's Gymnastics 4

Men's Wrestling 4

Table 2

Geographical Origin #of Student-Athletes

New Jersey 5

New York 1

Pennsylvania 2

Table 3

Cumulative High School Grade Point Average

Range 2.0 – 4.1

Average 3.44

Table 4

College Major #of Student-Athletes

Engineering 1

Political Science/Exercise Science 1

Sports Management 1

Undeclared 5

Table 5

Credits Attempted

Range 12 – 16

Average 13.75

Table 6

Advanced Placement or other college course credit #of credits taken and applied to transcript

Range 0

Average 0

Table 7

Method of financing education #of Student-Athletes

Full Athletic Scholarship 2

Partial Athletic Scholarship 5

Personal Loans 3

Federal Loans 3

Parental Contributions 2

Table 8

| Session | Feedback |
|---------|---|
| 1 | <p>I personally really think this session is going to help me get through my first semester better than on my own. It makes me not feel as stressed out about everything that is going on. I learned that all of my teammates are going through the same thing.</p> <p>Learning what this is about—time management, syllabi intro, studying for shorter periods of time at once to absorb more.</p> <p>I'm glad I have the opportunity to learn about more skills to help in my transition from high school to college and club to college athletics.</p> <p>I have a feeling that this is going to be very helpful and be able to help de-stress us about school and gymnastics.</p> |
| 2 | <p>This week we began to talk about time layouts through our weekly events. One way we talked about is through the use of planners. I believe a planner will help me be more active with homework and doing the things that need to be done. Before today, I didn't really comprehend the breakdown of time I have throughout the week.</p> <p>I feel that using a planner was a great idea so that I can plan my time better. I learned that I don't have a lot of free time during the week but thinking about small details will help clear my mind better.</p> <p>This week we learned how many hours a week we have of free time. This amount was shocking, but we learned some ways to deal with it and to organize your time better so you have enough time to finish what you need to and still have time for yourself.</p> <p>I am excited to see how writing out my time management schedule ahead of time will positively affect my week and stress level.</p> <p>Time management, using my planner, using my time more productively, how many hours I have a week of free time, how to relax and plan ahead so my mind doesn't run.</p> |
| 3 | <p>This week we learned about time management to go along with goal setting. Breaking down goals along with writing them down help me give order in how to achieve the long-term goals. Also, I learned that in order to obtain my long term goal, I must accomplish mini goals that build up to the major goal.</p> <p>I learned that setting small goals that you can achieve can be more realistic and help you get to your ultimate goal.</p> |

Table 8 – Continued

| Session | Feedback |
|---------|--|
| 3 | <p>We learned about goals and how to set them and how to reach them. We also learned techniques and skills as to how to accomplish our particular goals, academically and athletically.</p> <p>I learned that setting goals is a good way to manage my time. I feel that breaking the goals down will help me be calmer in the process of achieving them.</p> <p>I never thought about the S.M.A.R.T. part of making a goal.</p> |
| 4 | <p>This week we talked about relaxation through multiple methods. My favorite was closing your eyes and concentrating on everything around you in the moment.</p> <p>I feel that the breathing exercises will help me not stress out as much when I am in a situation where I panic.</p> <p>We learned some great stress relievers. I am definitely going to use these on a daily basis, especially before meets and certain skills in the gym. Today really taught me how to relax my body and, more importantly, my mind.</p> <p>I really liked this week and I think it will be helpful. Feeling less stressed and relaxed is a struggle and I enjoyed learning techniques that can help me achieve that.</p> <p>Most of the meditation and breathing techniques we did today I do during the day to prepare for meets.</p> |
| 5 | <p>I learned that I lost track of my goals and my way to get things done, and I need to get back on schedule and create a routine. *Work on positive strategies, attitude/motivation.</p> <p>I'm glad we had a chance to talk more about our goals. The pros and cons list helped me to think of other solutions to problems.</p> |
| 6 | <p>We learned to take everything day by day, and to stay positive. Reward ourselves with little things during the week after we accomplish goals day to day.</p> <p>I feel extremely stressed out with school now. I feel like I need to control my distractions because it happens way too often and I end up cramming everything in.</p> |

Table 8 – Continued

| Session | Feedback |
|---------|--|
| 6 | I need to calm down and believe in myself, and trust that my future is in my hands and anything is possible if I use all my tools properly. Day to day goals are the first step. |
| 7 | <p>Today was very helpful with problem solving at practice. Everything we talked about today is going to help out with our problems, and I am very certain with my major choice from the packet.</p> <p>I learned how to think about my major path, and not to get so stressed over it. New ideas on how to fix team/practice attitudes. Keep your eye on the goal and don't let people bring it down—bring them up.</p> <p>We learned about career opportunities and possible majors. We talked about certain fields of studies we were interested in and what types of jobs would suit us well.</p> <p>The packet is very helpful because I am still not positive on what I want to do after I graduate.</p> |
| 8 | <p>I found out that I do some of the thought traps that we went over. I also didn't know about some of the alcohol facts we went over.</p> <p>We learned about thought traps and how to fix them. We also learned about the effects of alcohol and how to take care of ourselves and make smart decisions.</p> |
| 9 | <p>I realized that getting too stressed makes things worse. Staying calm and taking things day by day help me manage my time and not get overwhelmed.</p> <p>I learned how to stay calm in practice with season so close and with school with finals this week. I am going to work on a pre-routine for balance beam because I am struggling with this event.</p> |

Table 9

| Statement | Perceived Benefits |
|-----------|--|
| 1 | “This program taught me a lot about the transition to college life that includes time management, setting academic and athletic goals, and learning good study skills. There wasn’t a lot of work assigned, but there was a lot of group discussion, which I found more beneficial. I think the things that I’ve learned over the semester will help me in the next 4 years.” |
| 2 | “These meetings were very influential. Freshman year, first semester in college, and being a Division I athlete is very stressful. I have learned how to manage my time and how to become less stressed. We were provided with stress relievers that I use on a daily basis. Also, in the gym, I have learned how to be verbal with my teammates and encourage one another whether it is with (sport) or academics.” |
| 3 | “I really enjoyed being a part of the program. it helped me with many things I will need all four years of college and even beyond that. I really liked having a place to go at the end of every week to talk about what I was struggling with and to get helpful strategies.” |

Table 10

| Statement Number | Suggestions for Future Improvement |
|------------------|---|
| 1 | I feel like it would be better if it was one on one so you could come up with your own times to go. |
| 2 | Make it not on a Sunday but during the week. talk to the coaches so the freshmen have to go. Make it mandatory to go. |

Table 11

| Question | Response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| I use a time management device (such as a planner or calendar) regularly | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| I know how to read and understand a syllabus | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 3 |
| Setting goals is a normal part of my academic and athletic routines | | | | | | | 2 | | | | 3 |
| I have increased my study skills | | | | | | | | 2 | | 2 | 1 |
| I have increased my ability to take tests | | | | | | | | 3 | | 2 | |
| I have learned about the contributions that come from human diversity | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | 1 |
| I know how to structure my education for my future career | | | | | | 2 | | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| I know what skills from athletics can transfer to academics, daily life, and my future career | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 2 |
| I was able to discuss topics that were important to me and that were relevant to my transition to college academics and athletics | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 2 |

Appendix I

Program Elements

The Program as an Evaluable Item

Putting the program into an evaluable form involves ensuring it has clarity, compatibility, and an understood developmental status. All of the program design elements were clarified and understood by all involved parties. The understanding of the design elements allowed for continued development and improvement. All the elements of the program appear to be consistent with each other as well. Finally, each element was fully developed and ready for implementation. All elements of the program indicate that it is appropriate for evaluation.

APPENDIX II

Forms**Participant Information Form****Please do not include your name on this form**

What athletic team(s) are you a member of? _____

Where are you from geographically? (In what city/state/country did you attend school prior to attending the University)_____

What was your cumulative high school GPA? _____

What is your major? _____

How many credits are you attempting this semester? _____

If you transferred or earned any Advanced Placement or other college course credit to be applied to your course record, please indicate the following:

Name of course Where you took it # of credits Grade/score

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

How are you financing your education? (Circle all that apply)

Full athletic scholarship

Partial athletic scholarship

Full academic scholarship

Partial academic scholarship

Federal loans Personal Loans

Parental contributions

Other (please explain): _____

Please provide your reaction to this week's session. Include your thoughts, feelings, what you have learned, what you would like to learn more about, and any other ideas. You may write these in any format you are comfortable with—please print clearly.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Page 1)

Please do not include your name on this form

Please circle the response you think best fits the description of what you have learned/done as it relates to athletics and academics over the course of the Fall 2011 semester. Feel free to add any comments on the second page.

1. I use a time management device (such as a planner or calendar) regularly

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | Agree | |

2. I know how to read and understand a syllabus

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | Agree | |

3. Setting goals is a normal part of my academic and athletic routines

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | Agree | |

4. I have increased my study skills

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | Agree | |

5. I have increased my ability to take tests

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | Agree | |

6. I have learned about the contributions that come from human diversity

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | Agree | |

7. I know how to structure my education for my future career

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | Agree | |

8. I know what skills from athletics can transfer to academics, daily life, and my future career

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | Agree | |

9. I was able to discuss topics that were important to me and that were relevant to my transition to college academics and athletics

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | Agree | |

Student Athlete Program Feedback and Evaluation Form (Page 2)

Other Comments

[illegible]

Athletic Personnel Program Feedback & Evaluation Form (Page 1)

Please do not include your name on this form

Please circle the response you think best fits the description of behaviors you have observed/discussed as related to student-athletes' athletic and academic development over the course of the Fall 2011 semester. (If you do have not observed/discussed a topic, please select N/A) Please add any comments on page 2.

1. Use of a time management device (such as a planner or calendar) is regular

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | | Agree | |

2. They have knowledge of how to read and understand a syllabus

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | | Agree | |

3. Setting goals is a normal part of academic and athletic routines

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | | Agree | |

4. They have put use of study skills in place

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | | Agree | |

5. There has been an increase test taking skill

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | | Agree | |

6. They have learned about the contributions that come from human diversity

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | | Agree | |

7. They have knowledge of how to structure education for future careers

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | | Agree | |

8. They have knowledge of skills from athletics can transfer to academics, daily life, and future careers

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | | Agree | |

9. They had opportunities to discuss topics that were important and relevant to their transition to college academics and athletics

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |
| Disagree | | | | | | | | | Agree | |

[illegible]

Informed Consent Form (Page 1)

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Jamye Shelton, a graduate student in Rutgers University's Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. The purpose of the research is to determine your perceptions and application of knowledge, skills, and abilities that will be presented in the first-year student-athlete development program in which you will participate.

Participation in this study will involve the following: filling out a weekly feedback and evaluation form, and a program feedback and evaluation form.

There are no anticipated risks for participating in this study, and participation in this study may not benefit you directly. However, the knowledge that is obtained from your participation may help in the formative evaluation of the developmental program.

This research is anonymous. Anonymous means that I will record no information about you that could identify you. This means that I will not record your name, address, phone number, date of birth, etc. There will not be any way to link your responses back to you. The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated, unless you have agreed otherwise.

For participating in this study you will receive study hall credit equal to the length of each session. If you withdraw from the study prior to its completion, you will still receive the credit for sessions that were attended.

Informed Consent Form (Page 2)

If you have questions at any time about the research or the procedures, you may contact me, Jamye Shelton, at Rutgers Psychological Clinic, 152 Frelinghuysen Road Piscataway, New Jersey 08854, at (848) 445-611, x 40135, or at shelton@eden.rutgers.edu. You can also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Charles Maher at camaher@rci.rutgers.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at:
Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate at any time without penalty to you. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be removed from the data set and destroyed.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Subject's signature_____ Date _____

Investigator's signature_____ Date _____