

Experience Satisfaction of International Student-Athletes in the NCAA

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Research on collegiate athletics has primarily been focused on studying administrators and professional staff. Student-athletes have been overlooked and the research in this area is rather scarce. Understanding the experience of student-athletes and their level of satisfaction with both the academic and athletic experience is important since higher levels of satisfaction could lead to better performances both athletically and academically. A subgroup within student-athletes is international student-athletes. The number of international student-athletes participating in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has nearly doubled in the past decade but the group members have received little scholarly attention in regards to their experiences as student-athletes.

The purpose of this research was to examine the level of satisfaction among international student-athletes in the NCAA. It is important to understand this so that international student-athletes can have an optimal experience in the United States. Increasing satisfaction may lead to better performances in the classroom and in competition.

Respondents were international student-athletes from six NCAA Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision conferences. There were 206 valid responses to the questionnaire utilized in this study, which was based on the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire developed by Reimer and Chelladurai (1998).

Data analysis revealed that international student-athletes were satisfied with the dimensions measuring satisfaction, including team social contribution, team integration, and personal treatment as well as academic support services. In addition, although generally satisfied with their collegiate experience as athletes, male athletes were more satisfied with external agents (i.e., media, the local and university community) than female athletes.

The highest dimension of satisfaction was in the area of academic support services, which has the potential to contribute to better performances in the classroom and higher graduation rates. Understanding the dimensions of satisfaction with coaching can help coaches adjust their coaching and training styles. Coaches and administrators can also tout the high level of satisfaction at their universities to recruit international-students to commit to their universities. In addition to the aforementioned practical implications, this research contributes to the existing body of literature on students in general and student-athletes in particular. More specifically, the contribution is in that it evaluates the overall academic and athletic experience of international student-athletes and does not focus on specific aspects of satisfaction, which provides for a broader description of their experience.