

Student-Athlete Development and Winning Success: An Analysis of Directors' Cup Standings

Sarah Stokowski
Clemson University

Amanda L. Paule-Koba
Bowling Green State University

Andrew Rudd
New England College

Alex Auerbach
University of Arizona

PROBLEM

Athletic departments' desire to achieve athletic success has often come at the expense of student-athlete well-being. Student-athletes experience additional stressors like role identity, injury, time demands, and transition challenges when compared to their non-athlete peers. Mental health concerns appear more frequently among the student-athlete population and are at the forefront of several NCAA-led initiatives. Athlete development specialists (e.g., academic advisors, athletic trainers, coaches) have a profound influence on student-athletes' well-being and individual growth; and ultimately can contribute to athletic success. The present study is the first to use the Athlete Development Literacy (ADL) model as a foundation to predict athletic success.

PURPOSE

To determine if there is a relationship between winning and use of athlete development personnel at 150 NCAA Division I institutions.

METHOD

Dependent Variables: Final Points in 2018 Learfield IMG Directors' Cup for top 150 schools (*measures on-field success for all teams in athletic department*)

Predictor Variables: Sport Psychologists, Learning Specialists, Athletic Trainers, Doctors, Mental Health Professionals, Physical Therapists, Strength Coaches, Nutritionists, Academic Advisors (*from analysis of online staff directories*)

Control: Athletic department revenue (*from USA Today data*)

Statistical Analysis: *Hierarchical regression:* chosen to control for revenue when attempting to determine the degree to which the athletic department personnel are predictive of athletic success.

RESULTS

While **winning explained 52%** of the variance Learfield IMG Directors Cup points, **including athlete development specialists** in the model explained an **additional 14%** of the variance.

3 positions were statistically significant:

- **Athletic Trainers**
- **Learning Specialists**
- **Sport Psychologists**

While all athletic departments utilize athletic trainers, **66%** of athletic departments **do not list a sport psychologist on their website**, and **45%** **do not have a learning specialist**.

WHY IT MATTERS

Athletic departments should further invest in athlete development personnel to achieve athletic success. This investment aligns with stated institutional priorities to care for student-athletes and improving their odds of success on the field. The ADL model insists that athletes must have access to and effectively use resources to obtain optimal athletic performance. The present study demonstrates that access to human resources such as athletic trainers, learning specialists, and sport psychologists can assist in athletic achievement. Learning specialists and sport psychologists can assist in the holistic development of student-athletes while also winning more games.

See the full article here: <https://journals.iupui.edu/index.php/sij/article/view/23755/23069>