

NCAA Student-Athletes and the Writing Center

DI and DIII Student-Athletes Relationship with the Writing Center and Associates



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Rhet 302: Writing Theory and Practice
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November 12, 2020

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A. Introduction

My Experience

Throughout my high school career, my academic integrity was primarily structured around my desire to participate in collegiate athletics. From a young age, I was taught that if I wanted to advance my athletic career, I would likewise have to work hard academically. Being successful in the classroom would only further the opportunities that I had when it came to applying to college and would present me with a larger base of schools to decide from. I, however, realize having this knowledge from a young age was a privilege and is not something all athletes are taught. Instead, many students structure their identity around their specific sport and see themselves not as “student-athletes,” but strictly “athletes.” Many athletically gifted students successfully slip through middle and high school without actually learning and developing as a student. Because of this, when these athletes do make it to college they face the struggles of balancing academics and athletics, knowing that if they do not perform academically they will also be prohibited from performing athletically. Although some people believe it is not fair for student-athletes to be accepted into colleges where they do not meet the academic standard, sometimes these students would not be able to attend a four-year college or university otherwise. These are often “underprepared” students who need their athletic ability in order to get a scholarship to attend an academic institution.

When I went through my college search process I went on many tours with different coaches and athletic directors who all mentioned academic sources that would be available to me as a student-athlete. This was very appealing to hear and reminded me that the work I put into my academics was going to be just as important as the work I put in on the ice and in the weight room. I have the unique experience of being both a Division I NCAA and Division III NCAA athlete and recognize that in both organizations, the academic support I was promised was not present.

I began my freshman year at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts with the plans of playing Ice Hockey. The semester quickly took a turn and these plans were not fulfilled. I was then asked to attend a meeting for the Women’s Rowing team and decided to walk on to the team. I never imagined that I would be participating in a sport that I had no experience in prior to college, nevertheless at the DI level. As the season progressed I was enjoying the many benefits of being a DI athlete such as the amazing facilities we worked in, the food and drinks we were supplied, the apparel we were given, and the athletic treatment that we received. Although these benefits were great, my life revolved around a very strict schedule as a student-athlete. Almost every morning, my teammates and I woke up around 4:00 AM to head to the water to practice for a few hours. After morning practice we rushed back to campus to prepare for a day of classes. In the afternoon, we had workouts in the weight room, on the erg machines, or in the tank (an indoor boat used to practice technique). These afternoon sessions were often followed by team meetings or appointments with the athletic trainers. Once all this was complete we then embarked on the journey to finish our days worth of homework with the

hope of getting to bed at a reasonable hour to do it all over again. This strict schedule did not allow much time to seek out academic resources that were typically open for operation during hours of practice and workouts and closed by the time we were done with team activities.

In high school, I had often imagined what it would be like to be a DI athlete, and although many of my fantasies came true, I was surprised by the little academic support we were given. Although it was understood that we had to maintain a good academic standing to participate and that we could not be a part of any academic scandals, there was not much discussion about our academic success or integrity. In fact, I had never even been introduced to academic resources, such as a writing center, throughout my time at Holy Cross.

In the Winter of my freshman year, I decided that I wanted to transfer to a school where I would be able to continue my ice hockey career. One of the schools I toured was of course Trinity College. When touring Trinity, I focussed more on the academic opportunities that would be present rather than the athletic ones. After being at a school that I only picked based on athletic desires, I knew that I did not want to make the same mistake. My tour at Trinity revolved much more around my identity as a “student” as opposed to my identity as an “athlete,” which was heavily present in all interactions with Holy Cross. During my tour of Trinity, I remember being told that the Women’s Hockey team had mandatory study halls multiple times a week for all first-year students. In addition, the coach discussed how when a player’s GPA dropped below a certain average, mandatory study hall sessions would be reinstated. He also mentioned that the coaching staff and team liaison would work with the student to set them up with academic support resources, which I assumed to be tutors. Since being at Trinity, and being a member of the Women’s Ice Hockey team, I have never experienced a single study hall session or have been influenced to work with academic resources.

Although I do not feel like I necessarily needed these extra academic resources, I do know that is not often the case for all athletes. With that said, I was surprised to see how little academic attention was forced upon students at both institutions and division levels. I was especially surprised considering the NCAA’s claim to “govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount” (NCAA.org). In this, they are saying that the student-athletes academic experience is the most important part of their career. From my personal experience as a student-athlete in varying divisions, as well as the research I have conducted, I do not believe this to be the case. Because of this, I have decided to further research how student-athletes interact with the Writing Center, specifically writing centers that are solely designated for student-athletes use. Since most of the research I found solely applied to DI programs with separate student-athlete academic sources, I decided to look into our very own Writing Center and how student-athletes engage with Associates at Trinity College (D3 program).

Why is this Important?

Similar to the way Associates are taught to recognize different groups of people on campus such as, English language Learners, students with disabilities, and even those who learn more visually than aurally, it is also important to recognize athletes as a group of their own. Student-Athletes tend to be overlooked academically on campus and, like all others, should be welcomed into Writing Centers. Writing Centers should pay more attention to this group because they have a large impact on the campus around them. At DI schools these athletes can tend to be idolized and known on campus, because of this it is important that they too are setting a high academic standard that correlates with the morals of the campus that they are on as well as its Writing Center. Similarly, at many DIII schools the percentage of student-athletes tends to be very high. Specifically at Trinity, student-athletes make up 40% of the population which is almost half of the student body. If this group is not taken into consideration, the Writing Center fails to care for a large majority of the campus' students. By becoming aware of student-athletes the whole campus will benefit as it is not just the job of the Writing Center to better these students as writers, but to challenge them into becoming the best versions of themselves as students, athletes, and overall people. By looking further into the engagement between student-athletes and Associates, we can discover different methods of teaching and a variety of techniques that can help not just athletes but all students. Through these developments and the Writing Center's goal of bettering all tutees as people, including student-athletes, the campus as a whole will benefit.

B. Research

Student-Athletes VS. NCAA Rules and Regulations

The first article I researched, regarding student-athletes engagement in the Writing Center, was, "Supporting Student-Athlete Writers: A Case Study of Division I Athletics Writing Center and NCAA Academic Mandates." This case study is written by Michael Rifenburg and discusses the experience that student-athletes have in the Writing Center at what he refers to as Mid-South University, or MU. Rifenburg explains how college athletics have become distinct from the university's overarching academic mission (Rifenburg 64). Instead of the focus being on the student's education, many Division I athletes are influenced to focus on their athletic performance to assist in the success of the school's program and thus the financial income of the athletic department and NCAA as a whole. This hierarchy of placing athletics above academics was structured when collegiate sports transitioned from extracurricular activities to professionalized sports that resulted in a financial profit for the school (Rifenburg 64). This lopsided relationship is proven in the fact that in 2013-2014 the NCAA "allocated \$98.1 million to use on Division I Championship events; the NCAA allocated only 26.1 million to academics" (NCAA.ORG). In order to protect this money, many DI schools created separate student life and academic resources for student-athletes (Rifenburg 65). Although this appears to be a positive

addition to the campuses at first glance, the academic resources for DI athletes do not seem to look out for the best interest of the students, but rather only of their identity as an “athlete.”

The MU writing center is not structured around the idea of helping a student become a better writer rather is centralized around not breaking any NCAA rules. This introduces the pragmatic and pedagogical challenges of tutoring student-athletes due to Principle 2.5 in the NCAA handbook (Rifenburg 61). This principle states, “intercollegiate athletics programs shall be maintained as a vital component of the educational program, and student-athletes shall be an integral part of the student body. The admission, academic standing and academic progress of student-athletes shall be consistent with the policies and standards adopted by the institution for the student body in general” (NCAA Division I Manual). Trying to abide by these regulations only furthers the worries that tutors have about compliance and leads to unproductive sessions. Although tutors admit to desiring a more collaborative tutoring method, they do not know how to obtain it without breaking NCAA guidelines.

The MU Writing Center is located in a small room in the athletic department and consists of only four tutors (Rifenburg 67). Student-Athletes do not just attend this center because it is conveniently close to their practice facilities and locker rooms, but because they are required to do so. I believe this requirement also proposes a challenging dynamic. In one sense it is beneficial for students who are not up to academic standards to receive help, and on the other, I remind myself that the productivity of a session is diminished if the student does not want to be there. Since MU’s center is strictly for student-athletes the tutors are taught to abide by NCAA rules and avoid any allegations of academic misconduct. In order to do so, student-athletes are required to turn all their work online at Turnitin.com, which is a website that checks for plagiarism (Rifenburg 61). Once this receipt is printed the tutor then uses a green pen and green code sheet to mark the student’s paper (Rifenburg 61). This is an outdated method that produces the image of a “fix-it shop” and therefore takes away from the collaborative environment that is supposed to exist in the Writing Center. This method of tutoring further proves that the center is more concerned with NCAA rules than actually helping students become better writers.

After discovering that the ultimate goal of the MU Student-Athlete Writing Center was to avoid academic misconduct and protect the institution first, Rifenburg broke down his findings into two discourses: “prevention” and “improvement.” In the discourse of “prevention,” he reveals that the primary responsibility of the tutor is to prevent the student from getting in trouble with the NCAA. Tutors do this by fixing the student’s bad writing habits such as accidental plagiarism, rather than helping them improve as a writer (Rifenburg 71). Rifenburg sees this as a major issue that is apparent in many athletic department based writing centers and argues that this compliance takes away from pedagogical advancements (Rifenburg 71). In his interviews with tutors and student-athletes, Rifenburg discovered that tutors feel the rules that they have to follow do not allow them to improve the overall writing skills of the student and instead they must do their best to help them with individual assignments (Rifenburg 73). In addition to being careful about offering the “right” amount of assistance, sessions are limited to thirty minutes and

require the signing of multiple forms including the student's ID number and team involvement (Rifenburg 73).

The discourse of "improvement" included the developments that Rifenburg introduced to the MU writing center. In order to improve the Student-Athlete Writing Center, Rifenburg reached out to the head of the campus' general Writing Center for advice. From this conversation, he decided to abandon the use of green pens and code sheets and added the option of asynchronous online appointments (Rifenburg 75). Although these new techniques would be beneficial for the student-athletes, Rifenburg's main takeaway was that the Student-Athlete Writing Centers should familiarize themselves with the practices of other campuses to create the best possible learning opportunity for their tutees. He furthers this saying that separate writing centers on campus should ensure the same policies that the general writing centers do (Rifenburg 77). If both centers follow the same set of guidelines and understand NCAA academic policies, then the tutors at these locations should be interchangeable and therefore able to work with regular students as well as student-athletes.

Although I think these developments further improve athletic based academic resources, such as the MU Student-Athlete Writing Center, I believe that more emphasis needs to be placed on treating the tutees as students, rather than business arrangements. In this article Rifenburg creates the image of a student athlete as a source of income for high DI institutions. Since the income of this school would be in danger without student-athletes academic success, these students are not led to perform their best in the classroom as they do on the field, court, ice, or weightroom, rather are taught to play it safe. In other words, DI writing centers rather help "fix" a student's paper to ensure a decent grade and thus GPA, then help them actually become better writers. Working with them to improve their writing would be deemed "too risky" as it could lead to the breaking of strict NCAA policies and a possible academic scandal. I do understand the fear that tutors and Student-Athlete Writing Centers face, as a lot of pressure is put on them to secure the tutees academic standing so that they can continue to perform athletically, but I can not say that I support their pedagogies. As Writing Associates we are taught to help a student reach their full potential as a person, student, and writer, and because of this applying quick corrections to an athlete's work is not acceptable. Although I believe that the NCAA needs to take action to create a more academic based structure for student-athletes, I argue that writing centers can take their own steps towards creating a better pedagogy when working with student-athletes.

"Underprepared" Student-Athletes

Knowing that a better technique needed to be adopted by Associates when working with student-athletes, I decided to continue my research. The next article I looked at was written by Pamela Stacey and is titled, "Moving From "She Just Sits Here" to "She's Opened My Eyes:" Evolution of Writing Tutor Roles in Conferences With L1 and L2 Student-Athletes." In this article Stacey focuses on the Student-Athlete Writing Center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM). Specifically she focuses on what she refers to as "underprepared" student-

athletes who need academic support in their writing (Stacey 24). This group of “underprepared” students includes first year students who are ethnic and linguistic minorities, international students, or first generation students (Stacey 23). Typically, these students would not have the chance of attending UHM without their athletic ability and scholarships and therefore need help in meeting the academic standard that they are now held to. This case study focuses on the evolution of these student-athletes in the athletic based Writing Centers over the course of two years and presents a training module for tutors to follow to improve their practices.

Stacey points out that there has been a significant amount of research conducted following the experience of “underprepared” students, yet none of which has followed the experience of “underprepared” student-athletes. This led her to apply this general research to writing centers that work with “underprepared” student-athletes to discover how they can assist these students in reaching academic success. She reminds her readers that “underprepared” student-athletes need additional support since the academic assistance that they receive is further constrained by NCAA rules and regulations. Because of this unique struggle, UHM and other schools create academic services and writing centers for their athletes. She summarizes the need for these separate centers in three reasons: the high percentage of student-athletes with low academic literacy, the tight athletic schedules that make attending general centers challenging, and the time consuming nature of completing writing assignments (Stacey 26). Like Rifenburg, Stacey explains that many athletes attend colleges without the academic abilities that they need in order to be successful in their classes and graduate. Although they often need extra help, they can not get it at general academic services on campus because the hours of operation interfere with their athletic schedule. When student-athletes can not get this needed help they are overwhelmed by their writing process as well as the time commitment to it resulting in an incomplete or plagiarized assignment.

Similar to Rifenburg, Stacey also believes that NCAA regulations negatively impact these athletic-academic resources. She takes this a step farther, claiming that athletic based writing centers can not follow campus wide modules because of the regulations they must uphold (Stacey 27). Just like at MU, tutors at UHM are expected to abide by NCAA regulations and therefore can not collaboratively work with their students to produce work, instead they are presented with highly structured and supervised appointments (Stacey 28). Although it was clear that NCAA rules should be followed, in her study, Stacey discovered that tutors at UHM interpreted this in different ways. Some Associates worked in a similar style to those at MU, whereas others disregarded the rules they were given and wrote on the papers of the student-athletes helping them produce written work through collaboration.

In order to improve the tutoring techniques at UHM and establish a basis of understanding among those working at the Writing Center, Stacey interviewed Associates and student-athletes. In her work she discovered that tutors felt like they could not help the athletes they were working with because the NCAA guidelines they must follow, likewise the athletes felt like they were not benefitting from the appointment (Stacey 21-22). Associates that followed rules believed the students they were working with were consistently frustrated, whereas those

who abandoned the rules felt that they were putting themselves and the athletes at risk of an academic scandal (Stacey 22). This brings in the concept of power and authority in the writing center. Due to these strict rules Associates have a difficult time of applying the right amount of power and authority.

In his article, “Power and Authority in Peer Tutoring” Peter Carino reveals that no matter what techniques are used in an appointment, one or both persons must have the knowledge and occupy the position of power and authority in a hierarchical relationship (Carino 105). Although this knowledge and power exists in most general Writing Center appointments it seems to have difficulty being established in Writing Centers that are solely separated for the use of student-athletes. In these appointments, Associates avoid filling the position of power due to the fear they have of breaking NCAA rules and assert it on the student instead. Since these student-athletes are often “underprepared” they do not want, nor have the right amount of knowledge to hold this power and therefore the appointment is not productive and results in the frustration of both parties. This idea is supported in the patterns that were produced in the appointments Stacey observed. In some appointments the tutor would use moments of silence to produce work for the student and in others the moments of silence would be used to influence the student to participate (Stacey 34). In both cases tutors and students were frustrated with the inability to give or receive what they thought of as “enough help.”

After recognizing the issues that existed in the UHM Student-Athlete Writing Center, Stacey picked a small group of tutors and held a one hour interactive training session that showed them “good” and “bad” tutoring techniques (Stacey 22). Stacey ended up adding six more hours of mandatory training where she taught tutors how to obey NCAA rules while successfully helping student-athletes. After these training sessions Stacey noticed that tutors no longer broke the rules, yet they still had trouble taking the role of power in their sessions (Stacey 28). The major shift that occurred after these sessions was the tutors role in the appointment. This was demonstrated when tutors rejected their role of “expert” and redefined themselves as co-learner with the student (Stacey 29). This new style of tutoring allowed the tutor to build up the students confidence and take ownership of their work.

Like Rifenburg I think Stacey presents some great ideas of how to improve the relationship between student-athletes and their designated Writing Centers. Although training sessions seem to help some Associates it is difficult to believe that it was a solution to all appointments. I believe that tutoring student-athletes in a different manner than regular students may be best and should be adopted by athletic department based Writing Centers.

C. A Look Into Trinity College Student-Athletes and the Writing Center

When conducting my research, I was not able to find much information on how student-athletes at Division III schools interact with their academic resources. I do however know that NCAA guidelines and regulations are much more relaxed with DIII athletes and was therefore interested to see if this relaxation improved or diminished the relationship between student-

athletes and Writing Associates. Since there is a minimal amount of research done on this topic I decided to conduct my own by interviewing Coaches, Associates, and student-athletes on Trinity College's campus. Although these results might not accurately represent all DIII schools, I believe that this research may well represent most NESCAC schools (New England Small College Athletic Conference) and can act as a basis of knowledge for all DIII schools.

Trinity College Men's Football and the Writing Center

The Trinity athletic department does not have its own writing center or isolated location of academic resources for their athletes, instead most student-athletes are expected to use the general resources on campus. This includes the Allan K. Smith Center for Writing and Rhetoric. There are some teams, however, that hold their own study hall sessions where they work with the general Writing Center by hiring a few associates to collaborate with the team. A few different teams have done this at Trinity, yet the Men's Football team has been most consistent in doing so. In order to figure out what persuaded the team to get involved with the Writing Center and its Associates, I decided to interview head football coach, Jeffrey Devanney. I asked him the questions below:

1. When recruiting athletes, do you look for players who you believe will be academically successful, or is your recruitment strictly driven by athletic ability?
2. Are all members of your team required to attend study hall sessions?
 - a. Why or why not?
3. Is this something you have always required your players to do?
 - a. If not, is there a difference you see in your team's academic success with or without this resource? Do you see any connection between their academic and athletic success?
4. How did you decide to involve Writing Center Associates in your study halls rather than professors, liaisons, or other coaches?
5. Would you advise the coaches of other teams to get more involved in their players' academic lives?
 - a. Would you suggest they work directly with the Writing Center?

I immediately recognized a major difference between Coach Devanney and the DI programs that I have previously discussed. Unlike the DI coaches, Devanney claims that although athletic ability is important in his recruitment process, it is essential that the athlete has the ability to handle the academic workload at Trinity. Devanney clarifies that the character of his athletes is important, which I believe has a direct impact on the student's academic success.

A student-athlete with a good character tends to work hard and be honest in all aspects of life including academics and athletics.

Another major difference I noticed was that not all athletes on the team are required to meet with an Associate, rather only freshmen are in the fall of their first semester. If these freshmen are able to keep a GPA of 3.4 or above, they are not required to attend appointments in the spring but can continue to do so if wanted. When I asked Coach Devanney why all players were not required to attend he revealed that after freshman year he wants his players to be on their own and acquire the responsibility to handle their own time management. I believe that this is a great strategy. Requiring freshmen to attend these study halls introduces them to academic resources in a less intimidating environment and establishes them within a community of student-athletes who want to reach academic success. Similarly, not forcing upperclassmen to attend is just as important. As I claimed earlier, a student who does not want to be at a session will not benefit from the appointment. If upperclassmen were forced to attend study halls and did not make full use of them or talk positively about them, I believe it would ruin the experience for the freshman and negatively impact their relationship with the Associates. It is, however, great that these Associates are available for the whole team so that those upperclassmen who do want assistance can still receive it.

Devanney also told me that he has done this with his freshman for the past twenty years and believes it has made a profound difference in the team's GPA and overall attitude towards academics. Devanney has the unique experience of being a Trinity football alumnus and coach and compares his time at Trinity to the team environment he has now established. Without these study halls during Devanney's time as a student, the football team fell under the stigma of being a team that identified as "athletes" more than "students." This is something football teams across the country tend to struggle with. Devanney has worked hard to change this perception and reminds his players that their academic success and experience are just as, if not more, important than their athletic career.

In the past, the football team did not use Writing Associates in these study halls, rather used upperclassmen who were elected by professors. When Tennyson O'Donnell, Director of the Trinity College Writing Center, became the football team's faculty liaison, he and Devanney decided to hire his Writing Associates instead. Devanney states that he prefers his players work with these Associates since they have been trained by the Writing Center and therefore have better techniques when working with students. Devanney says he highly suggests other coaches and teams become involved with the Writing Center and use Associates as resources for their teams. He believes that this academic resource is a great recruiting tool and a good retention tool. He also feels it improves his relationship with his players as they know he cares about their success off the field as well.

After talking to Coach Devanney I then interviewed three Writing Center Associates, all of whom have worked with the football team. One Associate worked with the team last year, and two worked with the team this year facing the added challenges of COVID19. Interestingly enough all Associates identify as female. I asked each of them the same questions listed below:

1. What team did you work with?
2. What made you want to work with the athletic program and specifically this team?
3. What are the requirements for the team with regards to your appointments?
4. How do you feel the team responds to always working with the same tutor?
5. How do these appointments differ from ones you have held in the Writing Center?
 - a. Do you notice a difference in the way student-athletes respond to tutoring as opposed to non-athletes?
 - b. Does your tutoring style and pedagogy change when working with athletes?
 - c. Are you more direct or indirect?
6. Any suggestions for tutors who will be working with athletes in the future?
7. Any final comment on student-athletes that you have worked with.

All three Associates explained that they worked with the football team and most frequently the freshmen on the team. One Associate was selected by Tennyson O'Donnell and the other two responded to an email that was sent out to all Associates regarding the position. The Associate who worked with the team last year sat in an adjoining room of the players' mandatory study hall and was available for all students who wanted her help with work. She explained that the freshman had to meet with her at least once and after that, it was up to them whether or not they wanted to work with her. She however said that the freshmen often asked for her assistance and did not need to be pushed to do so. Additionally, seniors frequently visited her for help. This Associate met with the coaches every week to update them on appointments and was told if a student was doing poorly and was required to meet with her.

The Associates who worked with the team this year had a little different experience due to social distancing guidelines. During code green, these Associates would sit in the lobby of the Ferris Athletic Center and individual players would come down from study hall to meet with them when they wanted to work on an assignment. When the campus was in code yellow, orange, or red these appointments were moved online and study halls were canceled. Both

Associates revealed that these sessions were negatively impacted and that without physical study hall spaces, these meetings became less frequent.

All three Associates claimed to have enjoyed working with the same group of students and believe that the students likewise benefitted from working with the same Associates throughout the semester. Even though the team typically had two to three available Associates, players often went to the same one for assistance. This allowed the tutor, tutee relationship to blossom, and created a higher level of comfort and confidence amongst the student in most cases. One Associate did reveal that sometimes students became too comfortable in the environment and wanted more of a quick edit than an actual improvement of their writing ability. The Associates however believe that in general, the tutor and tutee benefitted from working together all semester. These repeated appointments allowed the tutor to identify what the student needed to work on in the long run and influenced the session to go in more depth than typical appointments. Since the study halls were mandatory and occurred multiple times a week, student-athletes could look closer at parts of their assignments than regular appointments do. Additionally, the Associates could give them tasks to work on in between study halls and then check on their progress in the next meeting. Although the students had three Associates to choose from, one Associate claimed that there should be more available associates in the study hall as the freshman usually went to whichever Associate specialized in the subject they were writing for, such as foreign language. If only one Associate had studied this language and multiple students had a paper for this class it became difficult to work with the team.

Two Associates claimed that these appointments were different from ones in the general Writing Center whereas one Associate said they were not. One Associate said this difference occurred, not because these students are athletes but because of the environment of the study hall. I however argue that this is essentially the same thing as these students are only provided this environment because of the fact that they are athletes and in this case because they are members of the football team. She claims that these appointments are different because of the closer relationships that are formed as well as the ability to work on assignments more in-depth because of the multiple study hall requirements a week. I further this by saying that the confidence the student has in order to form these relationships, return to the same Associate, and look deeper into an assignment is all formed through the environment that they are in. Being surrounded by teammates provides student-athletes with a sense of comfort and security that they may not experience in the campus-wide Writing Center.

The other Associate claimed that these appointments are different because the student-athletes tend to be more distracted than non-athletes in the normal Writing Center and therefore have to be reminded to engage in the appointment more frequently. Similarly, she felt the need to reiterate that she was there to help them with their assignments, not do the work for them. On the other hand, this Associate said that these students were much more eager to learn when engaged than regular students are. I believe this is a direct comment on the athlete mentality that these students possess. Similar to being corrected by a coach on the field, these students want to apply the corrections they are given by tutors and learn not to make the error again.

The final Associate did not see these appointments as different from those that she had in the campus Writing Center. She claims that she has probably worked with student-athletes there as well and does not see any difference. She does seem to contradict herself though claiming that she keeps a similar pedagogy when working with student athletes by making suggestions through questions, yet has to be more direct with the football team. By having to be more direct, I believe that these appointments are far more different than the tutor cares to admit.

Both Associates who believe the appointments to be different than those in regular Writing Centers base their pedagogy off of the student that they are working with. They explain that their style of tutoring does not solely exist on the student being an athlete, rather the student's personality and what style of teaching they respond to best. One of these Associates says she is able to alter her pedagogy since she herself is an athlete and can therefore relate to the tutees in her own status. She admits that they tend to praise her intelligence often and she therefore has to remind them that they too can achieve academic success. In doing so she helps them further their identity from just "athletes" to "student-athletes." The other Associate agrees that the style depends on the person but has noticed there are typically two "types" of student-athletes. Some of these students are very independent and like quick appointments so that they can apply these corrections themselves. I again argue that this is very similar to how a lot of athletes behave in their given sport where they try to master a task after being corrected by their coach. The other "type" of student-athlete she sees is the one who wants to have very in-depth appointments. This reminds me of the "perfectionist" mindset that many athletes possess.

Interviewing a Student-Athlete on the Football Team

I then interviewed a member of the football team and asked him the following questions:

1. Do you like having an assigned Associate to work with?
2. What are the requirements regarding these appointments?
3. If you had a paper would you bring it to this Associate or go to the general Writing Center?
4. Do you feel like you identify more as a "student," "athlete," or both?
5. Do you feel like you are a strong writer?
6. Do you enjoy having to go to these sessions/ find them beneficial?
7. Any suggestions for the tutors that work with your team?

The student is currently a junior and claims to identify as both a student and athlete, but emphasizes his athletic identity reiterating the belief that non-athletes at the school do not understand how much busier and stressed athletes are. This student believes he is a strong writer in his classes for his major, but not necessarily in any subject outside of his expertise. He enjoys having the Associate, and was especially thankful for this resource during his freshman year. He explains that during freshman year it is extremely intimidating to enter the Writing Center, despite the welcoming environment, so having this resource alleviated a lot of his fear. He explains that they did not have to make appointments rather had study hall three days a week where they could work with the Associate no matter what point of their assignment they were at. The student-athlete clarified that if he had a paper he would always go to this Associate over the general Writing Center because the hours of operation at the campus-wide center do not work well with the hectic schedule of student-athletes. He revealed that he did not always feel like his sessions were helpful. He said sometimes the tutor did not give valuable feedback and he was left feeling like he wasted time that he could have otherwise used to work on his assignment.

D. Theory

DI Improvements

I think it is quite clear that the tutoring techniques currently being used for DI programs are not producing stronger writers and helping the overall development of the student. Instead, these programs have reverted back to the original “fix it” shops that once existed. Tutors mark student-athlete's work based on code sheets and do not collaboratively produce stronger work with them. The goal of helping a student become a better writer is overpowered by the fear of breaking NCAA regulations. Student-Athletes academic growth is being surrendered to ensure the athletic department's and NCAA's financial success. Here, athletes become business models whose worth is based on their performance on the field, court, or ice. Their only academic duty is to maintain a high enough GPA and avoid any academic allegations so that they can continue to play. This enforces the idea that students can be *either* students *or* athletes, not both.

This particularly negatively impacts “underprepared” DI athletes who may already have trouble adjusting to the academic standards of their institution. Instead of persuading these athletes to become more involved and focussed on their academics than they have been in the past, they are influenced to do the opposite. In these situations Associates just try to “get them along” rather than help them improve as writers and students. The student is therefore left feeling unintelligent and insecure about their academic ability and further pushed to strictly identify as an “athlete” rather than “student-athlete.”

Although from my research it is clear that neither tutors nor Associates are happy with the outcome of these appointments, not many changes have been made to alter the pedagogies that exist. I believe that a large part of this lies in the responsibility of the NCAA, which needs to create a more academic-based set of rules and regulations. I do not mean this in the sense that these rules need to become stricter, rather that they need to create a new set of rules that

prioritizes the academic growth and success of athletes. This includes the league's definition of plagiarism, which is “copying someone’s paper or copying straight from a source without giving him or her credit; cheating on a test or assignment; working as a group when each person should do the assignment individually, or letting someone complete the work on behalf of someone else” (NCAA Division I Manual). The last two parts of this list seem to relate directly to the Writing Center and the working relationship that student-athletes are unable to form with Associates. With regard to this definition, the NCAA can see the collaboration of a student and Associate as a form of plagiarism. Similarly, if the Associate produces any sentences or ideas for the student they are working with, they would be completing the work on behalf of the student-athlete and thus cheating. The NCAA needs to redefine this concept of plagiarism and redevelop it to exclude the collaboration of students and Associates. If this definition is expanded it could result in the productivity of a much more collaborative tutoring experience for college athletes and would therefore benefit the overall academic growth of the student-athlete.

With less regulation and rules, Associates will have to change the way that they work with student-athletes in these appointments. Here, they need to be comfortable taking the power and control in sessions when necessary as well as influencing the student to do the same. I believe that this not only occurs in appointments with student-athletes, rather is present everywhere, but is more challenging to handle in these appointments because of NCAA rules. Once again, if these regulations become more inclined with the academic growth of athletes, then Associates will better be able to take control of a session and help the student they are working with become a better writer.

DIII Pedagogies

With regard to DIII programs, I believe that schools should develop a similar theory to that of the Trinity College Football team. I argue that the best way for student-athletes to engage with the Writing Center is by having study hall sessions such as this team has done. I suggest these sessions over attending the general Writing Center as well as having a separate Writing Center for several reasons. First, the obvious being that many DIII programs can not afford to have separate academic resources for their athletes. Although a separate writing center is not a plausible option for some schools I believe having study halls with Associates is much more beneficial than forcing the team to attend Writing Center appointments. In these study halls, student-athletes are surrounded by their teammates, who they are both comfortable and confident around. It is likely that just like in their given sport, these athletes will be less fearful of failure in front of their teammates rather than in front of random people they do not know at the Writing Center. In addition, having the choice to work with an Associate or work individually allows all kinds of athletes to excel and influences the productivity of sessions that do occur. If these students were just required to go to the Writing Center and have an appointment multiple times a week as opposed to the study hall, they may eventually feel like they are wasting their time and receiving help that they might not necessarily need. In addition the student-athlete may be more distracted and timid in an environment where their teammates are not present. This could have a

negative impact on the session, lessening the students involvement and confidence and therefore overall collaboration in the session.

I also argue that tutors working with student-athletes should adopt a more direct method of teaching. All three Associates I interviewed revealed that members of the football team responded best to this style of teaching as they were often more easily distracted than regular students. I think that student-athletes respond best to this because it is in their nature after being trained by coaches for so many years. No matter what sport an athlete plays, they are told exactly what is expected out of them by their coaches. This includes what the athlete has done right or wrong and what is expected out of them in the future. Since student-athletes are so accustomed to receiving direct feedback and coaching in their sport, I believe doing the same in their academics will allow the most success. As one of the Associates revealed, these students seem to be more eager to learn than any students she has worked with. When tutors utilize this direct method, the student-athlete eagerly tries to please the tutor as they would do with their coach. Since athletes have a more competitive nature than regular students, they may view these sessions as game-like situations where they are the player and their tutor is the coach. Adopting this direct manner brings this competitive drive out of the athlete and allows them to work hard to succeed academically on whatever assignment is present in the session. Through this competitive nature the student-athlete will try their hardest to be the “best,” only this time not on the field, but in their session with the Associate.

One associate mentioned that in these study hall sessions, she gives student-athletes tasks to work on and then reviews them with the students in the next session. I believe that this is a great strategy to adopt. Oftentimes players are given certain aspects of their game that they need to improve on in the off season. When they return the following season they are expected to come back stronger than ever. This style of teaching mimics this process and gives the athlete an opportunity to work on something on their own but still receive the feedback of the Associate. Similarly the process of going over a completed assignment can be like that of film. Many teams utilize the technique of watching recordings of their games or competitions to see what they did right or wrong and how they can improve and be more successful. Going over a completed assignment or task with a student-athlete can be very similar to this process.

Lastly I emphasize the importance of assisting these athletes in developing their identity. Although more DIII student-athletes identify as both “athletes” and “students,” than DI players, I still think there are some students who are more confident in their athletic ability than their academic ability. It is the Associate’s job to help this student-athlete gain this same sense of confidence in their academics so that they can continue to develop into the best all round person, student, and athlete possible. This could be done by praising how eager the student is to learn and rejoicing in their successes with them. Just as a coach rewards players who work hard with positive reinforcement, I argue that tutors should do the same. Since these students are naturally competitive they will want to get good grades and continue to hold high GPA’s. By praising the student in moments of success and helping them through moments of defeat, Associates, like

coaches, support their tutees in all aspects and therefore become resources they can trust and collaborate with.

E. Suggestions for Future Additions

Although I believe that my research is a good start, much more can still be done, especially to that of DIII programs and specifically Trinity College. One way to better improve the interaction of student-athletes and the Writing Center at Trinity is by interviewing other teams who have worked with the Writing Center before. For example, the Men's Basketball team worked with the center in the past but no longer does this. It would be beneficial to research what led them to the decision to stop working with Associates and how the academic success of their team has been impacted.

It also may be beneficial to follow the relationship between student-athletes and Associates over the next few years since college life as we know it has been forever altered. Although we can hope that we will return to "normal" college life and the physical Writing Center soon, it could be helpful to look into how being online has impacted how student-athletes and Associates work together. Is this relationship strengthened or weakened? Is there a higher possibility of academic scandals or not?

Another way to further research would be to look at how student-athletes interact with male tutors. Since all the tutors that I interviewed were women working with a men's teams I am interested to see how the relationship would work if the roles were reversed. Similarly I question how a student might respond to an Associate who identified as the same gender and sex as them opposed to the opposite. I also wonder if athletes respond best to a tutor who shares the same gender identification as their coaches.

My final suggestion for Trinity is to start keeping data on student-athletes who use the campus Writing-Center. This could be something as simple as having students check a box stating whether they are an athlete or not on their report form. In this data, we could identify how many athletes attend the Writing Center and whether or not our school is doing a good job at promoting the academic integrity of its athletes. Once this step is taken separate surveys and evaluation forms can be sent to student-athletes. Here they could explain their experience as an athlete in the Writing Center, discuss if the hours of operation are coherent with their athletic schedule, and reveal whether or not they would prefer to have an opportunity to work with Associates outside of the campus Writing Center.

In regards to the improvement of this tutoring method throughout both DI and DIII programs I would suggest a scientific study on the brain and mind of student athletes. Although I was able to identify that the football players here at Trinity respond better to a direct tutoring method, I am interested to see if the brain and thought process of student athletes works differently than non-athletes in academic settings. With this research, a more specific tutoring method could be created that trains tutors how to work with athletes.

Although I am pleased with my research, I believe with these additional steps, the relationship between academic services and Student-Athletes can continue to improve. At Trinity specifically, I believe more coaches need to get involved in their players academic success, as Coach Devanney has done, and influence their players to use resources such as the Writing Center.

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