

## **AN INVESTIGATION OF DIVISION I STUDENT-ATHLETES DOWNTIME ASSOCIATED WITH OFFICIAL ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES**

Gregory Allen Smith, Brendan Dwyer, Carrie LeCrom, & Nathan Tomasini,  
Virginia Commonwealth University

Student-athletes at Division I institutions recently reported viewing themselves more as athletes than students and some reported spending well over 40 hours a week on official athletic activities (Wolverton, 2008). Potuto and O'Hanlon (2007) found that, in contrast, the majority of student-athletes wish they had more time to pursue educational opportunities available at the university. Additionally, student-athletes desired increased interaction with other students and instructors in academic-related activities as these interactions have been shown to increase learning and communication skills (Gayles & Hu, 2009). Due to these circumstances, further examination is required to fully-understand this discrepancy between educational opportunities and athletic responsibilities. A study examining ways to increase academic-related interactions between student-athletes, other students, and instructors may not only fill the gap in the knowledge base, but provide detailed information that could improve the college experience for student-athletes while maintaining one of the primary missions of the university, to educate students.

As a result of the need, this exploratory study is investigating the downtime of student-athletes associated with official athletic activities in an attempt to locate ways of increasing academic-related interactions. Employing a qualitative methodology, the researchers hope to discover meaningful content from which to build a foundation for future theory-driven research (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). Currently, student-athletes from a large Division I university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States are being interviewed in an attempt to better understand how downtime is being used. Four focus groups consisting of four to five student-athletes from four distinct varsity teams are currently ongoing and will be completed and analyzed by March 1, 2010. The results from this study have the potential to provide numerous practical implications for athletic administrators, advisors, and instructors with respect to the allocation of student-athlete downtime. In addition, study limitations, constraints, and areas for future research will be discussed.