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# Is It Worth It?: Experiences and Demands of Non-Scholarship Student-Athletes at a Division I Institution

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# Is It Worth It?

## Experiences and Demands of Non-Scholarship Student-Athletes at a Division I Institution

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### ABSTRACT

Student-athletes are some of the most stigmatized individuals at Division I institutions. A great deal of research focuses on the challenges and opportunities of scholarship student-athletes, but a look into the lives of non-scholarship student-athletes is not present in current literature. Through qualitative, semi-structured interviews with student-athletes who do not receive an athletic scholarship, a greater picture of the non-scholarship Division I student-athlete experience was gained. These student-athletes face greater pressure as financial aid is largely tied to maintaining higher grades and the demands of athletic participation are very high. Findings showed that though students feel supported, the rigorous demands of being a full-time student and athlete can be an inhibitor to full engagement on campus. Implications and recommendations of this study provide the need for more research on this sub-population and ideas of collaboration to allow for full involvement of these student-athletes at their institution.

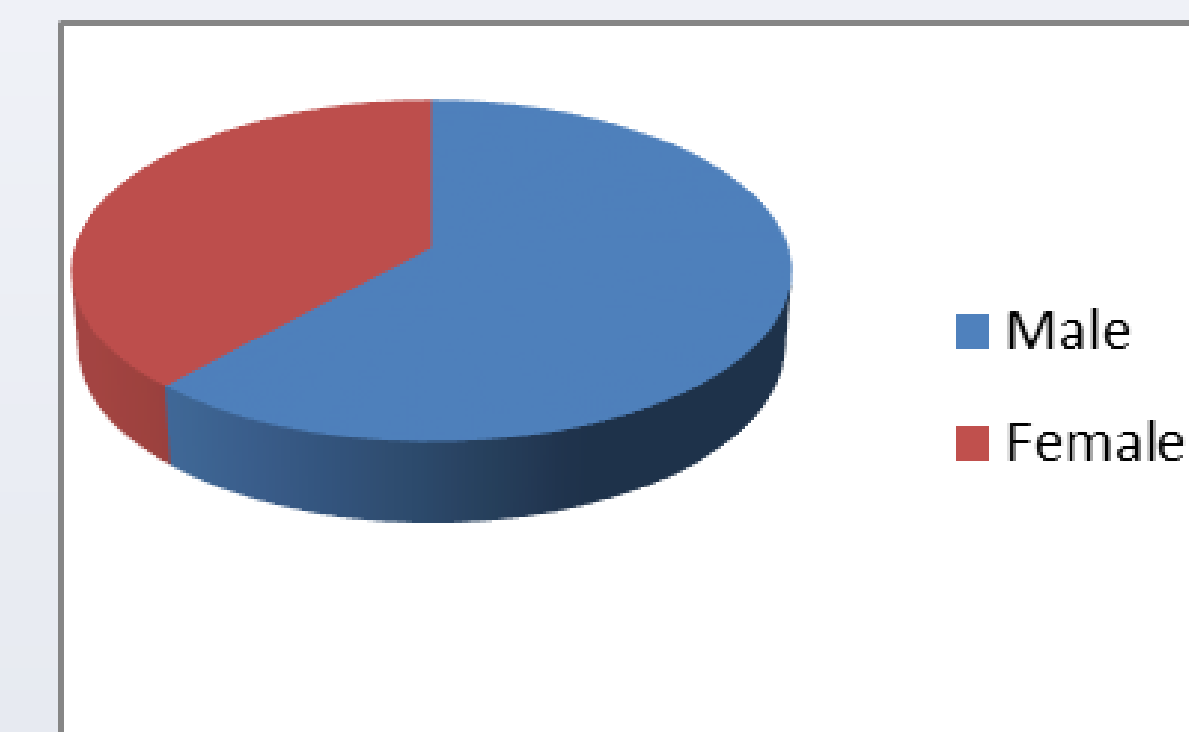
### METHODS

- Participants referred by Academic Coordinators
- Demographic questionnaire
- Semi-structured 1:1 interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded into themes
- Questions about engagement and experience

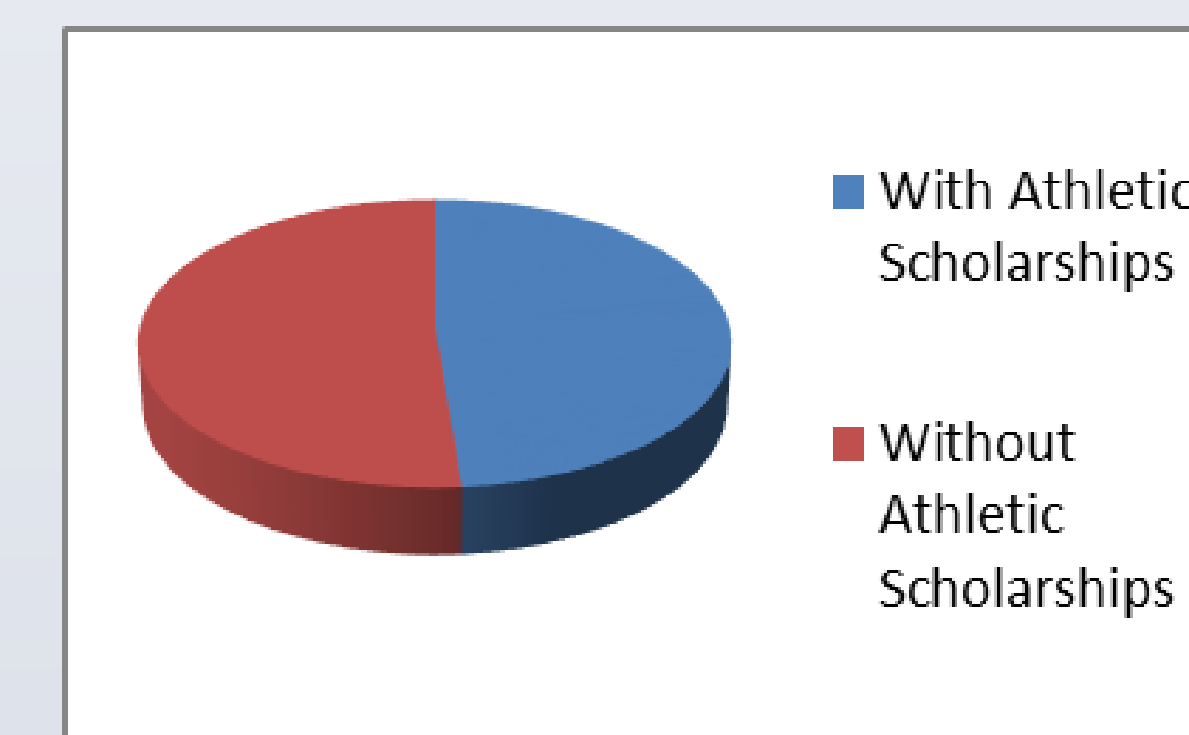


### RESEARCH QUESTION #1

What are the specific demands for non-scholarship student-athletes and how are they supported throughout their undergraduate years?



384 Student-Athletes  
Male: 237  
Female: 147



With Athletic Scholarships: 187  
Without any Athletic Scholarships: 197

### RESEARCH QUESTION #2

How does being a non-scholarship student-athlete at a Division I institution affect their perception of academic and co-curricular engagement?

### PARTICIPANTS

- 4 males and 4 females
- Undergraduate non-scholarship student-athletes
- Represent 5 Division I sanctioned sports at a private, medium-sized religiously affiliated institution

### FINDINGS

- Time Commitments- Most involved in outside activities/leadership positions. Focus on a need to always stay busy and be active.
- Dedication/Social Opportunities- Athletics provides a way to make friends and those bonds help with perseverance through difficulty.
- Overwhelmed- The pressure and demands of participation can negatively impact academic and social life.
- Role of Athletics- Overall positive thoughts, but more beneficial to institution (revenue and name recognition).
- Misconceptions- "Dumb Jocks" and everything is handed to them.
- Suggestions for Improvements- More trainers and opportunities for different teams to get together
- Perceived Differences Between Scholarship/Non-Scholarship-
- Faculty Assistance- Pressure to succeed academically. Some faculty make coursework difficult and are not supportive.

### FUTURE RESEARCH

- More participants from all sports
- Multi-campus component
  - Assess services
  - Different size/type
- Interview faculty and staff around support
- Focus groups to compare experiences
- Specialized training

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