

## *The Effect of Sport Participation on Academic Integration of International Student-Athletes*

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There is wealth of information concerning the academic performance of American college athletes. A majority of the research has indicated that athletes in commercial sports (primarily football and men's basketball) exhibit what Astin (1993) has termed over-involvement. Due to their extreme involvement in sport, these athletes actually become academically and socially detached from their institutions resulting in poor educational experiences and low graduation rates (Adler & Adler, 1991; Parham, 1993; Phillips, 1993; Wrisberg, 1996). These trends are especially dramatic among minority college athletes (Lapchick, 2009; Harrison and Lawrence, 2004; Lawrence, 2005). Yet, Coakley (2007) suggests that non-commercial programs may, "actively support academic success" (p. 497). Both female and small college athletes have demonstrated high graduation rates (Lapchick, 2009) and academic integration (Meyer, 1990; Schroeder, 2000).

One group that has received little attention in the athlete-academic performance literature is international athletes. Research on international students has found that language and cultural barriers pose significant barriers to the integration of international students (Andrade, 2008), yet current enrollment of international students in U.S. colleges and universities is at an all-time high (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2009). Furthermore, the NCAA (2009) reported that international student-athletes comprised 3% of male and 3.2% of female teams. However, little research has examined how sport participation affects the academic integration of international student-athletes. Therefore, this study will use Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement to determine how sport participation affects the academic integration of international student-athletes at one American university.

Seventeen participants were interviewed for the study. Five male and seven female NCAA Division I international athletes representing eight different sports and nine countries were the primary source of data. Four head coaches who had international athletes on their teams also participated. In addition, the university's director of international programs, who is responsible for international student recruitment, orientation, and retention, was interviewed. While questions were altered for each participant type, all interviews centered on understanding the educational, athletic, and social experiences of international athletes. The interviews ranged in length from 20-75 minutes and were digitally recorded. The transcribed interviews will be qualitatively analyzed using Goetz and LeCompte's (1984) method of theorizing. The results will be compared to the literature on academic integration of U.S. student-athletes and non-athlete international students.