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College Athletics in the Age of Neoliberalism

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INTRODUCTION

The modern student-athlete appears to be in crisis. Consider stories that have occurred just within the past year. In the wake of an announced FBI investigation into recruiting practices of basketball programs at three universities, popular sports magazine *Sports Illustrated* ran a cover for their recent October issue headlined, “The NCAA is Broken – Here’s How to Fix It,” referring to the National Collegiate Athletics Association, a member-led organization that regulates athletics departments across 1,129 colleges and universities (“What is the NCAA?”). In the featured story, “Shoestorm,” Andy Staples describes a scandalous account of monetary bonuses and sponsorship offers allegedly passed among high school recruits, college administrators, sportswear companies, and player management agents before calling for the NCAA to allow agent representation in college sports (Staples). Meanwhile, in an interview with *Bleacher Report* conducted two months prior to the *Sports Illustrated* issue, Josh Rosen, former quarterback for the University of California (UC), Los Angeles who recently declared for the National Football League after the end of the 2017-2018 college season, criticized untenable expectations put on student-athletes, stating, “Look, football and school just don’t go together. They just don’t. Trying to do both is like trying to do two full-time jobs” (Hayes). According to Rosen, balancing competitive collegiate sports and academic success is near impossible through sheer lack of time, and universities inappropriately prioritize student-athletes’ athletic performances over educational experiences.

A troubling picture of college athletics emerges, yet the exact concerns revealed by this picture remain uncertain. What needs fixing? More fundamentally, what is the role of sports in higher education, what is expected of the modern student-athlete, and what is the student-athlete experience with these expectations? Andy Staples is one recent voice among the many decrying

an economic interplay between sports and colleges, highlighting the incongruence between the NCAA's multi-billion-dollar annual revenue and student-athletes' lack of salaries. Josh Rosen critiques a prioritization of athletics over academics, pointing to the contradiction that student-athletes are expected to simultaneously perform at professional levels in their sports and achieve rigorous college degrees. The proper answer lies in-between.

The modern student-athlete is failed by a pseudo-separation of athletics and education that does not recognize their individual experience, contributes toward a broader impairment of educational development, and is unrealistic of post-graduate career development. The NCAA legally defines college athletes as amateurs. Student-athletes are expected to prioritize academic identities over sports careers described as avocational. The reality is the opposite, however – sports are college athletes' academic identities. Sports define the student-athlete experience as unique, professionalized specializations. This professionalization occurs in tandem with a larger correspondence between athletics and neoliberal American higher education. For universities, sports are coincidental with goals of institutional growth, reputation and revenue generation. For students, sports are in themselves specializations, methods of individualization expected of them in preparation for profitable careers. Despite this, colleges and universities maintain college athletes as amateurs, ideologically separating athletic and educational identities, rejecting student-athletes' lived experiences, and accordingly denying the interconnections among education, athletics, and post-graduate development. Student-athletes would benefit from a recognition of their reality. College athletics should be regarded as professional vocations. Athletes who participate in college sports are young professionals, students specialized in an extracurricular equally valuable to that of an internship, job, or other career-related college experience. By recognizing such, student-athletes' education would more appropriately develop

around, as opposed to separate from, athletic identity and be more effectively preparatory of life after school.

This thesis argues that college athletics must reevaluate the dominant perception and understanding of the modern student-athlete. I do this in two chapters. In the first, I theorize the larger systemic issues challenging student-athletes, explaining the illogicality of their current role and expectations. Student-athletes' participation in varsity intercollegiate sports are legally regarded as avocations separate from academic careers. The reality is that sports are supplemental, if not integral, to education, both institutionally within the context of the larger university and individually for student-athletes' self-development. In result of this ideological separation, or pseudo-separation, of athletics and academics, I argue that college athletes are restrained in educational and post-graduate success. I do so by incorporating literature analyses of college athletics and higher education with close readings of statistics on sports participation, college financing, post-graduate outcomes, and student-athletes' experiences.

I begin the chapter by establishing the reality that modern college athletics are inseparable from education. A proper demonstration of this reality must begin in the past, which I give in a historic overview of youth athletics. I reference Hilary Levey Friedman in tracing the emergence of organized children's sport in the early twentieth century. Recreational sports from the beginning have been understood as a method of individual development supplemental to students' educational experiences, and represent the origin of college athletics' foundational ideology of amateurism. Amateurism is the NCAA principle that guides the organization's treatment of student-athletes, defining sports as avocations separate from educational experience and development. Yet, it is unsubstantiated. I challenge this principle, referencing Allen Sack and Ellen Staurowsky in arguing that the NCAA's ideology of amateurism is truly a mythology.

Over the past century, the NCAA has legally upheld amateurism while permitting practices that have developed college athletics into a professional enterprise. In this way, college athletics embody an industrial operation founded on ideologies of education.

From here, I introduce the term pseudo-separation to describe how the sports-education ideology works in tandem with the modern neoliberal university. The NCAA's concept of amateurism is an outgrowth of neoliberal goals of economy and market output. In defining neoliberal higher education, I hybridize the arguments of Christopher Newfield and Cathy Davidson, referring to the alignment of universities' growth, aims, and student experiences alongside these industrial ideals. This alignment occurs both institutionally, with universities emphasizing brand and departments regarded as economically efficient, and individually, to students who are expected to specialize their academic careers in preprofessional preparations. Intercollegiate athletics are a facet of this neoliberal operation. Athletic departments have grown in conjunction with increases in university enrollment and tuition over the past few decades, reflecting how sports have benefitted from neoliberal goals of institutional higher education. Within this growth-focused system, student-athletes are held to professional standards and are expected to prioritize athletics, all while still legally defined as amateurs. In result, the college athlete experience is restrained by an inherently contradictory separation, or pseudo-separation, of their athletic and academic identities.

I end chapter one by looking at ramifications of the pseudo-separation of athletics and education. In not acknowledging the interconnection between student-athletes' athletic and academic experiences, colleges and universities fail to maximize student-athletes' post-graduate development. To make this argument, I reference a study by Stephen Rose to demonstrate that college students generally are challenged by overqualification. Overqualification describes

graduated undergraduates who are employed in jobs requiring less than a bachelor's degree or in positions not suited to their educational level – Rose concludes that one quarter of college graduates are overqualified for their jobs. I hypothesize that if college students are struggling generally with overqualification, then student-athletes are put at a greater disadvantage. I back this hypothesis by contextualizing psychosocial studies with statistics from the 2016 NCAA Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in College (GOALS) study to describe how athletics consume student-athletes' educational experiences. College athletes are students, yet intercollegiate sports, emphasized by the larger neoliberal university, demand a professional's worth of time, commitment, and dedication that naturally take away from academic study. This role-engulfment of student-athlete identity perpetuates the pseudo-separation of athletics and education. Finally, I present the pseudo-separation as an issue through which to understand different aspects of college athletics.

In my second chapter, I turn to student-athletes themselves with a case study of recent graduates from the University of California, Davis, where I am a student. To expand on the objective analysis of my first chapter, evaluate how the pseudo-separation of athletics and education is perceived in the experiences of real student-athletes, and consider potential solutions to the issue, I distributed a survey to college athlete alumni who graduated from UC Davis within the previous four years. In the survey, participants were asked a range of questions involving current occupations, satisfactions with the post-graduate preparation of college experiences, and use of undergraduate career development resources. A total of seventy-seven responses were recorded. The data is not significant enough to be effectively generalized – respondents came from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, representing twenty-two of twenty-three sports offered at UC Davis. Still, overall, student-athletes are complicit in the ideological separation of

athletic and academic identity – the majority of participants disagreed with the statement that their varsity sports career was related to their college major. Despite this, student-athlete alumni are largely positive about their post-graduate occupations and agree that college athletics helped prepare them for life after school. In fact, many reported a translation of skills gained from athletic careers to post-graduate occupations. Student-athlete alumni may perpetuate the pseudo-separation of athletics and education; however, the survey suggests that they are not explicitly failed by this modern model of college athletics. Instead, they are helped by it. If the NCAA and college athletics departments were to emphasize the positive post-graduate development that coincides with college sports participation, student-athletes may benefit more.

I write this thesis on the contradictory nature of modern college athletics in ironic contradiction myself. In questioning the role of sports in the university, expectations put on student-athletes, and the ramifications of these expectations, I critique yet support intercollegiate athletics. By maintaining student-athletes as amateurs and expecting them to separate athletic and academic identities, colleges and universities uphold an inherent paradox that is not inherently malicious. Student-athletes are failed, but not in terms of post-graduate success, for which participation in varsity sports is beneficial. Instead, they are failed by an inefficient model of college athletics and higher education that does not acknowledge the interconnected, developmental experience of the college athlete. College athletics departments nationally are under scrutiny out of concern about the emphasizing of sports in higher education. An evaluation of this concern is possible first through an acknowledgement of reality, a solution well-begun with a re-consideration of the backbone of college athletics itself, the student-athlete.

CHAPTER ONE

Sports are inseparable from education. Even a brief survey of high school and college sports participation reveals this fact in its most fundamental form. In 2016-2017, nearly 8 million students participated in high school sports, up over 2 million from 1981-1982, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations (“Athletics Participation Survey”). In college, the growth in student athletic participation is even more prolific – close to 500,000 student-athletes participated in NCAA sports in 2015-2016, representing a 400% increase from the figure that participated in 1981-1982 (“Participation Rates Report”). American students are merging educational and athletic careers at ever-increasing numbers. Compare – in 2016, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that there were just under 12,000 professional athletes and sports competitors (U.S. Department of Labor). Summing up, professional athletes, while dominating popular understandings and perceptions of the cultural phenomenon, make up less than 1% of all people participating in sports across the United States; note that this survey fails to account for sports participation by youths younger than high school age. Thus, the ever-increasing number of students participating in sports is not only relevant, but the defining facet of American athletics. The student-athlete experience is a significant, commonly-shared perspective in sports and universities throughout the United States.

The proliferation of athletics within education may be reaching record numbers, but the conjunction of the two is not recent. In fact, athletics are rooted in an American value system inextricably tied with school. This conjunction can be traced back to the emergence of organized youth athletics in the twentieth century. As Hilary Levey Friedman contends, the institution of compulsory education in the late nineteenth century delineated “school time” from “free time” needing to be occupied with meaningful activity. Beginning with New York City’s Public

School Athletic League for Boys established in 1903, children's sports were quickly adopted (H. Friedman 20-21). Sports were understood as a method of preparing children for the American workforce – as Friedman argues, “Sports were seen as important in teaching the ‘American’ values of cooperation, hard work, and respect for authority” (21). These values translated into the emerging, American industrial society demanding of physical laborers. From the beginning, youth athletics in the United States have been regarded in terms of educational goals, understood to teach students American cultural values of individual hard work and contribution to the workforce.

Children's competitive sport quickly came under public scrutiny, however. By the 1930's, professional and public concerns about youth athletics' tendency to prioritize the best athletes led to the almost uniform severing of children's organized sports from the elementary school system (H. Friedman 23). As the recreation persisted and grew in the form of privately-run, national-level organizations including Little League Baseball, Bidy Basketball, Pee Wee Hockey and Pop Warner Football, criticism continued to arise. Through numerous publications in the early 1950's, Charles Buchner, a professor of New York University, roundly condemned Little League Baseball for operating in the likes of an adult entertainment enterprise; in 1952, the National Education Association (NEA) published a booklet, *Desirable Athletic Competition for Children*, warning against the emphasis on sports taught through competitive youth athletics; then, in 1956, the founder of Little League, Carl Stotz, was ousted from his own organization after expressing concerns over its increasing corporatization (Hyman 7-12). Buchner, the NEA, and Stotz gave early voice to critiques of professionalization, specialization, and corporatization that remain relevant to recreational sport today. The critiques reveal long-held ideological goals of individual development and economic preparation embedded within American non-

professional athletics which have almost always been mired in controversies of truancy. Nonetheless, systemized youth athletics continued to grow, and while the development of privately-run organizations initiated a transition of children's sport into a corporate enterprise, the recreation never shed its ties from its foundation of education.

Intercollegiate athletics, like children's sports, came into prominence in the twentieth century. The origins of college athletics date to 1852 when Yale and Harvard competed in a rowing match, the first intercollegiate athletic contest between American teams (Sack and Staurowsky 17). By the 1960's, the NCAA was formally regulating the subsidization and recruitment of student-athletes while generating revenue in television agreements providing viewer access to college sports nationwide (Sack and Staurowsky 48-49). Always, college athletics has remained and continues to remain rooted in the same fundamental ideology that guided children's sports leagues, wherein sports are understood as a means of individual development and economic preparation. Within the context of universities, this ideology explicitly takes the name of amateurism. Amateurism is the essential principle establishing a legislative linearization of "student-" before "-athlete," qualifying intercollegiate sports as hobbies and college athletes as non-professionals in their respective hobbies. In section 2.9 of their 2017-2018 Division I Manual, the NCAA currently defines amateurism as follows:

"Student-athletes shall be amateurs in an intercollegiate sport, and their participation should be motivated primarily by education and by the physical, mental and social benefits to be derived. Student participation in intercollegiate athletics is an avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises" ("Division I Manual").

The principal of amateurism echoes those traditional American sports valuations in its establishment of college athletics as a secondary, supplemental experience to students' educational goals.

Crucially, amateurism, this foundational ideology of national collegiate athletics, is unsubstantiated. The NCAA maintains that student-athletes are athletic amateurs while overseeing practices that develop college sports in the likes of a professional enterprise. This argument is well-voiced by Allen Sack and Ellen Staurowsky, who write, "...the NCAA has been able to convince the public, including judges and members of Congress, that it is perfectly logical and ethical to apply the term 'amateur' to athletic programs" (2). Further, "This myth exerts a powerful influence over public policy in collegiate sport and is accepted uncritically by millions of Americans both in and outside of academe" (6). In this way, amateurism defines the student-athlete experience, but falsely, inaccurately and inappropriately determining the goal, focus and public understanding of student-athletes' college careers.

The mythology of American collegiate amateurism is as old as the principle itself; arguably, the ideology was never authentic. Adopted from British ideals of gentleman-aristocracy, amateurism has guided universities' treatment of student-athletes since the Ivy League's advocacy of an "educational model" prioritizing academic excellence above athletic needs in the late 1800's. This advocacy was led by Charles Eliot, president of Harvard from 1869-1909, who condemned generation of money through intercollegiate sport as a bane to academic achievement (Sack and Staurowsky 25-26). In fact, initially, the idea of remunerating college athletes was inconceivable – in a quote from the Brown Conference, a meeting among today's Ivy League schools convened in 1898 to evaluate college sports, administrators agreed: "...no student should be paid for his athletics. The practice of assisting men through college in

order that they may strengthen the athletic teams is degrading to amateur sport” (Sack and Staurowsky 27). Through such rhetoric, universities sustained sport as a participatory educational experience while separating competitive athletics from academic success.

This rhetorical separation was just that, however – rhetorical. The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a rapid denigration of amateur principles that has persisted to this day. In 1906, the NCAA was founded in part to oversee the enforcement of amateurism. Yet, by even then, universities were increasingly subsidizing athletes for growing college sports departments generating hundreds of thousands in revenue and attracting excess of that in attendance. Between 1906-1956, the NCAA adopted rules unequivocally maintaining of college athletes as amateur sportsmen while overseeing violations permitted through an almost complete lack of enforcement. While the NCAA published two definitions of amateurism in 1916 and 1922 and administered charges for illegal payments attempting to deter subsidization in the 1930’s, schools openly recruited students through scholarship and job offers based on athletic ability (Sack and Staurowsky 32-40). In 1946, the NCAA developed a document that maintained higher education’s emphasis on amateurism while allowing athletic financial aid in the form of tuition and incidental expenses. In what became known as the Sanity Code debate, even this loosening of professionalism was not enough, and a short four years later the document was vetoed. Through legislation in 1956 and 1957, the NCAA formally permitted financial aid to cover tuition and fees, room and board, and books purely based on athletic ability, yet still, the recipients of such aid were defined as amateurs (Sack and Staurowsky 40-50). The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics argues that college sports have been corrupted by economic aims since the early 1900’s, pointing to a 1929 report by the Carnegie Fund for the Advancement of Teaching which stated, in college athletics, “...recruiting had become corrupt,

professionals had replaced amateurs, education was being neglected, and commercialism reigned” (22). In tracing the contradictory economization of college sports back to this report, the Knight Commission undershoots the entrenchment of amateur ideology.

Thus, by the 1960’s, in synchronization with the nationalized organization of youth athletics, the NCAA was overseeing an athletic recruitment operation professional in nature and pervasive across college sports. As Sack and Staurowsky succinctly write, “Within a half century, the concept of amateurism had become a convenient label that the NCAA could arbitrarily define to suit its needs” (47). Amateurism became an inherently contradictory tool that ideologically maintained sports as educational avocations while permitting the professionalized development of college athletics. Legislation passed since the 1956 formalization of professionalized college athletics has refined and safeguarded the mythology. During the 1967 NCAA convention, proposals were made for a body of laws allowing for legal cancellation of athletic scholarships based on misconduct or misrepresentation of information. In 1973, such laws were adopted in the approval of a one-year limit on athletic grants, essentially making student-athlete scholarships conditional on participation and athletic ability. Further, 1973 witnessed the separation of Divisions I, II, and III. Through this separation, wherein Division I schools provide the most full-scholarships, Division II schools are more reliant on partial-scholarships, and Division III do not award athletic scholarships at all, the NCAA continued to promote professionalization of top-tier teams (Sack and Staurowsky 82-84). Post-1960’s legislation utilized the NCAA’s baseline ideology of amateurism to develop contractual relationships between all student-athletes and their universities.

The use of amateurism as a tool to contract high-performing student-athletes has contributed toward the monopolistic growth of the NCAA as an industrial organization. The

NCAA has capitalized on the popularity of and American obsession with sports. Currently, North American professional sports attract more than 100 million fans annually who fuel a market valued at over \$63 billion (ESPN; PricewaterhouseCoopers). Sports in the United States are nothing short of a cultural and economic phenomenon, and college athletics are sharing in the wealth. Universities make millions through licensed merchandise agreements and corporate sponsorships in which companies such as Nike and Adidas pay to provide uniforms and apparel for all sports at a given institution (Sack and Staurowsky 92). More significantly, the NCAA sustains a profitable economic backbone in the form of television and media deals. As a brief, recent history, the NCAA in 1982 reached a three-year agreement with CBS for \$49.9 million. This partnership has persisted through numerous additional agreements most recently continuing with a joint deal in 2010 involving both CBS and Turner for \$10.8 billion (“Revenue”). Combined, television and media deals make up over 80% of the fortune that is college sports’ revenue today. In 2014, the NCAA generated \$989 million in total revenue, a figure that projects to top \$1 billion in the near future (Berkowitz). This number perpetuates the contradictory nature of the NCAA, which is formally a non-profit organization. Through its principle of amateurism, the NCAA operates in the likes of an industrial enterprise while publicly regarded as an educational, developmental organization.

Contextualized by such numbers, the individual student-athlete becomes miniscule compared to the financial titan that is college sports and the NCAA. To obscure the individual student-athlete experience further, NCAA Division I and II schools provide over 150,000 student-athletes with more than \$2.9 billion in athletics scholarships every year (“Scholarships”). As one among this 150,000 playing on conditional scholarships in a college athletics system having finetuned a century’s worth of legislation and regulations, the student-athlete today is

legally trapped as an amateur within schools generating upwards of billions in revenue off their competitive performance on the field. This grand mythologizing of amateur ideology compounds from the macro level to individual student experiences. Student-athletes are professionals in their sports for more than just the contractual athletic scholarships they play on – participating in college sports is a legitimate full-time job. According to the 2016 NCAA Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in College (GOALS) study, student-athletes are committing record times to athletics. In 2015, Division I and II student-athletes spent medians of 34 and 32 hours a week in their respective sports. Even Division III student-athletes, who do not receive scholarship offers, spent a median of 28.5 hours weekly (“2015 GOALS Study”). From an objective standpoint, the student-athlete, who plays in a contractual relationship for an organization that generates almost one billion dollars from sports demanding time commitments nearing that of a full-time job, appears to be a professional athlete. In fact, Robert and Amy McCormick argue that players in revenue-generating sports at Division I institutions are not “student-athletes” but “employees.” More generally, in upholding the principle of amateurism, the NCAA adopts a subjective viewpoint that does not appropriately consider student-athletes’ lived experiences.

The amateur-university relationship is unsubstantiated and illogical. Yet, lack of financial remuneration for student-athletes’ professionalized vocations is not the issue. Instead, the mythology of amateurism is concerning in its coinciding with the modern state of higher education and corresponding impairment of student-athletes’ academic and post-graduate careers. The use of impairment here refers not to mere completion of degrees – student-athletes graduate at a high rate of 87% – but to a broader consideration of what I refer to as the neoliberal university system (“Graduation Rates”). College students are expected to focus specialized

academic interests in a single-minded pursuit of post-graduate, economically successful careers. In an alignment with larger, notably American goals of marketable output, universities funnel students through metricized curriculum geared toward specific job preparation. For student-athletes caught in-between this educational model and the NCAA, sports serve as the preprofessional specializations that dominate their academic experiences. Despite this, universities and the NCAA maintain a pseudo-separation of athletics and education, upholding the mythology of amateurism in a falsified distinction between student-athletes' athletic and academic careers. College students generally are considered pre-professionals; student-athletes are already professionals. Yet, instead of being recognized as such and receiving an educational experience integrating or even acknowledging of this professional experience, student-athletes are doubly expected to commit to preprofessional academic studies additional to their athletic participation.

A step back must be taken. Neoliberalism refers to the combined political and economic interests promoting privatization and free trade which concentrate resources for the wealthy elite (Duggan). In referring to a neoliberal university, I extrapolate this term to higher education in two aspects – financially and institutionally. Financially, the cost of college has more than doubled in the past few decades. According to the College Board, in 2016 dollars, average tuition and fees and room and board cost \$8,160 at a public four-year and \$16,760 at a private nonprofit four-year university in the 1976-1977 schoolyear. In the 2016-2017 schoolyear, the equivalent cost \$20,090 and \$45,370 at a public four-year and private nonprofit four-year, respectively (“Trends in College Pricing”). These numbers represent a more than 150% increase in tuition over the previous three decades. Skyrocketing costs have made college an increasing burden for the individual student. Simultaneously, American higher education has experienced

corresponding growth in its student body. To conduct a strict comparison, just over 11 million students were enrolled in public and private US colleges in 1976. Today, this number has increased to approximately 20 million (National Center for Education Statistics). College students are being enrolled at exorbitant rates at more rapidly growing costs. With certain schools enrolling upwards of 40,000 and even 50,000 students, the individual student experience becomes lost within the mass that is this tuition-collecting money machine (J. Friedman).

The neoliberal university describes more than merely this mass operation of college tuition and enrollment, however; moreover, the terminology encapsulates an institutional conjoining of college administration with goals of economy and business. Christopher Newfield attributes this modern evolution of market-centric universities to a conservative shifting of college administration structure brought about by three factors: cuts to public funding, the Bayh-Doyle Act of 1980, and privatization of academic values. First, decreases in public funding have caused deemphasis on broad academic development. In response to funding cuts since the 1980's nearing 30%, universities have been forced to make cuts throughout instructional departments (Newfield 224). Newfield argues that cuts are made in accordance with economic efficiency, with those departments understood as most efficiently producing students prepared for the workforce, typically, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), being protected over departments perceived as less productive, generally those of the humanities or social sciences.

Ramifications of cuts to public funding were amplified by the passing of the Bayh-Doyle Act in 1980. The Bayh-Doyle Act established universities as the intellectual property holders of research and discoveries conducted by its employees. For universities challenged with overcoming reduced funding, the Act offered an opportunity for independent revenue generation.

In result, further emphasis was put on those departments that produced marketable research. This emphasis continued to favor departments perceived as economically efficient, further aligning the university's interests in a market-based focus and distracting from ideals of broad educational development.

Finally, cuts to public funding and the passing of the Bayh-Doyle Act led to formalization of universities' market focuses in the 1990's. Brand and reputation grew as important facets of universities' perceived success, and schools adopted cost-based administrative practices in which allocation of resources revolved around money; read, research grants. In this system, grants are divided up – universities take a portion of the money for development purposes, paying facilities and administrative expenses, cover the direct costs of the funded research, and allocate any remaining funds to non-grant-receiving departments such as the social science and humanities departments (Newfield 210-211). Through this cyclical dependence on grants, modern universities directly privilege and protect departments regarded as revenue-generating while considering the maintenance of all others secondary interests.

The neoliberal university evolved thusly. Within the span of three decades, American higher education became ideologically, financially, and administratively tied to goals of economy and marketable output; or, as Newfield states, "...since the New University would be judged by its economic contribution, and since private enterprise drove the creation of economic value, there was no reason not to privatize the university's core functions – that is, make them more responsive to market forces and business methods" (10). Contextualized by this modern neoliberal university structure, the growth of college athletics falls into place. The multi-billion-dollar revenue generation of college athletics departments is not an anomaly, but an outgrowth of universities' emphasizing of economic output. Athletic television and marketing deals were

profitable, thus, gathering of high-performing student-athletes was encouraged, the NCAA loosened restrictions of recruitment, and the organization witnessed prolific growth. Sports performed by student-athletes became highly marketable showcases that remained slotted in the university's educational ideals through the mythology of amateurism. Athletic departments may be generating arguably excessive revenues, but these seemingly monopolistic operations are truly just facets of neoliberal higher education. At the majority of schools, athletic directors are given relative freedom to allocate expenses and have spent increasing amounts of money on facilities and other aspects of promoting big-time college sports – in fact, many athletic departments operate at a deficit (Hobson and Rich). This allocation of resources is essentially a contribution toward the development of the brand and reputation of the modern neoliberal university. In other words, sports and education are inseparable.

Still, an evaluation of the role of the neoliberal university in college athletics is not complete without a consideration of how this larger institutional system compounds to individual student, and student-athlete, experiences. The alignment of universities' goals and interests with those of American market and economy carry down to the roles and expectations of modern college students. As historicized by Cathy Davidson, American higher education's current model of academic majors, minors, course credits, and curriculum can be traced back to changes initiated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by a familiar face – Charles Eliot. Eliot's opinions on athletics were only a subset of his complete rethinking of university operations. Disillusioned with traditional college curriculum after graduating from Harvard in 1853, Eliot advocated a need for American colleges to educate and develop students in professional-managerial skills suited for an industrializing world. After taking over as president of Harvard in 1969, Eliot instituted a transformation of higher education that continues to define

American universities today. Eliot introduced fields, requirements, and departments, restructured professor salaries to attract disciplinary experts, funded professional schools, and encouraged institutional growth, including in such departments as athletics (Davidson 27-36). Eliot's changes revolutionized universities' structures and administrations in a precursory alignment of educational values with economic ones.

In the wake of Eliot's redirection of higher education toward goals of industrialization, college students became enmeshed within expectations of specialization and differentiation. Throughout the early twentieth century, colleges adopted methods of standardization designed to quantify students' skills and academic output. Referring to the ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor, who aimed to increase economic efficiency and productivity through scientific methods, Davidson uses the term scientific labor management to describe the implementation of standardized tests which became means of quantifying students' knowledge in metricized coursework (Davidson 36-40). This curriculum converted academic careers into checklists students strove to complete on route to earning degrees in specific fields. As Davidson writes, "The features of the modern university designed to train and to measure specialized knowledge production were desirable because they enabled people to be pigeonholed into hierarchical corporate structures" (40-41). This scientific management of students' academic careers established college as an endeavor of production to be understood through an economic binary of input and output. Within this binary, college students' academic success is determined on the basis of their quantifiable mastery of preprofessional specialization.

Thus, the recent formalization of the neoliberal university is only an institutionalization of a higher education ideology that has been refined throughout the past century. College students are expected to specialize and differentiate their academic careers in a single-minded

pursuit of economic output. This expectation has only been emphasized in today's setting of neoliberal universities aligned alongside ideals of marketable capital. The issue is that such economic goals fail to appropriately prepare students for life after college. Davidson accurately voices this concern when she states, "Eliot's university has had a good, long run. Yet it no longer prepares young people for the conceptual, epistemological, economic, intellectual, and social demands of the complex and often disturbing world we live in today" (Davidson 44). In pigeonholing college students' academic careers within economic pursuits, the neoliberal university assigns the individual student a specific piece of a larger revenue-generating puzzle, designating them as preprofessional trainees in eventual careers and failing to provide them the broad, developmental, educational experience necessary to prepare them for the modern world.

The impairment of college students' post-graduate success is demonstrated in numbers of underemployment. Numerous underemployment figures have been reported and headlined throughout the past decade. In 2011, Neeta Fogg and Paul Harrington used the term mal-employment to report that graduated college students were experiencing mismatch between their education level and required job skills at a rate of 28.2% (Fogg and Harrington). In 2013, the Center for College Affordability and Productivity concluded that 48% of employed US college graduates were in jobs requiring less than a four-year education and that this proportion had grown substantially since 1970 (Vedder et al.). A third report published in 2014 by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York gave a number in between the two former, stating that underemployment for all college grads had held steady around 33% across the previous two decades (Abel et al.). Among this myriad of numbers, I adopt one recently reported by Stephen Rose in his study for the Urban Institute. Rose uses the term overqualification to account for the concentration of workers with bachelor's degrees in a job and the respective earnings of that job

as indicators of whether a graduate is in a good-fit occupation or overqualified for their position. According to Rose, 25% of all degree-holding graduates are overqualified for their jobs (Rose). While this number occurs in the lower range of underemployment figures reported over the past decade, its implications are no less significant. One in four graduates are employed in jobs below their educational skill level. One in four graduates spend dozens of thousands or more in college tuition but fail to achieve the employment they pay for. Building on a cost-based analysis of the issue, Rose further reports that by 2014, graduates without good-fit occupations earned half of what their peers made (Rose). College students are not only facing difficulties in achieving appropriate employment, but they are financially disadvantaged by the modern system of higher education.

Moreover, the modern neoliberal university's prioritization of fields perceived as economically efficient is based on a mythology of its own. When aggregated, college graduates with degrees in fields perceived as lower-paying, generally, non-STEM majors, earn just as much if not more than graduates in STEM fields perceived as higher-paying. According to Douglas Webber, there is relative heterogeneity among financial returns of different majors, with those non-STEM graduates who earn slightly above the median salary in their respective fields not earning significantly more or less than the earnings of graduates with business or STEM majors (Webber). Focus on technical departments regarded as economically efficient not only impairs broad academic development, but contributes toward issues of overqualification challenging graduated college students. The neoliberal university maintains emphasis on disciplined, preprofessional academic degrees while misconceiving students about the reality of the workforce. Or at least, misconceiving those students who do graduate. College students are struggling to complete degrees – the current 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time

undergraduate students seeking a 4-year bachelor's degree is 59% (U.S. Department of Education). Leftover is approximately 40% of students who spend several thousands of dollars in tuition without any marketable output to show. University emphasis on academic majors cannot be solely blamed as the cause of the 40% of college students failing to complete their degrees. Yet, it is surely a contributing factor. In specializing and disciplining academic careers, universities streamline students through falsely preprofessional studies that do not efficiently prepare them with a broad range of skills and experiences necessary for success in the real workforce.

College students are challenged in achieving post-graduate success; I hypothesize that student-athletes are put at a greater disadvantage. Within the modern model of higher education consisting of biology, computer science, mathematics and history majors, to name a few, student-athletes are perhaps best described as sports majors with academic minors. Sports, which demand a professional's worth of time, experience, and performance for the economized industry that is the NCAA, are to the student-athlete the neoliberal preprofessional specialization that each of biology, computer science, mathematics and history are to respective students majoring in those fields. Student-athletes perform at professional levels in their sports. This occurs in accordance with institutional goals of the neoliberal university, wherein growth of athletics departments is encouraged owing to its economic efficiency. It further occurs in accordance with the modern role of college students, wherein academic careers are expected to be specialized in preparation for entry into the workforce. Despite this, through the principle of amateurism, the NCAA maintains that athletics are no more than supplemental experiences to student-athletes' separate, academic development. In this way, college athletics institutes a

pseudo-separation of athletics and education. Student-athletes are expected to separate two inherently intrinsic identities and dually specialize in simultaneous preprofessional vocations.

The issue is that while there is general misconception about the link between undergraduate academics and post-graduate careers, there is greater delusion within preprofessional athletics. According to the 2016 GOALS study, 43% of all NCAA student-athletes believe their careers after college will involve sports, a figure closer to 50% for Division I athletes and as high as 73% for Division I men's basketball players ("NCAA GOALS Study"). In reality, just over 3% of NCAA student-athletes move on to professional leagues in their sports, or 2%, when excluding the high anomaly of 9.1% of baseball players who go pro ("Estimated Probability"). While college students generally are funneled through metricized curriculum with unrealistic expectations of their post-graduate prospects, many student-athletes dually specialize in academic and athletic careers while inaccurately focusing on the ladder experience as their future career path.

Nonetheless, sports consume student-athletes' experiences. Adoption of athletic identity occurs at a young age through the foundation of the sports-education ideology, youth athletics. According to the 2016 GOALS study, approximately 60% of NCAA athletes began competing in their sports by age 9, and more than a third specialized in these sports by age 12. Over 72% played their sports year-round growing up through both club and high school teams. All these figures curve according to competitiveness of college divisions, tending lower for Division III and higher for Division I student-athletes. Overall, the majority report that their family expected them to be a college athlete since they were young ("NCAA GOALS study"). Such numbers reveal the pervasiveness of neoliberal educational ideology. Students even before college recognize a need to differentiate themselves. Sports represent an early opportunity to do so – as

James Shulman and William Bowen argue, "...there is a corresponding tendency to specialize in sport at an early age, so that a young person can become 'really good at something.' The changes in the philosophy of college admissions, which put greater emphasis on excellence along at least one noticeable dimension, have played at least a small part in encouraging this tendency" (24). The college admissions process perpetuates the neoliberal role of the modern college student within primary education. In particular, athletics become integral to many students' identities in an early conformation to this model of higher education.

Once in college, athletic identity continues to consume individual experiences in governing both social and self-perceptions of student-athletes. Patricia and Peter Adler use the term "role-engulfment" to argue that while athletes enter college optimistic about educational ideals, sports careers quickly dominate their existence as they struggle to balance athletic demands with academic success. As they write, "For college athletes...their specialization, dedication, and abandonment of alternatives leads to their becoming finally proficient at a role that, for most, will end immediately following the conclusion of their college eligibility" (230). Here, the Adlers recognize that student-athletes specialize in vocations specific to their college experiences. While theorized more than two decades prior, the phenomenon of role engulfment persists today. Just under 40% of NCAA athletes report not frequently socializing with non-athletes at their colleges while 30% say that all their closest friends are college teammates ("NCAA GOALS Study"). Through such relationships, the role-engulfment of athletic identity reinforces itself, a cycle sustained by social perceptions of student athletics. According to Darren Yopyk and Deborah Prentice, students primed with athletic identity suffer negatively from stereotype threat correlated with lower self-regard and worse performance on tests. Further, female athletes specifically perform more poorly when primed with athletic identity,

suggesting that the identity is intersectional with gender (Harrison et al.). Thus, athletics carry real impacts on student-athletes' personal and social identities that further impair a college career already challenged in achieving broad academic development. Despite the NCAA's principle of amateurism, sports take precedence for student-athletes. Sports become preprofessional specializations from a young age that remain inseparable from student-athletes' academic experience. By maintaining the opposite, the NCAA and universities delude college athletes, ignoring their individual experiences and challenging them with overcoming a double-edged sword of neoliberal higher education.

Many aspects of college athletics and the student-athlete experience can be understood through this pseudo-separation of athletics and education. For example, college athletics departments are criticized for earning upwards of 70% of their revenue from subsidized student fees (Wolverton et al.). This critique inappropriately blames athletics in a failure to acknowledge the evolution of the modern neoliberal university which charges exorbitantly growing tuition prices to students organized into economically efficient degree programs. Sports and education are inseparable – the growth of college athletics is an outgrowth of the growth of universities generally, not a result of student financial exploitation. In another critique, a 2008 study conducted by *USA Today* concluded that student-athlete teammates at 83% of schools cluster into the same major, with 30% of schools having two or more teams clustering in the same major program (Upton and Novak). Student-athletes are sports majors with academic minors – while clustering is concerning according to the principle of amateurism, this high figure is a result of the ideology's mythology and the denied reality that sports are student-athletes' academic careers. Finally, in 2013, Eugene Smith, athletics director for the Ohio State University, signed a new employment contract involving bonuses based on percentages of student-athletes employed

in positions requiring a college degree (Lesmerises). College students are struggling generally to achieve post-graduate success – the neoliberal university is interested in the confirmation of student-athletes' post-graduate economic output, and Smith's contract recognizes a gap in this regard.

Speaking at Marquette University on the debate over whether student-athletes should be paid in 2013, NCAA president Mark Emmert defended the organization's adherence to amateurism, stating,

“One thing that sets the fundamental tone is there's very few members and, virtually no university president, that thinks it's a good idea to convert student-athletes into paid employees. Literally into professionals. Then you have something very different from collegiate athletics. One of the guiding principles (of the NCAA) has been that this is about students who play sports” (Associated Press).

Emmert is incorrect. There is no conversion to be made – college athletes are already professionals. College athletics, in a continuation of the legacy of youth recreational sport, may be founded on a principle of amateurism, but this ideology is unsubstantiated. Sports are near full-time jobs for student-athletes playing in contractual relationships for universities generating billions off their nationalized performances on the field. Athletic identities consume their college experiences and impact role expectations put on them by the public and university. In all but legalized salaries, student-athletes are professionals in their sports.

Yet, I contend Emmert is right in one aspect – student-athletes should not be paid. Paying student-athletes would only corroborate an imperfect model of neoliberal higher education that challenges students in achieving equitable financial returns on their educational

cost and misconceives them about the link between undergraduate academics and careers. Salaries would legalize the professionalization of student-athlete's sports participation and formalize the pseudo-separation of athletics and education, further distracting from goals of broad educational development. College athletes are already contradictorily held to separate standards in a distinction between their athletic and educational identities – concretizing this distinction would only restrain them further.

Instead, college athletics would do well in acknowledging the reality that sports and school do go together. In touting a rhetoric of academic development while sending student-athletes into the American workforce with little more than degrees and a professional's time worth of experience in their sports, the NCAA and universities disservice and delude college athletes. The issue is not simply that the NCAA profits off student-athletes without paying them, or that they hold student-athletes to demanding athletic expectations, but that their idealization of amateurism, in conjunction with broader educational models maintained by universities throughout the country, falsely emphasizes a certain identity that impedes college athletes in that experience and essential goal of higher education, self-development and post-graduate success. Student-athletes should no longer be misconceived. The NCAA should eliminate the principle of amateurism from its policies and acknowledge the fact that college students participating in varsity sports are committing to professional vocations. College athletics departments should encourage student-athletes to develop academic studies around their sports participation and actively embrace athletics as uniquely developing of skills, experiences, and habits that translate to successful academics, preprofessional work experiences, and post-graduate occupations. In the words of Mark Emmert himself – college athletics is about students who play sports. Now, for once, the NCAA should follow up on its stance.

CHAPTER TWO

In chapter one, I argued that the modern student-athlete is failed by a pseudo-separation of athletics and education that does not recognize their individual experience, contributes toward a broader impairment of educational development, and is unrealistic of post-graduate career development. From an objective standpoint, student-athletes are professionals in their sports, high-performing competitors who play for a nationalized industry that generates near \$1 billion in revenue off their performance on the field. Despite this, the NCAA legally defines student-athletes as amateurs, upholding college sports as avocations separate from studies and denying the truly interconnected identities that are athletics and academics. Such an argument is incomplete without hard, real data, however. What about a subjective standpoint? How is the pseudo-separation of athletics and education perceived by real student-athletes, where are former student-athletes occupied, and how can the concern be addressed? In my second chapter, I contribute toward a necessary researching of student-athlete outcomes, directing these questions toward college athletes themselves.

Data on post-graduate outcomes was collected from a survey sent to recently-graduated student-athlete alumni from the University of California, Davis. A total of seventy-seven responses were recorded. Participants were asked both quantitative and qualitative questions regarding a range of topics covering current employment statuses to perspectives on the post-graduate preparation of athletic-academic careers. Overall, student-athlete alumni are positive about their post-graduate outcomes. Alumni are employed at high rates and are earning incomes comparable to those of the larger population of college graduates. Most report being satisfied with their current employment status and feeling that their occupations require skills gained from their undergraduate careers. More significantly, despite a contrasting denial of connections

between athletic and academic experiences, the majority of student-athlete alumni believe that varsity college sports helped prepare them for life after school.

The survey should not be significantly generalized – respondents came from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, representing twenty-two of twenty-three varsity sports offered at UC Davis. With that said, the survey suggests that student-athletes are not explicitly failed by college athletics; instead, they may in fact be helped by it. College athletics may carry potential in differentiating student-athletes for post-graduate success. Based on the survey, student-athletes appear to be successful in finding meaningful and fulfilling occupations. Former college athletes reported using skills in their current occupations gained from varsity sports careers. College sports participation fosters a differentiated undergraduate experience developing of skills translatable to successful transitions into life after school. The failure of college athletics occurs not in student-athletes' post-graduate success, which the survey suggests is resounding, but in the lost potential. Student-athlete alumni report positive post-graduate outcomes despite many perpetuating the pseudo-separation of athletics and education and denying relations between athletic and academic careers. If college athletics departments were to combat this, actively acknowledge student-athletes as receiving a differentiated undergraduate experience and encourage them to utilize their unique skill development as supplemental to academic and preprofessional experiences, student-athletes may benefit from college sports even more. In general, more research on the post-graduate outcomes of former student-athletes is needed. The survey conducted for this thesis considers one subsection of student-athletes from a single university with a notably progressive college athletics department. More research on how student-athlete alumni are occupied from universities nationwide is required to properly consider the implications of the pseudo-separation of athletics and education.

BACKGROUND

Existing research on post-graduate outcomes of former student-athletes is relatively sparse. In 2001, James Shulman and William Bowen surveyed student-athletes of the 1951, 1978, and 1989 graduating cohorts from thirty academically selective Division IA, IAA, and III colleges and universities. The authors reported that student-athletes attained advanced degrees at high rates – 56% of men and 60% of women – with men being particularly inclined toward business degrees and women being more likely than non-athlete peers to earn advanced degrees (Shulman and Bowen 87-88, 159). Shulman and Bowen further reported that student-athletes earned higher mean incomes than their non-athlete peers, with men from the 1976 cohort witnessing a \$13,000 earnings advantage and women a \$7,000 advantage (Shulman and Bowen 173). Overall, while acknowledging that student-athletes, particularly male student-athletes, tended to cluster in higher-paying financial fields of the for-profit sector, the authors concluded that there was a positive correlation between income and number of years a student-athlete participated in varsity college sports. Shulman and Bowen attributed this post-graduate success to an “athlete culture”, writing, “More generally, the ‘athlete culture’ has a set of norms, values, and goals that are coherent, largely independent of socioeconomic status, and different from those of other groups of students attending the same institutions” (273-274). Their study established concerns about lack of diversity in student-athletes’ career paths but suggested that college athletics and its corresponding “athlete culture” was a positive indicator of financial, post-graduate success.

In their 2004 study for the *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, Keith Harrison and Suzanne Lawrence worked around the lack of outcome data by focusing more specifically on student-athletes’ transitions from school to careers. For the study, Harrison and Lawrence self-

developed a test they termed the Life After Sports Scale (LASS), a 58-item questionnaire designed to gauge student-athletes' self-perceptions of the transition process. The authors reported that student-athletes' perceptions tended to take one of three themes – “career path well-planned,” wherein participants recognized the importance of planning personally-engaging careers, “balancing academics and athletics”, within which student-athletes were cognizant of the difficulties and challenges of balancing academic and athletic success, and “positive role model”, where student-athletes aspired toward real-life examples of college athletes who moved on to achieve post-graduate success (Harrison and Lawrence 494-499). Stating a positive correlation between student-athletes' career-minded focuses and chances of post-graduate success, Harrison and Lawrence recommended that student-athletes be exposed to all three themes. The authors advocated doing so by giving college athletes platforms to share experiences, stating, “The more opportunities that student athletes have to voice their concerns and report their experiences the more informed others will become” (19). While Shulman and Bowen adopted a strictly quantitative approach to studying student-athlete outcomes, Harrison and Lawrence emphasized student-athletes' individual perspectives. In focusing on the student-athlete transition process, the authors made efforts toward developing methods for helping college athletes achieve post-graduate success.

The most extensive and substantive study of student-athletes' post-graduate outcomes occurred in Gallup-Purdue's recent 2016 study, “Understanding Life Outcomes of Former NCAA Student-Athletes.” In the study, commissioned by the NCAA, Gallup interviewed 1,670 former NCAA student-athletes who received a bachelor's degree between 1970 and 2014. Results were compared to a cohort of 22,813 non-athlete graduates from the same institutions. When compared to that of non-athlete graduates, Gallup's data was resoundingly positive.

According to the study, 82% of former student-athletes are employed full- or part-time at their desired levels, compared to 78% of non-athlete peers, while 42% are engaged in their workplaces, compared to 39% of non-athletes. Beyond the employment sphere, the study reported that 33% of former student-athletes continue their education in advanced studies, a rate two percent higher than that of non-athlete students. Further, student-athletes were reported to be thriving at higher rates than non-athletes according to all five well-being factors of the study's independently-developed Gallup-Healthways 5 View – purpose, social, financial, community, and physical. In effect, the study disproved a differentiation of the student-athlete experience, stating, “Gallup’s study finds that overall, the college experience, viewed through the lenses of emotional support and experiential learning, looks quite similar for former student-athletes and their non-student-athlete peers” (11). Gallup echoed the positive findings of Shulman and Bowen while failing to incorporate the qualitative student-athlete experiences called for by Harrison and Lawrence. As research commissioned by the NCAA, the study should be interpreted with acknowledgement of potential bias. Still, the results statistically counter any notion that student-athletes are challenged in achieving post-graduate success.

Counter any notion that student-athletes are uniquely challenged, that is. A consideration of post-undergraduate outcomes must be contextualized by the larger workforce confronting graduated bachelor’s-degree-holding students generally. And that workforce paints a contrasting picture. According to McKinsey & Company, almost 40% of American employers are unable to fill positions with hires prepared in the skills they need (Laboissiere and Mourshed). There is a mismatch between the percentage of students employed at their desired levels and the percentage of employers making hires with their desired skills. This mismatch is amplified by delusion within college students’ perceptions of their employment – according to PayScale’s 2016

Workforce-Skills Preparedness Report, 87% of recent college graduates feel prepared for their jobs, while only 50% of managers feel the same (“Workforce-Skills Preparedness Report”). This skills gap reveals workforce and employment concerns that underlie figures on college graduates’ employment statuses and job satisfactions. Disregarding overlap, a combination of the 37% skills gap with Rose’s overqualification figure of 25% suggests that over half of the recent college graduate workforce is challenged in finding appropriate work (Rose). This context must be considered in studying the post-graduate outcomes of former student-athletes.

METHODS

A survey was sent to former student-athletes of the University of California, Davis who graduated between 2011 to 2016. UC Davis was selected because of its convenience as the university I attend. The survey was put together on the data collection software *Qualtrics*. A shareable link to the survey was sent with an accompanying email to the UC Davis Athletics department, where it was correspondingly distributed to the contacted sample of student-athlete alumni. To ensure proper consent, the distributed email was sent with the following statement:

“All questions are anonymous, and you are free to answer as many or as few as you are comfortable with. Any and all participation in the survey is helpful.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to reach out to me. Thank you!”

(“Student-Athlete Post-Graduate Survey”).

The end of the email included my name and email address for further contact.

The survey itself consisted of twenty-one questions, broken up into five blocks. The opening of the survey included a statement ensuring consent and confidentiality echoing that of the email. The proceeding blocks included both quantitative and qualitative questions designed

to collect information on participants' identifications, employment statuses, perceptions on the preparatory nature of college experiences, perceptions on the preparatory nature of athletic experiences, and feelings on the link between academic, athletic, and professional careers. All questions, in order of how they were presented in the survey, are listed below:

“Block 1:

1. To which gender do you most identify?
2. To which ethnicity or ethnicities do you most identify?
3. In which school year did you graduate from UC Davis?
4. Which varsity sport(s) did you play at UC Davis? (Check as many as apply)
5. In which UC Davis college did you earn your degree?

Block 2:

6. What is your current employment status?
7. If continuing or planning to continue education: What is your current or planned program of study?
8. If employed full- or part-time: What is your current occupation?
9. If employed full or part-time: What is your current salary?

Block 3:

10. Overall, how satisfied are you with your current employment status?
11. Agree or disagree: *My current occupation is related to my college major.*
12. Agree or disagree: *In my current occupation, I am using my skills to their fullest potential.*
13. Did you participate in an internship while in college?

14. Did you participate in a study abroad program while in college?
15. Did you complete a Senior Capstone and/or independent project while in college? (ie. Senior Thesis, Senior Design Project, etc.)
16. While at UC Davis, how many times did you visit the Internship and Career Center?

Block 4:

17. Overall, how satisfied are you with your varsity athletic experience at UC Davis?
18. Agree or disagree: *My varsity athletic career was related to my college major.*
19. Agree or disagree: *In my current occupation, I am using skills gained from my college athletic career.*

Block 5:

20. Agree or disagree: *My college athletic career helped prepare me life after school.*
21. Additional comments on any of the previous questions?" ("Look").

All questions but the twenty-first included corresponding multiple-choice responses.

Participants were asked to respond to questions involving personal satisfaction and agreement based on a five-point Likert Scale. For the final, twenty-first question, participants were provided a comment box with an opportunity to supplement any of their responses with personal perspectives or statements.

RESULTS

A total of 77 responses to the survey, both partial and complete, were recorded. Among the respondents, 48 identified as female, 25 as male, and 1 as gender non-conforming (see table 1). Racially and ethnically, a majority of 58 identified as white; of the remaining, 3 identified as

black or African-American, 6 as Asian, and 7 as other, non-listed identities (see table 2). The distribution of respondents' graduation years is presented in figure 1 below:

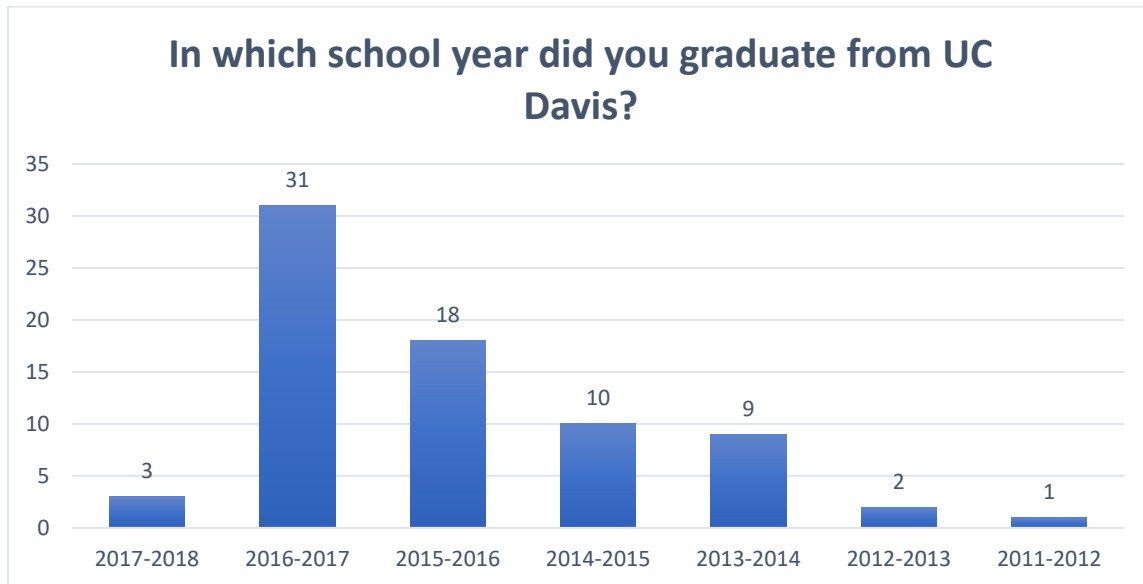


Figure 1: Distribution of Student-Athlete Alumni's Graduation Years

Note that respondents were recent graduates. More than 70% of participants, 49, reported graduating within the previous two years, in either 2015-2016 or 2016-2017, with 3 more anticipating graduation in 2017-2018.

In terms of specific participation in athletics, aside from outliers of 11 Men's Cross Country and 14 Men's Football players, the distribution of varsity sports that respondents played was relatively uniform. There were no respondents who competed in Men's Basketball, but each of the remaining 20 varsity sports offered at UC Davis featured between 0 to 6 student-athlete alumni survey participants (see table 4). The distribution of respondents' UC Davis colleges was similarly, if more roughly and comparatively less, uniform. Of the four academic colleges offered at UC Davis, a small minority of 4 respondents received degrees in the College of

Engineering; of the remaining, 20 studied in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, 16 in Biological Sciences, and 34 in Letters and Sciences (see table 5).

A majority of 47 respondents reported being currently employed – 39 full-, and 8 part-time. Two student-athlete alumni reported being unemployed and looking for work (see table 6). Employed student-athlete alumni’s occupations represented a diverse range of professions, including teachers, lab managers, sales representatives, and government employees among others (see table 8). Of this population of 48 employed respondents, the distribution of salaries is displayed in figure 2 below:



Figure 2: Distribution of Employed Student-Athlete Alumni’s Salaries

The mean reported salary occurred within the range of approximately \$35,000 to \$45,000 and the standard deviation occurred within the range of approximately \$20,000 to \$39,000.

Of those student-athlete alumni not currently employed or looking for work, one reported working in volunteer service and two listed other occupations; the remaining eighteen are either

continuing or planning to continue education. Planned programs of study for respondents continuing or planning to continue their education also represented a diverse range of fields, but the majority are related to medicine or the biological sciences (see table 7).

The distributions of responses to survey questions regarding student-athlete alumni's participation in internships, study abroad programs, and senior projects are presented in figure 3 below:

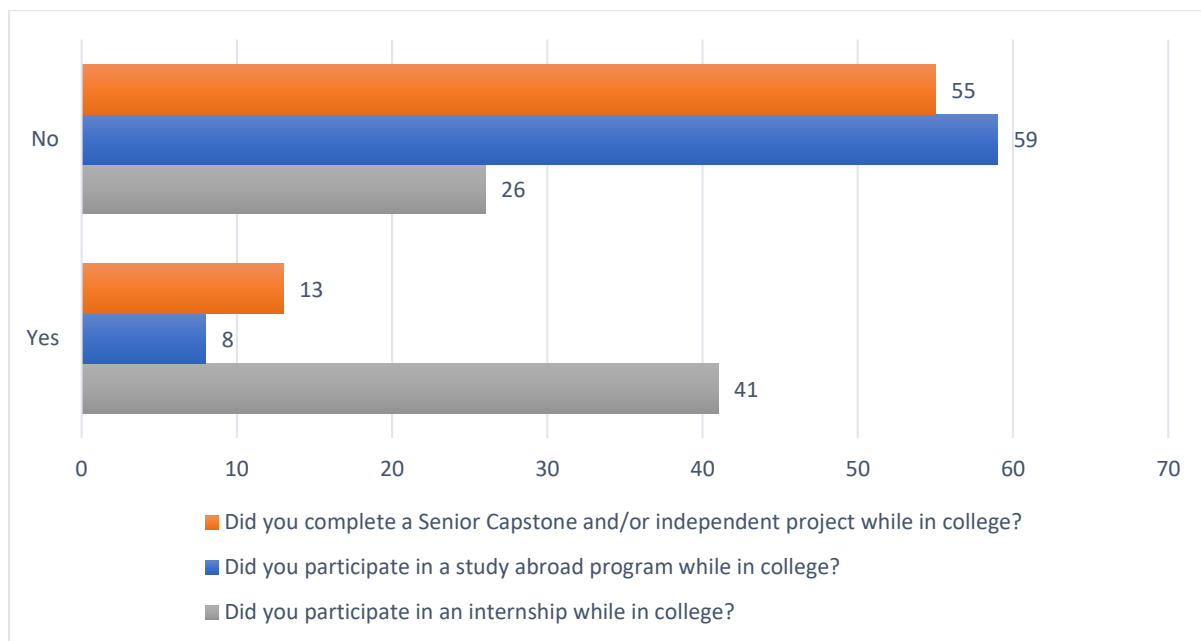


Figure 3: Distributions of Student-Athlete Alumni's Internship Participation, Study Abroad Participation, and Senior Project Completion

About half of respondents completed internships during their college careers, while smaller percentages – approximately 12% and 19%, respectively – participated in study abroad programs and completed senior projects. Additionally, the distribution of times student-athlete alumni attended the UC Davis Internship and Career Center was roughly uniform, with approximately a

quarter each of participants reporting attending the center never, once, twice, and three or more times, respectively (see table 16).

The majority of respondents reported being satisfied with both their current employment status and varsity athletic experience. The distributions of answers to both questions are presented in figure 4 below:

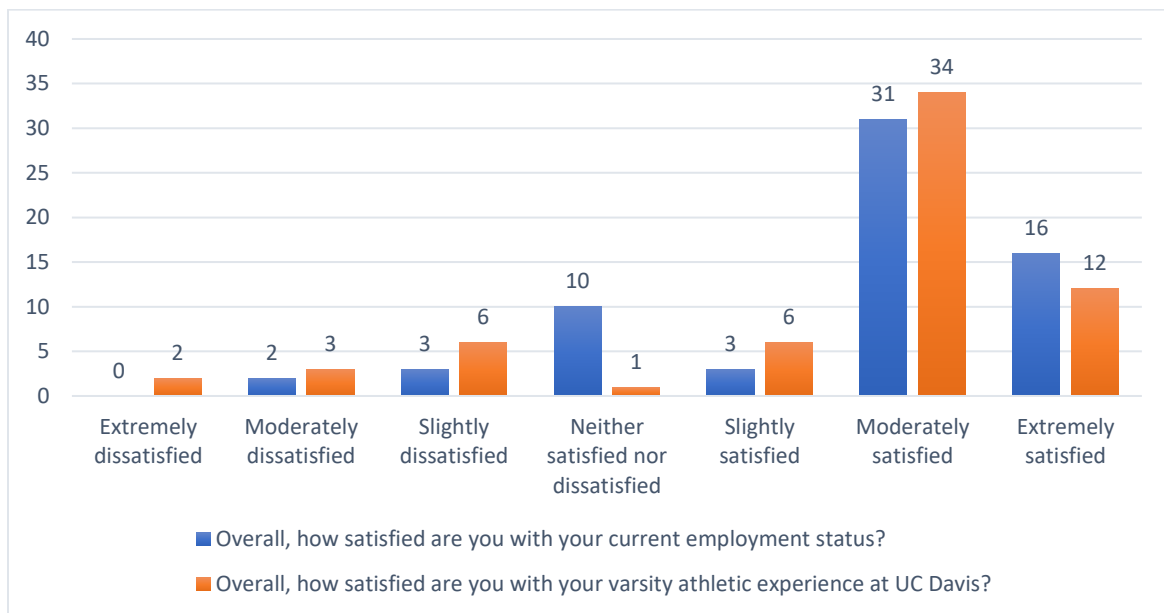


Figure 4: Distributions of Student-Athlete Alumni's Satisfaction with Employment Statuses and Varsity Athletic Experiences

The distributions are almost symmetrical, skewed to the left with 47 and 46 respondents reporting being moderately or extremely satisfied with their employment statuses and athletic experiences, respectively.

In contrast, student-athlete alumni were of more scattered opinions when asked how both their employment statuses and varsity athletic experiences related to their college majors. The distributions of answers to both questions are presented by figure 5:

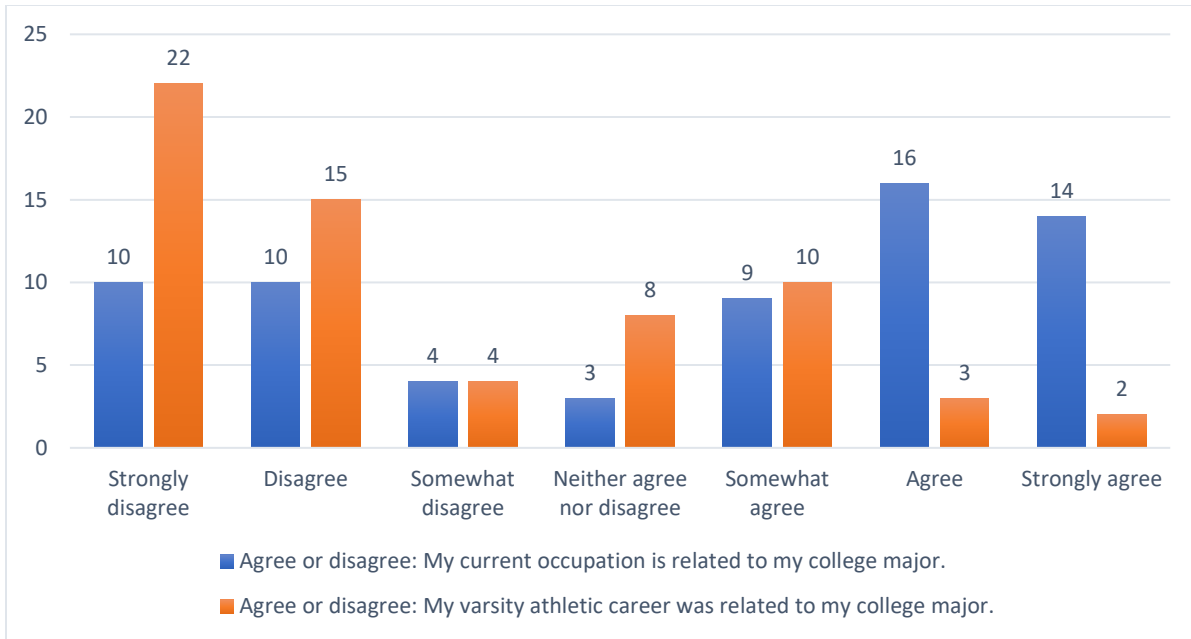


Figure 5: Distributions of Student-Athlete Alumni's Perspectives on the Relation Between Occupation and College Major and Varsity Athletic Career and College Major

While the distribution of participants' answers to whether their current occupation related to their college major is bimodal, with most either agreeing, strongly agreeing, disagreeing, or strongly disagreeing, the distribution of answers to whether varsity athletic experiences related to participants' college majors is more skewed to the right, with most disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement.

Respondents' answers were in accord again regarding use of skills in current occupations. The distributions of answers to whether student-athlete alumni believed they are using their skills to the fullest potential and whether they believe they are using skills gained from their varsity athletic careers resulted as following in figure 6:

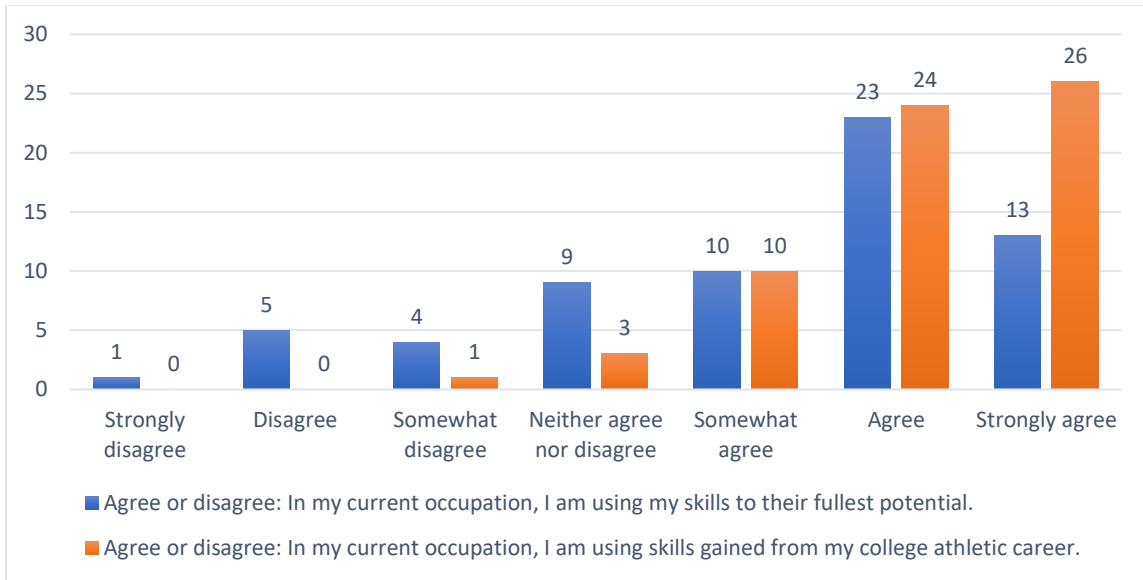


Figure 6: Distributions of Student-Athlete Alumni’s Perspectives of Maximum Use of Skills in Current Occupations and Use of Skills Gained From College Athletics

Again, the distributions are almost symmetrical, skewed to the left with 36 and 50 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements, respectively.

Finally, participants’ answers to whether their college athletic careers helped prepare them for life after school is presented in figure 7 below:

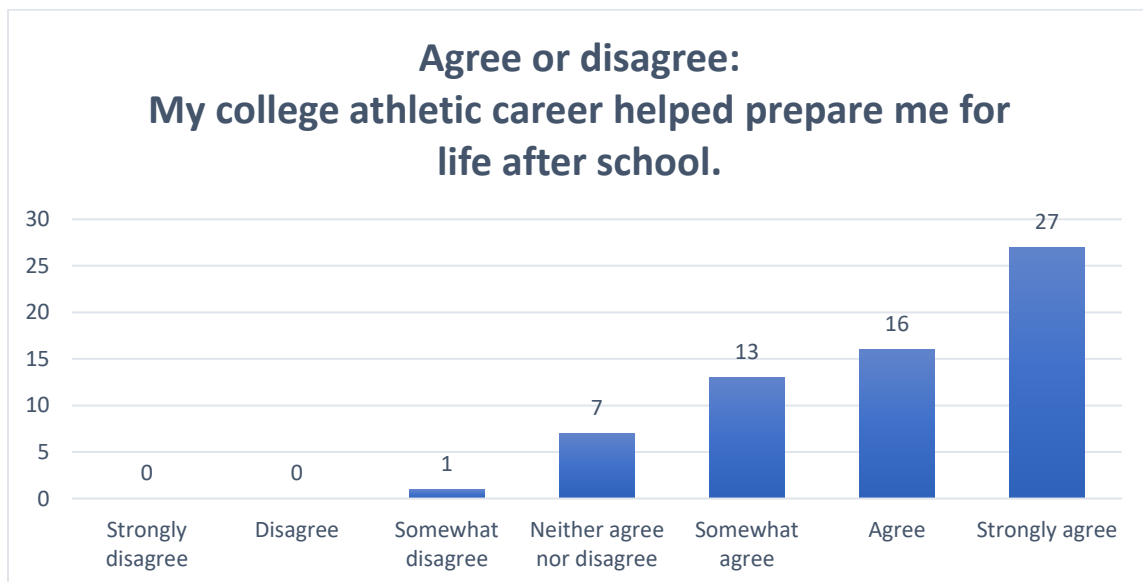


Figure 7: Distributions of Student-Athlete Alumni's Agreement that College Athletics Prepared Them for Life After School

Echoing much of the previous data, the distribution is skewed to the left – all but 8 respondents at least somewhat agreed that their college athletic careers prepared them for life after school, while a majority of 43 agreed or strongly agreed.

DISCUSSION

Overall, based on the results of the survey, student-athlete alumni are positive about their post-graduate outcomes. The majority of respondents, just under 77%, reported being at least slightly satisfied with their current employment status, with 72% being moderately or extremely satisfied. If satisfaction can be understood as equivalent to a graduate being employed at their desired level, then this figure is in accord, if slightly lower, than the 82% of former student-athletes satisfied with their employment as reported by Gallup. This high satisfaction percentage occurs despite the fact that student-athlete alumni are earning a lower mean income than the last reported UC Davis graduate average of \$43,875 (“From College to Career”). It also occurs despite relatively low rates of higher education. Just about 26% of participants are continuing or planning to continue education, less than the figure of 37% of UC Davis alumni reported doing so in the 2010-2011 alumni survey (“UC Davis Profile”).

Instead, post-graduate satisfaction is more likely at least quantitatively related to participants' low unemployment rate of 4%, which is just 1% higher than the former student-athlete unemployment rate reported by Gallup. Further, the survey gives reason to suggest that participation in different college experiences may influence employment satisfaction. While only 12% and 19% of respondents reported completing study abroad programs or senior projects,

respectively, a high 61% participated in internships during their college careers. The ladder figure stands out, as a comparatively lower 46% of former-student athletes from the Gallup study reported working in internships that allowed them to apply what they were learning in the classroom. There may be a correlation between internship experience and post-graduate satisfaction. Regardless, the majority of former student-athletes have acquired satisfactory post-graduate occupations, and thus cannot be considered as explicitly failed by their college athletic experiences.

In fact, even more student-athlete alumni, 82% of respondents, reported the opposite, that their college athletic careers helped prepare them for life after school. This figure appears to be most directly correlated with perceptions of skills usage. A little over 70% of student-athlete alumni at least somewhat agreed that they are using their skills to their fullest potential in their current occupations. An even more noteworthy 94% of student-athlete alumni reported that in these occupations, they are using skills gained from their varsity athletic careers. The numbers here counter my hypothesis from chapter one, that student-athletes are put at a greater disadvantage than non-athlete students in terms of achieving post-graduate success. A significant majority of former student-athletes disagree with the idea that college athletics failed to prepare them for life after school; instead, college athletics appears to develop skills that translate into successful post-graduate careers.

This finding highlights an important fact, that college athletics is a unique experience that contributes toward college students' career development. Occupationally, this fact was suggested by Shulman and Bowen's concept of "athlete culture." Academically, it has been touted by the Bayh College of Education and Indiana State University. According to the two school's 2015 University Learning Outcomes Assessment, throughout the length of their

academic lifespan, student-athletes experience relatively more profound growth than non-athlete students in all aspects of critical thinking, self-awareness, communication, diversity, citizenship, membership and leadership, and relationships (“Center for Learning Outcomes Assessment”). By participating in intercollegiate sports, student-athletes uniquely receive development in interpersonal skills. Within the modern workforce witnessing a mismatch between employers’ and job applicants’ perceptions of skills preparation, this development is invaluable. According to PayScale’s 2016 Workforce-Skills Preparedness Report, there is a higher percentage of managers who feel new graduates lack soft skills – primarily, critical thinking, attention to detail, communication, ownership, and leadership – than managers who feel new graduates lack hard skills (“Workforce Skills Preparedness Report”). College athletes, who receive experiences developing of these very skills, should conceivably be better off than the average non-athlete student peer; the survey supports this.

Qualitatively, a number of participants described more detailed connections, or lack thereof, between college athletic experiences and post-graduate outcomes. In response to the prompt for additional comments at the end of the survey, one participant denied any preparatory development of college athletics, writing,

“I do not believe UC Davis athletics has any interest in how students do academically... Our coach...told us we were not allowed to have internships or do anything outside of [the sport] because we were ‘athletes first.’ I, as well as others, had to hide our internships and research projects from our coach...UC Davis athletics taught me how to deal with unprofessional/abusive bosses. That’s about it” (“Look”).

This respondent’s perspective was not unique. Despite 82% of respondents agreeing that college athletics helped prepare them for life after school, many still reported a disconnect between

academic and athletic careers. About 41% of respondents failed to agree that their current occupation is related to their college major. More notably, 76% failed to agree that their varsity athletic career was related to their college major. The numbers here connect to Webber's findings that there is relative heterogeneity among financial returns of different majors (Webber). Student-athlete alumni agree that college athletics helped prepare them for life after school, yet they disagree that their varsity sports experiences were related to their college majors. In other words, academic majors are more disconnected from undergraduates' post-graduate careers than is commonly perceived.

The figure of 76% of student-athlete alumni who disagree that their athletic and academic careers were connected carries more significant implications, however. In their contradictory responses, student-athlete alumni are complicit in the pseudo-separation of athletics and education. Almost equal figures, 82% and 76%, respectively, simultaneously agree that college athletics helped prepare them for life after school while regarding their sports careers as separate from their academic ones. My hypothesis from chapter one may be countered, but the survey still reveals an inefficient model of college athletics. Student-athletes received and have benefited from the unique skill development of college sports yet still deny that their athletic and academic careers are interconnected. The cyclical perpetuation of the pseudo-separation of athletics and education continues.

The comment of the above respondent reveals the relevance of the pseudo-separation despite positive student-athlete alumni post-graduate outcomes. Nonetheless, not all respondents denied interconnections among sports, academics, and employment. Another wrote,

“Although [the sport] took up a lot of my time that I could have spent studying, at office hours, etc, I was still able to accomplish a lot (got good grades with a difficult major, did

independent research, worked all 4 years) and I really learned how to manage my time. Additionally, my physical strength and stamina as well as an ability to wake up hellishly early have been beneficial for my past two jobs that include a substantial amount of field work...My employers always say how impressed they are by my athletics background and it is always worth mentioning in a resume or squeezing into an interview” (“Look”).

Other similar responses echoed how participants viewed their college athletic experiences as positive and career-building. Such descriptions support the finding that college athletics is developing of skills that help prepare student-athletes for post-graduate careers. Former student-athletes recognize and appreciate the interpersonal development gained from varsity sports experience. Still, the transition from an all-but legalized professional athletic career to the workforce can be difficult. As another respondent recommended,

“After graduating and finishing sports it can take a few years to find your footing in the professional world. Your body goes through a lot of changes when you stop competing and it can be hard to find something you love as much as sports. My advice is to ruthlessly pursue something you love as much as sports, while also asking people for help. I think living at home, resting and relaxing for a period of time (even 2 Years) after sports is good for some people. Transfer that hard work and discipline into a passionate career...” (“Look”).

The comment is reflective of the student-athlete experience. Varsity college sports are an intensive, consuming collegiate occupation. Through the pseudo-separation of athletics and education, student-athletes are led to regard this occupation as separate from other aspects of their life. After being separated from sports, finding meaningful work can appear daunting. In reality, however, student-athletes are arguably more prepared for life after school, having

practiced a professional's time worth of commitment, discipline, and passion that directly translate into satisfying and successful post-graduate careers.

NOTE

The survey completed for this thesis must be recognized as carrying bias and limitations. First and foremost, all findings are generalized on a diverse and statistically insignificant sample of student-athlete alumni. Participants represented twenty-two of twenty-three varsity sports offered at UC Davis – sport played surely plays an influential factor in student-athletes' undergraduate experience, and comparisons among sports must be cautioned against accordingly. Second, the survey carries bias of convenience sampling, with student-athlete alumni from UC Davis being contacted for question only due to their sharing the same alma mater as my current attending university. Third, the findings of the survey are limited to evaluation of recent student-athlete alumni who graduated within the last four years. Number of years passed since graduation may be a contributing factor in post-graduate success, and the survey fails to consider the perspectives of student-athletes who have graduated further out than the previous four years. Finally, this survey is limited to the experience of student-athletes who graduated from a single university. UC Davis can be considered progressive in its implementations of programs for student-athlete post-graduate development, just last year making a hire of a new senior associate athletics director with a primary focus in student-athlete outcomes (Dateline Staff). Student-athletes at other universities receive different academic-athletic experiences and may report dissimilar perspectives on the preparatory nature of their athletic careers.

In general, more research is needed to consider the experiences of student-athlete alumni from universities nationwide. The findings of my survey support that of Gallup's; however, Gallup's represents the sole, substantial, contemporary report on student-athlete outcomes. More

studies must be conducted at universities of different capital, of student-athletes from different backgrounds, and of post-graduate situations representing more extensive time spans. The numbers collected in this survey are too small to produce significant statistical tests, but with more data, research could be conducted into determining predictive factors of student-athletes' post-graduate success. The pseudo-separation of athletics and education demands a deeper investigation of implications and solutions.

CONCLUSION

The popularized crisis of the modern student-athlete is not so egregious and one easily averted. Student-athletes are not failed by the college athletics experience, which is in fact preparatory of life after school, but by the restraint of their post-graduate potential. According to the pseudo-separation of athletics and education, college athletics is a vocation distinct from that of academic studies, student-athletes participate in amateur athletic hobbies, and football and school simply do not go together. That's just it, however – participation in college athletics coincides with academics, student-athletes are truly professionals in their sports, and football and school do go together.

Change is coming. In a panel interview that occurred at the Big 12 Conference's 2015 State of College Athletics Forum, Big 12 commissioner Bob Bowlsby and *ESPN* analyst Jay Bilas debated solutions to improving student-athlete welfare. The two were not necessarily in agreement – Bilas advocated legal action against the NCAA and the permission of college athlete contracts while Bowlsby emphasized a self-governed approach – but both agreed that modern student-athletes are exploited and restricted a proper college experience. Such discussions push forward a necessary conversation on college athletics that must focus on individual student-athlete experiences, a point accurately expressed by Bowlsby when he stated,

“In the end, we have to all remember these are students. Our business is to help 18-year-old adolescents become 22-year-old adults. And in that process give them a great experience... We don't want to get to the point where we separate our football and basketball players. But we do have to recognize there are some significant ways they are different than the rest of the students on our campuses. And I think we can accomplish that” (Bilas et al.).

To do as Bowsby stated, to recognize the ways student-athletes are different and help 18-year-old adolescents become 22-year-old adults, we must first recognize the reality that is the student-athlete experience. College athletes are professionals in their sports with a professional's time and expertise in a positive, developmental experience. By understanding college sports as concurrent with student-athletes' studies, universities and athletics departments will stop misconceiving athletes. Enlightened, student-athletes would be cognizant of the interconnectedness among sports, school and life and would better translate skills gained from their athletic careers to life after school. Such a student-athlete is exemplified by a final survey participant, who works as a school psychologist. In a supplementary comment, the respondent described being able to better bond with students over sports, writing,

“...after sharing about UC Davis soccer and this photo with this student, the expression on his face simply made my day! He then could not stop asking me about how he could one day play soccer at a college and what he needed to do in school to make sure he could one day reach his goals..this absolutely warmed my heart to see a student suddenly become so ignited with passion for SCHOOL just because of soccer!! Needless to say, it wasn't the testing, the rating scales, the goals, the accommodations, the modifications, or the time out/in the classroom that fueled this students fire..it was just finding that common ground and interest with him that made a world of difference!” (“Look”)

Through college athletics, student-athletes participate in a unique, character-building and innately interpersonal experience preparatory of successful post-graduate careers. Through the maintenance of the pseudo-separation of sports and education, however, college athletics restrain this potential. Consider a world in which every student-athlete recognized the skill development of their athletic experiences, in which every university athletics department engendered this skill

development within larger career preparation, and in which everyone understood the benefits of college athletics as this participant does. In recruiting student-athletes, athletics departments advertise not the glamour or industry of big-time, nationalized college sports, but the differentiated undergraduate experience unique to participation in intercollegiate varsity sports. College athletes are actively encouraged to contemplate and compile the skills gained in their athletic careers and utilize them in coursework, networking, and applications. Student-athletes excel in passionate academic careers understood and emphasized as interdisciplinary. Now, open your eyes.

Table 1: To which gender do you most identify?

Gender	Count
Male	25
Female	48
Gender-nonconforming	1

Table 2: To which ethnicity or ethnicities do you most identify? (Check as many as apply)

Ethnicity	Count
White	58
Black or African-American	3
Asian	6
Latino	1
Chicano	1
Mixed	1
Spanish	1
American	1

Table 3: In which schoolyear did you graduate from UC Davis?

Schoolyear	Count
2017-2018	3
2016-2017	31
2015-2016	18
2014-2015	10
2013-2014	9
2012-2013	3

Table 4: Which varsity sport(s) did you play at UC Davis? (Check as many as apply)

Sport	Count
Women's Basketball	2
Women's Cross Country	5
Women's Field Hockey	3
Women's Golf	1
Women's Gymnastics	3
Women's Lacrosse	2
Women's Soccer	6
Women's Softball	3

Women's Swimming and Diving	4
Women's Tennis	1
Women's Track and Field (Indoor)	5
Women's Track and Field (Outdoor)	7
Women's Volleyball	4
Women's Water Polo	2
Men's Baseball	5
Men's Basketball	0
Men's Cross Country	11
Men's Football	14
Men's Golf	1
Men's Soccer	3
Men's Tennis	5
Men's Track and Field (Outdoor)	5
Men's Water Polo	2

Table 5: In which UC Davis college did you earn your degree?

College	Count
Agricultural and Environmental Sciences	20
Biological Sciences	16
Engineering	4
Letters and Sciences	34

Table 6: What is your current employment status?

Employment Status	Count
Employed Full Time	39
Employed Part Time	8
Continuing Education	15
Planning to continue education	3
Unemployed Looking for Work	2
Volunteer Service	1
Pro Golf	1
Employed part time and continuing education	1

Table 7: If continuing or planning to continue education: What is your current or planned program of study?

Program of Study
Medicine
Environmental Policy Analysis and Planning Undergrad.
Water policy and health
N/a
Business
Molecular Cellular Integrative Physiology
Current- UC Berkeley Extension; Planned- PhD Biochemistry & Molecular Biology
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine
MD
I am completing my 5th and final year at UC Davis and then joining the industry.
Neuroscience
Genetic counseling
Teaching credential
Physical Therapy
Law school (currently attending)
Masters of Science in Kinesiology
Education
Physician Assistant
Masters and credential in teaching
Enrolled in post-bacc program, planning on medical school
Degrees and certifications in marketing
Registered dietitian
UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine
EdS degree
MBA
Paramedic
Doctorate of Physical Therapy
Masters in Nursing
PhD in Cognition and Behavioral Psychology
masters in energy economics and technology
MSc Genetic Counseling

Table 8: If employed full- or part-time: what is your current occupation?

Occupation
environmental engineer
Sales and marketing
Data Entry
City Year AmeriCorps Member
Research Assistant
Auditor

Medics Device Sales
Professional Soccer Player
Communications Cordinator
Non-profit Manager
Registered Nurse
assistant baseball coach
Lab Manager
Marketing Executive
I have accepted a job as a Chemical Engineer for Navair
Case Manager
Lab Manager
Administrative role at UC Davis!
High school teaching
Mechanical Project Engineer
High School Teacher
Pro golf
Teacher
B2B Sales Representative
Coach
College Campus Missionary
Substitute, para educator, child development center
Student athlete study skills mentor
Copywriter at an advertising agency
Sales
Middle School History Teacher
Right of way agent for state of California dept of transportation
School Psychologist
Loan Closing Administrator
Union Pacific Railroad
Police officer.
Firmware Engineer
Professional athlete
Scientific Aid - California Department of Water Resources
Executive Director
Officer with California Highway Patrol
Environmental planner
climate program assistant
Student lead transportation services
Sacramento County
Environmental consultant
Animation
Assistant Campus Ticket Manager

Table 9: If employed full- or part-time: What is your current salary?

Salary	Count
Less than \$10,000	8
\$10,000 - \$19,999	2
\$20,000 - \$29,999	8
\$30,000 - \$39,999	4
\$40,000 - \$49,999	12
\$50,000 - \$59,999	7
\$60,000 - \$69,999	6
\$70,000 - \$79,999	1
\$80,000 - \$89,999	3
\$90,000 - \$99,999	0
\$100,000 - \$149,999	3
More than \$150,000	1

Table 10: Overall, how satisfied are you with your current employment status?

Satisfaction	Count
Extremely dissatisfied	0
Moderately dissatisfied	2
Slightly dissatisfied	3
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10
Slightly satisfied	3
Moderately satisfied	31
Extremely satisfied	16

Table 11: Agree or disagree: My current occupation is related to my college major.

Agreement	Count
Strongly disagree	10
Disagree	10
Somewhat disagree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Somewhat agree	9
Agree	16
Strongly agree	14

Table 12: Agree or disagree: In my current occupation, I am using my skills to their fullest potential.

Agreement	Count
Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	5
Somewhat disagree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	9
Somewhat agree	10
Agree	23
Strongly agree	13

Table 13: Did you participate in an internship while in college?

Response	Count
Yes	41
No	26

Table 14: Did you participate in a study abroad program while in college?

Response	Count
Yes	8
No	59

Table 15: Did you complete a Senior Capstone and/or independent project while in college? (ie. Senior Thesis, Senior Design Project, etc.)

Response	Count
Yes	13
No	55

Table 16: While at UC Davis, how many times did you visit the Internship and Career Center?

Times	Count
Never	23
Once	17
Twice	14
Three or more times	14

Table 17: Overall, how satisfied are you with your varsity athletic experience at UC Davis?

Satisfaction	Count
Extremely dissatisfied	2
Moderately dissatisfied	3
Slightly dissatisfied	6
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1
Slightly satisfied	6
Moderately satisfied	34
Extremely satisfied	12

Table 18: Agree or disagree: My varsity athletic career was related to my college major.

Agreement	Count
Strongly disagree	22
Disagree	15
Somewhat disagree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	8
Somewhat agree	10
Agree	3
Strongly agree	2

Table 19: Agree or disagree: In my current occupation, I am using skills gained from my college athletic career.

Agreement	Count
Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0
Somewhat disagree	1
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Somewhat agree	10
Agree	24
Strongly agree	26

Table 20: Agree or disagree: My college athletic career helped prepare me for life after school.

Agreement	Count
Strongly disagree	0

Disagree	0
Somewhat disagree	1
Neither agree nor disagree	7
Somewhat agree	13
Agree	16
Strongly agree	27

Table 21: Additional comments on any of the previous questions?

My occupation is only a gap year job, so I had low standards on how relevant it would be to my field of study.
I do not believe UC Davis athletics has any interest in how students do academically. I played for the women's soccer team. Our coach, Twila Kaufman, told us we were not allowed to have internships or do anything outside of soccer because we were "athletes first". I, as well as others, had to hide our internships and research projects from our coach. It is absolutely outrageous. One tournament she told us we couldn't study on the plane because we had to focus on soccer. I am now in a doctorate program. UC Davis athletics taught me how to deal with unprofessional/abusive bosses. That's about it.
In my opinion, at least for the football program while I was there, we should have had access to more tutoring. They limited us to only one tutor for all of our classes and that tutor was only able to tutor us in one subject. So if we were taking more than one hard class, which most of us are at Davis, then we were unable to get a tutor for those extra hard classes. Lastly, I think there needs to be more discussions and more resources to help find internships for athletes. other than that my experience that Davis was by far the best experience I've had in my life. And that experience by far exceeded all expectations I had college
After graduating and finishing sports it can take a few years to find your footing in the professional world. Your body goes through a lot of changes when you stop competing and it can be hard to find something you love as much as sports. My advice is to ruthlessly pursue something you love as much as sports, while also asking people for help. I think living at home, resting and relaxing for a period of time (even 2 Years) after sports is good for some people. Transfer that hard work and discipline into a passionate career... GO AGS!
My dissatisfaction with college athletics stems solely from the coaches I had. I definitely feel like UC Davis and being a student athlete helped prepare me for my masters program and my career today.
The other day a student came into my office and would not stop talking about soccer and how much he loved playing and hoped to be on tv or in the news one day...of course I couldn't help but talk soccer with this kiddo! We talked positions, coaches, teammates, professional teams, and eventually got on the topic of college teams (disclaimer..not much assessing was completed during this particular testing session 😊). I told this kiddo that I once was a college soccer player wayyy back in the day and was even on tv once and in the news in Davis. Of course I warned him that I wasn't the most amazing athlete nor did I attend the top NCAA division one school he is used to seeing on ESPN. However, after sharing about UC Davis soccer and this photo with this student, the expression on his face simply made my day! He then could not stop asking me about how he could one day play soccer at a college and what he needed to do in school to make sure he could one day reach his goals..this absolutely warmed my heart to see a student suddenly become so ignited with passion for SCHOOL just because of soccer!! Needless to say, it wasn't the testing, the rating scales, the goals, the accommodations, the modifications, or the time out/in the classroom that fueled this students fire..it

was just finding that common ground and interest with him that made a world of difference!
Moments like this make me soooo incredibly proud to be a UC Davis Aggie Alumni and make me feel so blessed to be in a place as a School Psychologist that I can meet these kiddos and impact their lives the same way mine once was ♡♡♡

It could have been better

Although water polo took up a lot of my time that I could have spent studying, at office hours, etc, I was still able to accomplish a lot (got good grades with a difficult major, did independent research, worked all 4 years) and I really learned how to manage my time. Additionally, my physical strength and stamina as well as an ability to wake up hellishly early have been beneficial for my past two jobs that include a substantial amount of field work in the SF Bay/Delta. My employers always say how impressed they are by my athletics background and it is always worth mentioning in a resume or squeezing into an interview. Thanks for putting this survey together!

You learn the most about in your struggles, varsity athletics provides that opportunity in a controlled non threatening environment.

I feel like being a student-athlete has shaped me into the human that I am today. I appreciate and cherish all the experiences that have led me to my current position.

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