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**THE VALUE OF NON-SCHOLARSHIP COMMUNITY COLLEGE ATHLETICS
IN NEW JERSEY: A STUDENT-ATHLETE AND ADMINISTRATOR
PERSPECTIVE**

by

Anthony Joseph Trump

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of
Doctor of Education

at

Rowan University
December 11, 2017

Dissertation Chair: Monica Reid Kerrigan, Ed.D.

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Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated to the student-athletes, athletic administrators, and coaches of Region XIX of the National Junior College Athletic Association.

Additionally, I dedicate this to my mentor, colleague, and friend, Ilene Cohen who awakened in me a passion for student development, athletics, and student affairs. Thank you for constantly pushing me to be my very best and teaching me what it is to be a true advocate for students.

Acknowledgments

Without the support of family, friends, and professional mentors this accomplishment and longtime goal would not have been possible. First I would like to acknowledge my wife Karen and our three beautiful children Alexa, Kylie, and Kaden. Your support and sacrifices during this process meant the world to me. To Ron, thank you for seeing something in me and supporting my goals. Your consistent generosity, support, and altruistic nature is very much appreciated and something I aspire to. Mom and Dad thank you for always believing in me and supporting my educational aspirations. The sacrifices you made during my youth to send me to the best schools and push me to succeed have brought me to where I am today. To Cohort IV of the Rowan CCLI Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership and particularly my friends Pam and Marianne, thank you for all your collaborations, positive energy, pick-me-ups, phone calls, texts, and support through this journey. It could not have been done without each of you. To Dr. Larson and Ocean County College for believing in the value of educational leadership and providing generous support for people such as myself to reach educational goals. Finally, to Dr. Kerrigan, Rose, and McDonough for agreeing to serve on my dissertation committee, constantly pushing me to be my best, and always believing in me. Your guidance and teachings will resonate throughout my professional career and be something I aspire to give back to others.

Abstract

Anthony Joseph Trump

THE VALUE OF NON-SCHOLARSHIP COMMUNITY COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN
NEW JERSEY: A STUDENT-ATHLETE AND ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVE

2017-2018

Monica Reid Kerrigan, Ed.D.

Doctor of Education

This multiple case study examines two New Jersey non-scholarship community college athletic programs and answers the questions why student-athletes choose to attend the community college and participate in athletics, what factors influence their decisions, and how administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of participation in community college athletics align. The value of attending and competing in a non-scholarship community college athletic program is carefully examined through multiple interviews of student-athletes, athletic administrators, and chief student administrators. Additionally, the student-athlete perspective on what factors influenced them to choose to attend community college and participate at the non-scholarship level is also examined through interviews of student-athletes and a modified version of a student-athlete selection factor survey.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Intercollegiate athletic participation, particularly at the community college level, can assist student-athletes through their growth and development and provides numerous other benefits (Castaneda, 2004; Gill, 2015; Vaughan, 2004). Raeppe, Peery, and Hohman (1982) assert that collegiate athletic programs are part of the college education process, supporting and promoting the goals of the institution to develop the whole student. To provide more of the traditional college experience, recruit and retain more students, and develop the whole student, community college administrators have begun to invest more in student activities particularly athletics (Wolf-Wendel & Ruel, 1999). Astin (1999) has called for additional study of community college students, arguing that the two-year college experience has not been properly explored, as students tend to participate less. Echoing this, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) have recognized the body of research today underrepresents the community college impact on a student's growth, development, and college experience. Ideally, athletics at the community college level is integral to the educational process and complementary to the mission of the institution (Horton, 2009; Raeppe et al., 1982). The lack of research on the community college experience (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and recent investments in areas such as athletics (Wolf-Wendel & Ruel, 1999) provide a platform for research to address the impact of athletics on recruitment, retention, and the development of community college students.

Non-revenue generating athletics is an expensive venture for institutions particularly community colleges who are committed to fiscal responsibility and keeping expenses down for students. Despite this, today's community college presidents at institutions offering athletics overwhelmingly agree that athletics increases institutional and community pride, enhances the reputation of the institution, and supports the mission of the community college (Williams & Pennington, 2006). Although there is support for athletics among community college leaders, there remains a need for research to examine the espoused value administrators place on athletic participation with the actual value student-athletes describe, particularly at the non-scholarship level.

Purpose of the Study

In this multiple case study (Yin, 2013) I examined why New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes chose to attend the community college and participate in athletics, what factors influenced their decisions, and how administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of participation in community college athletics aligned. This study will assist the reader in identifying the value of attending and competing in a non-scholarship community college athletic program from both the student-athlete and administrative perspective. Additionally, the reader will gain insight from the student-athlete perspective on why they chose to attend community college and participate at the non-scholarship level. This study will reveal the value of intercollegiate athletics from both an administrative and student-athlete perspective and reveal important choice factors and rich descriptions on why students in New Jersey chose to attend and participate in community college athletics at the non-scholarship level.

Need for the Study

While there has been a large amount of research done at the four-year level, research into the community college experience is a relatively new endeavor (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). More students are choosing to attend community colleges to begin their post-secondary education. This is evidenced as during the fall 2013 semester 43% of all and 26% of full-time undergraduates were enrolled in community college (Ma & Baum, 2015). Further, during the 10-year period from 2000 to 2010, total enrollment in the public two-year sector increased from 5.7 to 7.9 million and full-time enrollment increased from 2.0 to 3.3 million (Ma & Baum, 2015). Records from the 2001–02 academic year show community college athletic teams among the most popular activities found at American community colleges and thus an area of high impact with a total of 72,558 full-time student-athletes at 508 institutions (Castaneda, 2004).

A study such as this has not been done on students in the geographic region of New Jersey, however, other studies have been done on student-athletes in other geographic regions of the country (Castaneda, 2004; Gill, 2015; Holland, 2009; Rinke, 2011; Schulz, 2007). New Jersey community colleges are part of one of the largest and most competitive non-scholarship Division III regions and conferences in the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). With the tremendous increase in enrollment and popularity of athletic programs at the community college level, it is imperative that we consider its importance to student development and the institution. Based on these factors, New Jersey is a prime area to perform this research in a multiple case study format (Yin, 2013).

Assumptions and Limitations

It is important to consider the assumptions brought to this study by the researcher from nearly 13 years of work with college-aged students in the community college intercollegiate athletics field. While many studies look at college student involvement, engagement, and retention there is limited research on community college students linking their development to participation in extracurricular activities, particularly athletics. This study will add to the limited research on the impact of non-scholarship intercollegiate athletic participation at the community college level. I attempted to minimize the biases I brought to this research as a result of my professional experience through multiple methods, which will be discussed in chapter 3.

The research for this study was gathered from geographic regions of very similar institutions. Due to the diversity of how community college athletic programs are organized nationwide, the findings of this study should not be generalized. Further, the data gathered is a temporal snapshot of the descriptions given by student-athletes and administrators. Over time, these descriptions and experiences can change.

For this study, students and administrators that are actively engaged in large well-established NJCAA non-scholarship intercollegiate athletic programs were studied. The experience that community college intercollegiate athletics provides may not be equivalent to other student activities and functions. For the purpose of this study, we should not apply the generalizations of this study to any other non-scholarship community colleges. Further, it is important to note that student's experience in sport varies greatly based on the time of year and from other types of extracurricular activities.

This further limits our assumptions, as we should not assume any of the findings from this study should apply to other extracurricular activities at the institutions.

Operational Definitions

Extracurricular Activities - Those activities that fall outside the scope of the normal curricula followed by students.

Garden State Athletic Conference (GSAC) - An athletic conference made up of 16 New Jersey community college athletic programs.

Soft Skills - Skills and behaviors that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life including cognitive skills for analyzing and using information and non-cognitive skills for developing personal agency, managing oneself, and communicating and interacting effectively with others (Goleman, 2015).

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) - The largest governing body for athletic competition, eligibility, and sport guidelines for college students participating in the four-year college and/or university setting. Competition is offered in three divisions each with varying rules for games played, contact with students, and scholarship assistance provided to students.

National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) - The largest governing body for athletic competition, eligibility, and sport guidelines for college students competing in intercollegiate athletics at junior and community colleges. Competition is offered in three divisions, each with varying rules for games played, contact with students, and scholarship assistance provided to students. For the purpose of this study, it is important

to note that NJCAA Division III programs do not give scholarships and are therefore also referred to as non-scholarship programs.

Out of Classroom Experience - Experiences that allow students opportunities to apply knowledge learned through in class teachings outside of the classroom thus gaining experiences and lessons that do not happen simply by themselves. These experiences include formal and informal interactions with peers and faculty/staff occurring outside of the classroom (Kuh, 1995).

Region XIX - A geographic region within the NJCAA that is comprised of 34 member institutions from Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

Student Development - The ways a student improves, grows, progresses, or increases developmental capabilities (Astin, 1984, 1993).

Student Engagement - The degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (Kuh, 2011).

Student Retention - A measure of student engagement, enrollment, and satisfactory successful progress towards a degree at an institution (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. How do Division III New Jersey community college administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of being a community college student-athlete align?

2. Why do Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college?
3. Why do students choose to participate in athletics in Division III New Jersey community colleges?

Overview of the study. As a multiple case study, this study followed rigorous methodological processes and procedures as outlined by Yin (2013). To answer the research questions and address the propositions, two community college athletic programs were examined from Division III of the NJCAA in the state of New Jersey. Student-athletes and administrators from each of the institutions were interviewed using a carefully crafted instrument that is designed to answer the research questions above and relate back to the work of Astin (1984, 1993), Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), and Rinke (2011). A larger number of student-athletes at each institution participated in a survey that was designed to assist with answering the second and third research questions above and relates directly to the work of Rinke (2011).

The data collected was analyzed using triangulation, pattern matching, explanation building, and statistical techniques (Yin, 2013). A cross-case analysis then examined the findings from each individual case (Yin, 2013). By performing a multiple embedded case study (Yin, 2013), and utilizing valid and reliable methods, I provided rich and detailed answers to my proposed research questions and connected these answers back to the literature.

Summary

Community colleges do an excellent job educating students at low cost, meeting students where they are, and thus make huge impacts in their lives. Division III community college athletics is an expensive venture for colleges that are committed to fiscal responsibility and keeping expenses down for students. There is a need for research (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), assessment, and evaluation to examine the value of these programs for institutions that sponsor them, particularly at the non-scholarship level. This study addresses the impact of non-scholarship community college athletics on recruitment, retention, and the development of the whole student.

This study provides answers to the research questions, best practices that can be followed by other institutions, and validation of the importance non-scholarship community college athletics brings to an institution. Additionally, this study assists non-scholarship community college administrators, coaches, admissions, and recruitment professionals' with creating recruitment strategies and validating their athletic programs through finding answers to the questions regarding what matters most to the student-athletes they are recruiting and what student-athletes learn from their participation in athletics.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

For years, people have debated the significance of out of classroom experiences, particularly athletics, and how they relate to the overall academic mission of the college (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013; Storey, 2010). In this review of literature, I will examine the scope of the popularity of community college athletics, the history and connections between the missions of the community college and their sport governing bodies, and a brief explanation of the regional and conference system that New Jersey community colleges participate in and how their missions align with the institutions they serve. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the holistic out-of-classroom model of student development including Student Involvement Theory (Astin, 1984, 1993) and Student Retention Theory (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). These theories are then connected back to prior research on community college student-athletes and the out-of-classroom model further illuminating the value intercollegiate athletics brings to the development of the whole student. Finally, a brief discussion on why students choose to attend and participate in community college non-scholarship athletics is had, followed by a summary of Chapter 2.

Community colleges are improving student service and student activities programming as the collegiate ideal is shifting to the development of the whole student (Wolf-Wendel & Ruel, 1999). With this shift, comes a large investment of time and resources towards areas such as athletics. The need for continued study and research then becomes critical to address the impact of the importance of these investments as non-

revenue generating athletics is an expensive venture for institutions particularly community colleges who are committed to fiscal responsibility and keeping expenses down for students. To this end, research, assessment, and evaluation must be done to ensure the espoused values and mission of athletics aligns with what the students are experiencing.

This literature review demonstrates present research regarding the value of two-year community college intercollegiate athletics at the non-scholarship level is sparse. Most of the current research at the two-year level calls for further study in some cases in regional case study format (Castaneda, 2004; Gill, 2015; Holland, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rinke, 2011; Schulz, 2007). The growth and sheer number of students who choose to attend community colleges as the springboard for their post-secondary education and participate in athletics are the foundation for the significance of this study. This review of literature provides a theoretical basis for my study of New Jersey non-scholarship community college athletic programs. In my multiple case study (Yin, 2013) I examined why New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes chose to attend the community college and participate, what factors influenced their decisions, and how administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of participation in a community college athletic participation align.

The Numbers: Community Colleges and Athletics

In a College Board research brief, during the fall 2013 semester, 43% of all and 26% of full-time undergraduate students were enrolled in community college (Ma & Baum, 2015). Further, during the 10-year period from 2000 to 2010, total enrollment in

the public two-year sector increased from 5.7 million to 7.9 million and full-time enrollment increased from 2.0 million to 3.3 million (Ma & Baum, 2015). The majority of community college athletic programs are not revenue generating which, to some, adds to the debate about the importance of the purpose they serve (Horton, 2011). Despite this, there are a number of theorists who believe that extracurricular and out-of-classroom experiences are critical to the development, persistence, and retention of students (Astin, 1984, 1993; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993).

Records from the 2001–02 academic year show community college athletic teams among the most popular activities found at American community colleges and thus an area of high impact with a total of 72,558 full-time student-athletes at 508 institutions (Castaneda, 2004). With the tremendous increase in enrollment and popularity of athletic programs at the community college level, it is imperative that we consider its importance to student development and the institution.

The NJCAA, Region XIX, and the Community College Mission

To understand the connection between athletics and the community college, the mission of the institution and the main governing body of two-year intercollegiate athletics must be explored.

A brief history of community colleges. Early in American history the primary mission of community colleges was upward vertical transfer education (Townsend, 2001). General liberal arts studies were the primary focus of many of the community colleges during the early 1900's (Community Colleges Past to Present, n.d.). From the 1900's to the 1930's, the number of community colleges grew slowly. During this time,

the general liberal arts transfer mission began to shift. The impetus for this shift was the need for job training and workforce development as a result of the great depression.

According to Stanley Lebergott (1957) unemployment was as high as twenty-five percent of the workforce in the 1930's. During the great depression, community colleges began to focus their missions on job training programs to assist the nation in easing unemployment. Job training became a strong part of many community college missions and remains a part of many community colleges today.

At the end of World War II in 1945, unemployment had declined to around 1.9 percent (Lebergott, 1957). The numerous jobs that were created in military industries were being converted into consumer industries that required new, skilled labor. This, along with the GI Bill, created more of a drive for people to pursue enrollment in community colleges. In 1948, the Truman Commission suggested the creation of a network of community colleges to serve local needs. At this point, community college missions became very dependent on local needs. The Truman Commission's suggestion was realized in the 1960's as 457 community colleges opened nationwide, more than doubling the number of two-year colleges that existed prior (Community Colleges Past to Present, n.d.).

In 1962, the New Jersey County College Act was signed into law and paved the way for counties in the state to establish institutions while assisting with the funding of said institutions (Nespoli, n.d.). During this time, community colleges in New Jersey began to form and take off. Baby boomers filled seats and drove the continued growth and success. According to Larry Nespoli (n.d.), President of the New Jersey Council of

County Colleges, the first four community colleges, Atlantic, Cumberland, Middlesex, and Ocean were established in 1966, six more followed in 1968, seven more appeared in the 1970s, and the last two, Sussex and Warren, opened in 1982. The total number of community colleges currently operating in the state's 21 counties is 19. At the moment, two counties jointly sponsor one college, Atlantic and Cape May counties sponsor Atlantic Cape Community College and Somerset and Hunterdon counties sponsor Raritan Valley Community College.

Presently, community college missions vary across many different areas based on local community needs which include upward vertical transfer education, workforce development, continuing education, developmental education, and community service. Cohen et al. (2014) identify five missions of the community college as general education, vocational/technical education, transfer function, community education, and compensatory education. None of these primary missions deal directly with student development, despite student development being the core of student growth. If community colleges are going to achieve their missions, be successful, and produce a strong product, they must find ways to support and engage their students to learn and practice skills in safe environments outside the classroom. When done properly, this can lead to increased retention and more fully developed students (Astin, 1984, 1993; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). This furthers the importance of investigating the value of the out-of-classroom experience provided by intercollegiate athletics at the community college and how it supports the mission.

Division III of the National Junior College Athletic Association. There are three primary community college sport governing bodies nationwide. They are the

National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA), the California Community College Athletic Association (CCCAA), and the Northwest Athletic Conference (NWAC). For the purposes of this study, we will focus on the NJCAA although the CCCAA and NWAC certainly have similar missions and espoused student development outcomes.

The NJCAA provides amateur athletic opportunities for students at the Division I, II, and III levels. Each division has rules for amateurism, recruitment, personnel, athletic and academic eligibility, scholarship benefits, financial aid, and playing/practice timelines and guidelines (NJCAA, 2016). At the Division III level, athletic programs may not provide any athletic scholarship/aid therefore, student participation, recruitment, and development is not motivated by athletic aid (NJCAA, 2016). The NJCAA describes its purpose, "... to promote and foster junior college athletics on intersectional and national levels so that results will be consistent with the total educational program of its members." (NJCAA, 2016). The purpose is straightforward and clearly shows the importance of the support for the "total educational program" which directly relates to student development theories and the holistic nature of educating students. This study will focus on Region XIX of the NJCAA particularly at the Division III non-scholarship level.

Region XIX and the Garden State Athletic Conference. Region XIX of the NJCAA has 34 member institutions and is made up of community colleges from the states of New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Within Region XIX, New Jersey community colleges hold membership in the Garden State Athletic Conference (GSAC). The GSAC is a group of 16 diverse New Jersey based community colleges that

vary by division. 16 of the 19 community colleges in the state of New Jersey sponsor intercollegiate athletics (NJCCC, 2016; Region XIX, 2016).

Unlike the NCAA, NJCAA colleges declare divisions by sport rather than institution; therefore, a college may be Division I in one sport and Division III in another. The majority of the institutions in Region XIX and the GSAC participate in sports at the Division III level. Region XIX (2016) indicates its purpose as "...to promote and foster two-year college athletics on a Regional basis consistent with the educational programs of its members." The GSAC Constitution (Region XIX, 2016) states its purpose is to "...regulate and supervise intercollegiate athletics among the member colleges, to assist in bringing into the public esteem the ideals and functions of the athletic programs are maintained on a level in the member colleges, and to assure that athletic programs are maintained on a level in keeping with the dignity and purpose of higher education.". In all cases, the purpose and mission statements of Region XIX and the GSAC are aligned with the purpose of the NJCAA to support the "total educational program" of its member institutions through opportunities created by participation in intercollegiate athletics.

Student Development Theories and the Out-of-Classroom Model

The development of the student not only as an academic, but in their body, mind, and character was first introduced by Robert Clothier in 1931 as cited in Manning et al. (2014). This brought a focus on the development of the student out of the classroom and gave rise to the "Student Affairs" profession. In this profession, the entirety of the college community, from faculty member to janitor, are responsible to assist students

through their education and development. It follows then that the NJCAA was founded in 1938 shortly after Clothier's 1931 proposition (NJCAA, 2016).

For years, student affairs professionals have identified themselves as educators who are concerned with the total development of the student through interaction in primarily out of class activities (Manning et al., 2014). The out-of-classroom model provides significant value as the backbone for the student affairs field and athletics in particular. Student engagement outside the classroom creates possibilities for students to achieve educational standards that promote a wide variety of knowledge, skills, and perspectives. In these settings, students are exposed to diverse populations, acquire leadership, learn to work collaboratively with peers, and gain confidence and expertise.

Out of class activities are described by 40% of four-year college seniors as the most significant educational experience for them during their college years (Kuh, 1995). These experiences provide opportunities to increase student retention and enrich the college experience. Further, they can help with growth, teach students responsibility, provide a safe environment for students to learn and develop, and assist with the academic development of a student. Recent articles point to former four-year student-athletes in comparison to their non-athletic counterparts as being more employed, engaged in the workplace, thriving in life, and developed with real world leadership skills (NCAA Research, 2016; New, 2016). While there is a great deal of research on the effects of athletics at the four-year level, the literature is sparse when it comes to the impact of community college athletics and the experiences of community college athletes.

Kuh (1995) points to the importance of the out-of-classroom experience as providing opportunities to apply knowledge learned in the classroom through experiences and lessons that do not happen simply by themselves. Furthermore, he argues that while colleges can't force students to participate in these experiences, they should create conditions that promote such behaviors as they are a crux for student development and success. A number of student development theories are directly related to the benefits of the out-of-classroom model and will be explained below.

Student Involvement Theory. Astin (1984, 1993) postulates the importance of student involvement in extracurricular activities such as athletics through his Student Involvement Theory. Student Involvement Theory describes the development of a student as a direct result of their involvement within an institution. Involvement is defined as the amount of psychological and physical energy the student devotes to their college experience. Highly involved students, therefore, are those that devote a large amount of energy studying, spending time on campus, participating actively in organizations on campus, and interact frequently with administration, faculty, staff, and other students.

Astin (1984, 1993) purports this involvement happens in many different ways such as through engagement in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities like athletics, and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel. The theory suggests that there is a direct relationship between the student's involvement in college and their learning and personal development. Essentially, the more involved the student is on campus, the better that student learns and develops.

There are five basic postulates to Student Involvement Theory as described by Astin (1984, 1993). Postulate one relates to the definition of involvement. Involvement, as explained above, is related to the amount of physical and psychological energy the student invests in objects or programs. The objects can be highly generalized, such as the overall student experience, or specific, such as preparing for a big game. Student-athletes can spend enormous amounts of time involved and invested in their sport. In this study I looked for the impact of this involvement on student development.

Postulate two relates to the temporal nature of the students involvement. Involvement occurs along a continuum, regardless of its object. Different students manifest different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times. From an athletic perspective, not all sports are created equal. The amount of time invested in one sport may not be the same as the amount of time invested in another sport. Additionally, there do tend to be groupings of students with further growth potential and differing educational values based on the sports they play. This study did not examine this specifically, however, it assisted with elucidating some of the trends and prior research in this area. Temporal involvement, as it relates to this study, happens for all student-athletes regardless of sport participation and thus all student-athletes should experience some level of development as a result of their participation.

Postulate three relates to how this involvement is measured. Involvement has qualitative and quantitative features. For example, the extent of a student's involvement in academics can be measured both quantitatively by figuring how many hours they spend studying and qualitatively by describing whether or not the student reviews and comprehends assignments actively or simply stares off into the void of space aimlessly.

In this study, I examined student involvement through both qualitative and quantitative means and then triangulated my data into valid findings.

Postulate four distinguishes the importance of the quality and quantity of the program the student is involved in. The amount of student learning and development in any educational program is directly proportional the quality and quantity of the student involvement in that program. In this study, I studied two institutions and worked to understand, wherever possible, the relationship between the quality and quantity of student involvement in athletics and their personal development.

Postulate five proposes a relationship between educational policy, student involvement, and the effectiveness of that policy. The effectiveness of any educational policy of practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. Institutions have policies but so do athletic teams and programs. In this study, the success of athletic department policies and practices as they relate to student involvement in athletics was an emergent characteristic in the interviews.

Student Retention Theory. Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) identifies three major areas of student exodus in higher education: academic difficulty, the inability of individuals to determine their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain integrated in the intellectual and social life of the institution. Tinto believes that for students to persist they need to be integrated into formal (academic performance) and informal (faculty/staff interactions) academic systems and formal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interactions) social systems such as athletics.

Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) describes the central idea of "integration". The main factors related to whether a student persists or drops out can be very strongly predicted by their degree of academic and social integration in the institution. Academic integration can be determined based on grades, personal development (or students judgment of the value of how they are developing), academic self-esteem, enjoyment of subject matter, and ability to relate with academic norms and values and role as a student. Social integration can be determined based on finding a group of friends you fit in with and personal meaningful contact outside the classroom with staff, faculty, and administration. I looked for evidence of integration throughout this study and connected it to Tinto's theory.

Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) also describes four stages of retention. In stage one, students are recruited and admitted to the college. During this time, realistic expectations are delivered to the student so they can choose an appropriate institution. In stage two, students are orientated to requirements of the academic system. In stage three, student's needs are identified through their placement in appropriate first year courses and counseling and advising. In stage four, students are assisted with their transition to college through things such as a first-year experience courses and integration into the college community. When student-athletes are recruited into a program they may receive more intrusive admissions counseling not only from the staff at the college but also their coaches, peers, and athletic administration. In my study these connections are identified and tied back to the impact on student retention, persistence, and integration.

Student development theories and athletics. Broadly defined, student success in college encompasses academic achievement; engagement in educationally purposeful

activities; satisfaction; acquisition of desired knowledge, skills, and competencies; persistence; educational attainment; and post-college performance (Manning, et al., 2014). Athletics certainly provides opportunities for student to achieve each of these pillars of student success through academic eligibility standards, team goals, competition, and engagement, social interaction, leadership opportunities, real life lessons, and learning that can only happen in settings outside of the classroom.

In her dissertation, Cindy Castaneda (2004) made the argument that community college athletics can serve to meet the goals of the institution, provided that this is a part of the institutional mission and appropriate support is provided for the activities. Athletic teams provide socializing functions, give opportunities for leadership and growth, promote collaboration and the team concept, and teach ethics and sportsmanship. All of these things assist with student development particularly in the areas of soft skills which as cited by Kuh (2011) are critical to student success.

The out-of-classroom experience provided by athletics can also impact the academic success of a student. Athletic administrators are charged with taking an active role in connecting students, typically the most at risk, to college services while holding the highest standards for scholarship and academic integrity. This is further described by McCarty (2014), where he points to the importance of the partnership between athletics and academics as a highly effective way to engage students to complete a liberal-arts education. When coaches and athletic administrators place academic priorities first, and faculty members understand the importance of athletics and other student-life activities to students, we effectively draw students more deeply into the life of an academic community and the life of the scholar. These types of interpersonal connections that are

facilitated by athletic administrators and engaged by faculty and staff are critical to the academic success of students.

While it may seem, due to a great deal of negative national press, that community college athletic programs focus on the athletic aspects of the student-athlete (Martin, 2013; Svokos, 2015) there is much to be gained from participating in intercollegiate athletics. Making community college athletics beneficial to student development and the educational process requires strong leadership, self-study, and innovation (Byrd & Williams, 2007). Kuh and Banta (1998) explain the need for faculty and student affairs professionals to work together collaboratively on assessment to ensure student outcomes and learning. This is the true nature of developing the whole student. We must know who are students are, have high expectations, and work together to better them in more than just academics, but rather as whole persons (Wolf-Wendel & Ruel, 1999).

Athletic administrators have a duty to ensure a focus on the academic aspects of their athletes (Baghurst, et al., 2014). Institutions are beginning to realize their obligation to provide a supportive environment starting in the first year for student-athletes to succeed (Carodine et al., 2001). To meet the unique needs of student-athletes, community colleges have begun to develop and augment their support service programming for this group of students (Carodine et al., 2001). Identifying and implementing academic success reforms that support community college student-athletes enables colleges to reinforce their commitment to the development of the whole student (Wolf-Wendel & Ruel, 1999).

Prior research on student development in the Out-of-Classroom Model.

Research performed by Kuh (1993), examined four-year college seniors and the value they placed on out-of-classroom experiences through a set of semi-structured interview protocols. A list of top ten outcomes was created as part of the findings. The questions asked during the interviews focused on the lessons learned from the experience, the ways the students changed as a result of their participation, and if the outcomes differed by type of institution and individual backgrounds. The top outcomes indicated by the students were self-awareness, autonomy and self-directedness, confidence and self-worth, altruism, reflective thought, social competence, practical competence, knowledge acquisition, academic skills, application of knowledge, esthetic appreciation, vocational competence, and sense of purpose (Kuh, 1993).

These outcomes fall directly in line with the student development theories of Astin (1984, 1993) and Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) explained above. Kuh (1993) concluded that out-of-classroom experience makes substantial contributions to learning and development. Student personal backgrounds, while they do affect where the student typically is when they arrive at the institution, do not inhibit the participation and growth of the individual. The question then becomes, do these same values apply to community college student-athletes?

Further research cited by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) point to the difference between student development at two-year compared to four-year institutions. Students who participate in out-of-classroom activities at the community college have significantly more positive outcomes related to their locus of control than their four-year counterparts (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). With this being said, there is a small amount of research

that has examined the effect of intercollegiate athletic participation on knowledge acquisition, cognitive growth, psychosocial growth, attitudes and values, diversity openness, moral development, and persistence and graduation primarily at both the two and four-year level (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Recent community college athletic research. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) and others describe the need for further research to be carried out in the area of community college athletic programs. Recent dissertations by Cindy Castaneda (2004), Karyn Schulz (2007), Daphne Lucynda Holland (2009), Patricia Ann Rinke (2011), and Michele Gill (2015) have examined intercollegiate athletics at the community college level. These more recent dissertations have begun to touch on the value of community college athletics and call for further research on the impact and value of participation particularly in many cases at the non-scholarship level (Castaneda, 2004; Gill, 2015; Holland, 2009; Rinke, 2011; Schulz, 2007).

Cindy Castaneda (2004) performed a complex nationwide study involving community college athletic programs. She noticed a lack of research done within the field of community college athletic programs nationwide and looked to assist with filling that gap by performing a study on public community colleges within the United States that sponsor intercollegiate athletics programs. Her study detailed many aspects of community college athletics, but focused on the involvement of public community colleges in athletics and how this involvement varies by college type.

Castaneda (2004) describes how athletic participation in community colleges is not evenly distributed nationwide. Further she points to the inverse relationship between

population density and the importance of athletics and the direct relationship between the size of the institution and the number of intercollegiate athletic sports offered. She also found that intercollegiate athletics is one of the most popular activities on community college campuses and that most of them offer their student-athletes aid in the form of scholarship.

Following the work of Castaneda (2004), Karyn Schulz (2007) and Daphne Holland (2009) looked for connections between athletic participation and student success and engagement factors. Schulz (2007) focused on the impact of academic and athletic motivation on the academic achievement of community college student-athletes with the purpose of determining how academic and athletic motivational factors impacted the academic achievement of student-athletes. Holland (2009) studied the perceptions of community college student affairs administrators regarding intercollegiate athletics participation, specifically examining the relationship between student engagement, attractiveness of the institution, school spirit, and support of the mission against financial earnings, student enrollment, and retention rates.

In both cases the findings showed a strong correlation between athletic participation and student success and engagement. Schulz (2007) found that a number of factors including race/ethnicity, sport played, and gender had a direct impact on the academic achievement as measured by Grade Point Average (GPA) on community college student-athletes. Holland (2009) found that the majority of community college student affairs administrators' strongly agreed that intercollegiate athletic programs benefited the community college and the general student body, students' memories of their college experience, and student engagement outside the classroom. They also

agreed that athletics led to higher enrollment, school pride/spirit, reputation enhancement of an institution, mission support of the institution, and increased financial earnings due to donations for winning programs.

Patricia Rinke (2011) picked up on the work of Schulz (2007) and Holland (2009) and wanted to know the influence of the chance to compete in intercollegiate athletics at the community college level on college choice. She sought to identify the factors associated with college choice of student-athletes at the community college level as well as the satisfaction with the factors influencing their choices. She found the top factors included academic programs and social atmosphere, individual role on the team and athletic goals, peers, parents, friendliness of campus, and weather, secondary team characteristics, team reputation and success, high school influences and prior experiences, aid and tuition, housing and campus life, facilities and academic support for athletes, and interactions with coaches and teammates.

More recently, Michele Gill (2015) took the work of Schulz (2007) and Holland (2009) in a different direction and examined the value and contribution of the participation in intercollegiate athletics on the personal development of community college-aged students. In her study, she looked at how students described the influence on personal development and the development of soft skills as a result of participation in intercollegiate athletics as an out-of-classroom experience in a small Midwestern Community College. Her findings indicated that student-athletes learned a number of soft skills as a result of their participation including trust, confidence, the ability to set and complete goals, communication skills, the ability to develop relationships,

opportunities to practice leadership, and follower skills. Additional findings included the impact of their participation on personal development.

Answering the call for further research. In one way or another each of these studies inform this study. Three research questions were answered in this multiple case study. The first research question, "How do Division III New Jersey community college administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of being a community college student-athlete align?" directly relates to studies and calls for further research from Castaneda (2004), Schulz (2007), Holland (2009), and Gill (2015). Castaneda (2004) in her study points to the need for future research in the relationship between the engagement in intercollegiate athletics with student retention and development and the role that athletics plays on each campus. Shulz (2007) calls for more qualitative research to allow for students voices to come through. Holland (2009) explains the need for continued implementation of research methods to provide generalizations for community colleges in the area of intercollegiate athletics particularly examining and comparing the students and student affairs administrators' perspective on the benefits and challenges of community college athletics. Gill (2015), who performed a single case study of a small Midwestern community college, suggests a regional case study of the value and contribution of the community college intercollegiate athletic experience. This study addresses each of these areas particularly as they relate to the first research question.

The second and third research questions for this study, "Why do Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college?" and "Why do students choose to participate in athletics in Division III New Jersey community

colleges?" directly relate to studies and calls for further research from Schulz (2007) and Rinke (2011). Rinke (2011) explains the need for future research that examines the factors affecting college choice on community college student-athletes. She believes more research should be done on non-scholarship student-athletes as much of the current research has been completed on Division I and II athletes in regards to college choice factors. She also points to the need for more qualitative research into community college athletics to provide a true student voice. Schulz (2007) calls for more qualitative future research to allow for students voices to come through and believes that further investigation should be had into why community college student-athletes choose to attend the institutions they select and participate in athletics. This study also examined non-scholarship community college student-athlete choice factors both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

Why Non-Scholarship Community College Athletics

Little research has been done to determine why students choose to attend and participate in non-scholarship community college athletics. According to Rinke (2011), the most important factors influencing college choice by prospective community college student-athletes were academic programs and social atmosphere, individual role on the team and athletic goals, peers, parents, friendliness of campus, and weather, secondary team characteristics, team reputation and success, high school influences and prior experiences, aid and tuition, housing and campus life, facilities and academic support for athletes, and interactions with coaches and teammates.

As stated earlier, 72,558 students participated in community college intercollegiate athletics during the 2001-02 academic year (Castaneda, 2004). In a study by Bush et al. (2009), 37% of all community colleges offered athletics at the non-scholarship Division III level. Of the 209 colleges that were Division III, 69 were rural, 84 suburban, and 56 urban. Division I and II community colleges that offered scholarships totaled 358 institutions. 239 of them were rural, 63 suburban, and 56 urban. 22% of rural, 57% of suburban, and 50% of urban institutions chose to participate at the Division III non-scholarship level. Rural colleges made the greatest financial commitment to intercollegiate athletics through scholarships primarily as a way to boost enrollment.

The answer to the question of what draws these students to community college athletics is elusive. Community college tuition in the state of New Jersey averages just over \$3,400 a year (Facts at a Glance, 2016). With an open access mission and such affordability, non-scholarship community colleges may be attracting student-athletes who could not afford, were not offered enough money, were overlooked, or were not yet skilled enough to be offered scholarship money to go elsewhere. Additionally, students may simply value the opportunity to participate in athletics beyond high school (Lawrence et al., 2009). There is a value and personal benefit associated with athletic participation that students that choose to stay close to home can pursue while meeting their academic and personal needs (Lawrence et al., 2009).

Students may simply choose to attend and participate out of convenience. Travis Mitchell (2015) lists the top ten reasons to attend community college as saving money, academic flexibility, financial aid, school-life balance, STEM opportunities, transfer

agreements, increased elements of traditional college, personalized attention, professional certificates, and online class options. Community college is affordable and a good option for students who are still undecided on their career path or for those who question if college is really for them. It allows students to live at home, save money on room and board, and work jobs to assist with supporting their education. Community colleges are also well known for having supportive faculty who are teachers first as opposed to large Universities who employ researches as faculty. This provides a level of personalized attention for students. There are many other academic reasons students are attracted to the community college including STEM opportunities, transfer agreements, certificate programs, and flexible scheduling including online and hybrid learning options.

Recently, community colleges are improving their college experiences and student life offerings, providing more of a traditional college experience to those who attend.

Perhaps non-scholarship student-athletes attend community college as a result of the above, but the question still remains regarding why they choose to participate and what value they feel their participation affords them.

Summary

Intercollegiate athletics at the community college is at the heart of holistic student development particularly in New Jersey. It is one of the most popular extra-curricular activities offered at community colleges nationwide. Institutions across the country are looking for ways to increase enrollment, persistence, retention, and graduation rates and athletics has proven to be a vehicle to do just that.

Kuh (1995) describes the importance of student engagement outside the classroom as having a critical impact on student success. The out-of-classroom experience, particularly as it pertains to athletics, has proven to impact the success and growth of individual students but is too complex to measure simply based on enrollment, persistence, retention, or graduation numbers. With many community colleges investing so much time and resources into athletics, further research should be done to study the outcomes of these investments. These outcomes should be investigated not purely from a numbers perspective but from qualitative comparisons made between the descriptions students explain their participation had on their personal growth and development in comparison with the well tested and reputable student development theories.

Due to the many different divisions, levels, and numbers of sports offered in community college athletics paired with the great diversity of resources and operations in different geographic regions, multiple case studies of similar institutions must be considered to draw reasonably equivalent comparisons. In a 2003 study, Pike et al. found that individual student development outcomes were directly influenced by institutional culture, administration, faculty, staff, and environment. For these reasons, this study will focus primarily on Division III New Jersey community college athletic programs and investigate those institutions that are similar in mission, resources, and scope.

Chapter 3

Methods

In this chapter, the research design, methods, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis techniques of this study will be discussed. As a multiple case study, I have followed rigorous methodological processes and procedures as outlined by Yin (2013). To answer the research questions and address the propositions, two community college athletic programs were examined from Division III of the NJCAA in the state of New Jersey. Student-athletes and administrators from each of the institutions were interviewed using a carefully crafted instrument that was designed to relate back to the work of Astin (1984, 1993), Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), and Rinke (2011). A larger number of student-athletes at each institution were invited to participate in a survey that relates directly to the work of Rinke (2011). By building on the work of others, referring back to theories, and working within the framework of Yin (2013), the reliability and validity of this study was maximized. The data collected was analyzed using triangulation, pattern matching, explanation building, and statistical techniques (Yin, 2013). A cross-case analysis then examined the findings from each individual case (Yin, 2013). By performing a multiple embedded case study (Yin, 2013), and utilizing valid and reliable methods, I aimed to provide rich answers to my proposed research questions and connect these back to past theories and literature.

Athletics at the community college level is an area of growing research interest (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). As such, there is a need to examine, assess, and evaluate the value that administrators and student-athletes attribute to participation in

athletics at institutions that sponsor intercollegiate athletic programs, particularly at the non-scholarship level. The methods section of this study outlines the important processes and procedures that were utilized to collect data during this study with the ultimate goal of determining the impact of New Jersey non-scholarship community college athletics on recruitment, retention, and the development of the whole student. Additionally in this chapter there will be further discussion regarding validity, ethical issues, the researcher's role, and limitations to provide a comprehensive analysis of the methods used. Yin (2013) believes that doing case study research remains one of the most challenging of all social science endeavors. The goal of this section is to describe the methodological design for my study which will allow me to collect, present, and analyze data fairly. Additionally, this section will assist with tying my study to prior research in this area and will provide a level of rigor and validity. This study explores community college athletics at the non-scholarship level and provides additional data to a growing field of interest.

Purpose Statement

In this multiple case study (Yin, 2013) I examined why New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes chose to attend the community college and participate in athletics, what factors influenced their decisions, and how administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of participation in community college athletics align. This study identifies the value of attending and competing in a non-scholarship community college athletic program from both the student-athlete and administrative perspective. Additionally, the insight from the student-athlete perspective on why they chose to attend community college and

participate at the non-scholarship level is explored. This study revealed the value of intercollegiate athletics from both an administrative and student-athlete perspective and examined important choice factors through both quantitative surveying and qualitative interview questions on why students in New Jersey choose to attend and participate in community college athletics at the non-scholarship level.

Research Design

According to Yin (2013) a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. Given that the research questions for this study began with “why” and “how” along with the inability to manipulate the behavior of those involved, a case study design was the sensible choice for the research methodology of this study. Further, a multiple case study design was chosen over a single case as the research is not looking at an unusual, critical, or extreme case (Yin, 2013). Multiple case studies are more compelling, robust, and provide the opportunity for replication which will allow the researcher to make comparisons of findings and conclusions across multiple institutions, in this case Division III New Jersey Community College student-athletes and administrators (Yin, 2013).

This particular multiple case study is embedded in design and has two contexts with two embedded sub-units (Yin, 2013). The setting is New Jersey Non-Scholarship Community College Athletic Programs. The contexts or unit of analysis are the two

community college athletic programs being studied and the sub-units are the student-athletes and administrators at each institution (Yin, 2013). This is a multiple case design as there are two different institutions being examined. Figure 1 depicts the basic design for this embedded multiply case study.

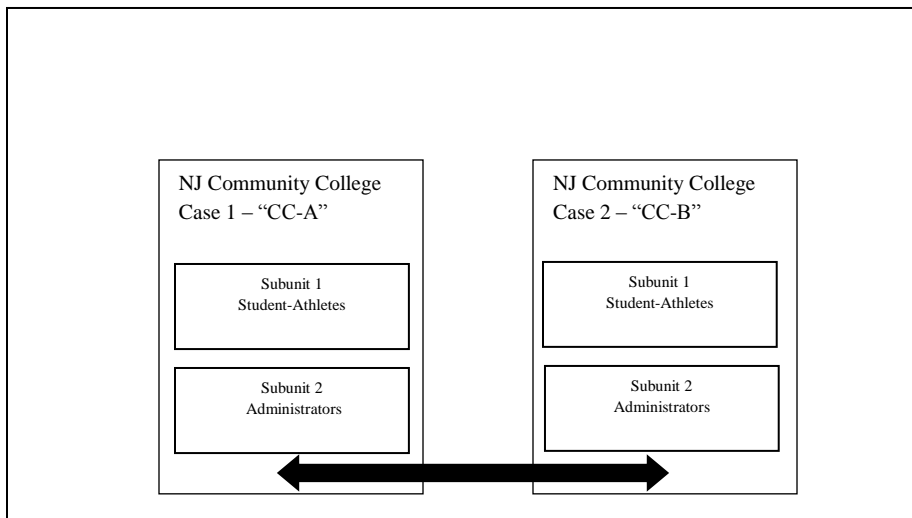


Figure 1. Embedded Multiple Case Study Design

Research Questions & Propositions

The research questions and propositions for this study are:

1. How do Division III New Jersey community college administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of being a community college student-athlete align?
 - Proposition 1: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes describe the value and contribution of their participation in athletics as

having a direct impact on their personal growth, learning, and development as described by Astin (1984, 1993).

- Proposition 2: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes describe the value and contribution of their participation in athletics as having a direct impact on their ability to stay academically eligible, continue at the institution, and become integrated as described by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993).
 - Proposition 3: Division III New Jersey community college administrators describe the value and contribution of athletics as having a direct impact on student personal growth, learning, and development as described by Astin (1984, 1993).
 - Proposition 4: Division III New Jersey community college administrators describe the value and contribution of athletics as having a direct impact on student retention, persistence, and integration as described by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993).
 - Proposition 5: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes and administrators descriptions of the value and contribution of participating in athletics align.
2. Why do Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college?
- Proposition 6: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college based on similar factors and rankings as described by Rinke (2011), however, as non-scholarship

athletes, they tend to gravitate more towards factors such as the success and reputation of the team, distance from home, their role on the team and athletic goals, and the tuition and aid offered.

○ Rival 1: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college and participate in athletics for reasons ranked differently than those described in Proposition 6.

3. Why do students choose to participate in athletics in Division III New Jersey community colleges?

• Proposition 7: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to participate in community college athletics because they have been historically involved in athletics, see the benefits that involvement has had on them as described by Astin (1984, 1993) and Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), and because the selection factors described by Rinke (2011) resonate with them.

○ Rival 2: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to participate in community college athletics for many differing reasons not related to those listed in Proposition 7.

Propositions and rivals, rather than hypotheses, are exceptionally important to case studies as they bound the research and develop the framework that can later become the method for generalizing to new cases (Yin, 2013). The importance of generalization to new cases is a fundamental part of this study. The tenants of replication logic are used to inform sampling in this study and to assist with the development of theory (Yin, 2013).

Boundaries of the Case Study

This case study examined two non-scholarship New Jersey community college athletic programs. It delved into the descriptions of student-athletes and administrators. Further, it did not focus on programs that provide scholarships or belong to differing geographic parts of the country. Many community colleges, both at the scholarship and non-scholarship levels, are greatly diverse based on geographic region. New Jersey non-scholarship community colleges are nearly all labeled suburban institutions, do not offer room and board, hire part time coaches, and recruit primarily from the counties they serve. This is very different from non-scholarship community colleges in other areas of the country which may have dorms, recruit from multiple different service areas, hire full time coaches, and/or be urban or rural serving institutions.

Setting

Of New Jersey's 19 community colleges, 16 currently offer intercollegiate athletic programs (NJCAA, 2016; Region XIX, 2016; State of NJ, n.d.). Nine of the 16 offering athletics do so entirely at the NJCAA Division III level (NJCAA, 2016; Region XIX, 2016). Eight of the nine colleges are considered suburban serving institutions (State of NJ, n.d.). For the purposes of this study, these nine Division III non-scholarship colleges present the best opportunity for answering the research questions.

To keep with the principle of replication logic (Yin, 2013), I have employed a one phase "most similar" cross-case selection process (Yin, 2013; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Two colleges were selected from this grouping of nine. These institutions were selected as "most similar" since they each offered a robust intercollegiate athletic

program in the state of New Jersey with over 10 sport offerings, participated in non-scholarship Division III of the NJCAA in all sports, and are considered suburban serving institutions (NJCAA, 2016; Region XIX, 2016; State of NJ, n.d.). By selecting these cases using the "most similar" cross-case selection process I had enough replication to create a case study that met the highest standards of validity and reliability allowing a cross-case analysis that effectively generalizes the findings in this study (Yin, 2013).

Unit of Analysis

The primary unit of analysis in this multiple case study was the athletic programs at each community college with the student-athletes and administrators as sub-units.

Participants

Krathwohl and Smith (2005) describe the key to good qualitative sampling as choosing cases that you can learn the most from. Yin (2013) echoes this and explains the need to screen candidates through a two-phase approach when dealing with possible candidates larger than 12. In phase one, athletic directors were asked to provide a short descriptive list of student-athletes, their year, sport played, and GPA. This list was then stratified down to individual cases based specific criteria for diversity including gender, participant year, GPA, and sport participated in. Administrators were then be queried about each of the candidates to assist with selecting the final student-athletes, or cases, which fit best with my goals for replication logic. Additionally, athletic administrators were asked to produce a list of student-athletes that are no longer participating in the athletics program but may still be enrolled at the college.

Qualitative sampling. A stratified two phase purposeful approach was used as the method of sampling when conducting the qualitative strand of research (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2013). At least two community college administrators including the athletic director and a chief student administrator from each of the institutions were selected for interview. It was important that the student-athletes selected were second year as they provide a more thorough and in depth explanation of their experiences as a community college student-athlete and that the student-athletes had diverse sport interests and GPA's. While second year student-athletes have persisted and most likely had a positive experience, the student-athlete that did not persist is not represented in this study. This is a limitation of my findings and discussed further in Chapter 5. Interviews continued until saturation was reached in the data or a critical mass was achieved (Creswell, 2014).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985):

In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units; thus redundancy is the primary criterion. (p. 202)

Following transcription of the interviews and prior to data analysis, a second meeting with each person interviewed was had to confirm the data collected was a true representation of what each interviewee intended. This ensured the data provided was reliable and valid.

Quantitative sampling. There was no sampling criterion for participants in the quantitative survey portion of this study. All student-athletes within the athletic

department of each college selected was invited to participate in the quantitative survey and the surveys remained open and data was collected with the goal of reaching a 95% confidence interval at each institution according to the standards set by Krejcie & Morgan (1970).

Data Collection

To answer my research questions, I utilized both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. A modified version of Gill's (2015) qualitative semi-structured interview protocol was utilized to collect data on student-athletes and community college administrators to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A modified version of the Community College Student Athlete Survey (Rinke, 2011) was used to collect quantitative data to further answer the research questions. The data was then analyzed, synthesized, triangulated, and ultimately compared both within each unit of analysis and in a cross-case format (Yin, 2013). All participants were required to complete an informed consent and agreed to participate in the study.

Qualitative data collection. Qualitative data was collected during this study using interviews to answer the research questions. Detailed interview protocols were developed and pilot tested. These protocols were then utilized and interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Qualitative interview. An adapted version of Gill's (2015) standard semi-structured open ended interview (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) was conducted using carefully selected, adjusted, and sequenced questions. The benefit of a strong qualitative interview as it relates to this study is that I was able to talk to those who have knowledge and

experience as non-scholarship community college student-athletes and administrators. Through these interviews I was able to explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of others and gain a perspective different than my own (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Additionally, working with an adapted version of a well tested interview protocol assisted me with making comparisons to Gill's (2015), Schulz's (2007), and Rinke's (2011) findings and calls for future research outlined in my literature review.

By performing thorough and in depth interviews, I worked with carefully crafted unbiased questions to illuminate connections between athletic participation and student development and retention (Astin, 1984, 1993; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). Student-athletes were interviewed as well as administrators to provide evidence from both perspectives on the impact participation has on student development and retention. As a highly involved group on campus, student-athletes devote large amounts of energy studying, spending time on campus, participating actively in organizations on campus, and interacting frequently with administration, faculty, staff, and other students. They fit the mold of a highly involved student as defined by Astin (1984, 1993) and thus Student Involvement Theory suggests that they should experience further learning and personal development as a result of this involvement. They should also fit the mold of Student Retention Theory (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993) as student-athletes are highly integrated into an institution.

I was also able to meet the calls for further research by Schulz (2007) and Rinke (2011) to further examine college choice factors qualitatively as well as quantitatively. By asking questions related to college choice factors, I was able to collect enriched data that assisted with answering my second and third research questions.

Through carefully crafted questions, I was able to assess through the interview process if integration in an athletic program had a direct impact on persistence and success and, if so, how it impacted these areas as well as why student-athletes chose to attend the community college and participate in athletics. Through meaningful qualitative interviews I was not only able to answer my research questions, but also assisted with joining the conversation and answering the call for additional research related to the study of community college athletics (Castaneda, 2004; Gill, 2015; Holland, 2009; Rinke, 2011; Schulz, 2007).

Quantitative data collection. The data sources for the quantitative phase of this study came from a carefully crafted cross-sectional quantitative survey instrument (Fink, 2013).

Quantitative survey instrument. This instrument is carefully crafted based on the research questions and has been adapted for use in this study from an existing well tested instrument by Rinke (2011). The questions are a mix of Likert style questions and demographic questions directly related to answering the research question. By using this survey instrument in conjunction with the qualitative interview protocol, I was able to triangulate my data to either confirm Proposition 6 and 7 or their rivals.

Instrumentation. In this section, the instruments used in this study will be described in detail. The reliability of each instrument will be addressed and detailed linkages back to the theories discussed in the literature review will be described. The qualitative instrument was used to answer the "how" and "why" research questions and the quantitative instrument was used to answer the "why" research questions.

Qualitative instrument. Qualitative data collection consists of collecting data using non-biased but targeted questions to engage the participants with the ultimate goal of generating responses to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative interview protocols for this study are listed below in Appendix A and are a modified version of Gill's (2015) qualitative semi-structured interview protocol. The protocol was adapted to meet the needs of this study as it relates to community college student-athletes and administrators. Participants were encouraged to expand upon their interview responses with greater depth and clarity.

Previous theories identified in the literature review were reflected in the interview questions and guide the data collection and analysis. These theoretical models include Student Involvement Theory (Astin, 1984, 1993), Student Retention Theory (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993), Student Engagement Theory (Kuh, 2011), the Academic and Athletic Partnership (McCarty, 2014) and the work and calls for further research of Castaneda (2004), Gill (2015), Holland (2009), Rinke (2011), and Schulz (2007). Table 1, below, links the interview protocol questions with the three primary literature review theories that are referenced in the propositions and research questions related to this study.

Table 1

Interview Questions Linking Table to Literature Review Theories

Theory	Question(s) S=student	A=administrator
1. Student Involvement (Astin, 1984, 1993)	S2, S4, S5, S6, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S19, S20	A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, A8, A9, A10, A12, A13, A14, A15, A16, A17, A18
2. Student Retention (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993)	S2, S4, S5, S7, S8, S11, S12, S13, S19, S20	A2, A3, A4, A6, A7, A10, A11, A17, A18
3. College Selection Factors (Rinke, 2011)	S3	

Quantitative instrument. The Student-Athlete College Choice Factor Survey (Rinke, 2011) was adopted and utilized in this study and is included as Appendix B. The adoption of this survey instrument assisted with making comparisons to the findings of Rinke (2011), answering the second and third research questions, proving either Proposition 6 and 7 or their rivals, and improving the validity of this study through the use of a well-tested and reliable instrument. Rinke (2011) designed the survey coming up with 47 college choice importance factor questions. Each choice importance factor question was rated on a 4-point Likert scale. These importance factor questions could be grouped in ten similar factors. The names are given in the below Table 2 and the breakdown of the importance factor questions into the factor names in Table 3. It is important to note that questions regarding housing and athletic scholarship aid were removed as they do not fit the constraints of this study.

Table 2

Factor Names

Number	Name
1	Academic Programs and Social Atmosphere
2	Individual Role on Team and Athletic Goals
3	Peers, Parents, Friendliness of Campus, and Weather
4	Secondary Team Characteristics
5	Team Reputation and Success
6	High School Influences and Prior Experiences
7	Aid and Tuition
8	Campus Life and Location
9	Facilities and Academic Support for Athletes
10	Interactions with Coaches and Teammates

Table 3

Importance Factors Alignment Table

Survey Question # / Importance Factors	Factor
25. Academic programs available	1
26. College's academic reputation	1
32. Social atmosphere of campus and/or community	1
33. Classroom facilities on campus	1
35. Opportunity for internships within major	1
36. Preparation for transferring to another institution	1
37. Job placement rate	1
38. Contacts with Admissions Office	1
13. Potential to transfer to a competitive four-year college athletic program	2
14. Size of team roster	2
18. Potential for playing or competition time	2
19. Potential for leadership opportunity on team	2
20. Potential to be 'first string' or starter on team during first year	2
21. Potential to be starter or 'first string' before graduation	2

Table 3 (continued)

Survey Question # / Importance Factors	Factor
16. Opinion of fellow high school teammates	3
43. Friendliness of the campus atmosphere	3
44. Weather climate of the college community	3
45. Parent(s) opinions on where I should attend college	3
46. Friend(s) opinions on where I should attend college	3
8. College's athletic conference	4
9. Game schedule	4
10. Potential to travel for tournaments or competition	4
15. Diversity of team membership	4
22. Team uniforms and colors	4
4. Tradition and reputation of the athletic programs	5
11. Historical success of team	5
12. Team's previous two-year win/loss record	5
17. Opinion of high school athletic coach	6
27. High school counselor's opinions	6
28. High school teachers' opinions	6
29. Prior experience with this community college	6
40. Tuition and fees for this institution	7
41. Non-athletic scholarships offered	7
42. Financial Aid package offered	7
23. Distance of college to home	8
24. College campus' size	8
30. Community size where college is located	8
31. Cultural activities available in campus area or town	8
34. Quality of student life/activities	8
39. Campus visit	8
5. Weight room and/or training facilities for athletes	9
6. Fields, courts gyms, or facilities for competition	9
7. Academic support for athletes	9
2. Assistant Coaches	10
3. Interaction with team members during college search process	10
1. Head Coach	10

Rinke (2011) initially used the survey in a study of 316 respondents from eight diverse community colleges. She performed extremely rigorous reliability tests including principal component analyses (PCA) first using orthogonal rotation (varimax) to

determine the ideal number of factors to use, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure to verify her sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test of sphericity to ensure the correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. Through this she came up with 10 factors as the ideal for comparison. Finally, she performed a Cronbach's alpha test on each of the ten factors which met the .7 threshold for internal reliability.

The survey data for this study from both CC-A and CC-B was combined and underwent a Cronbach's alpha test using the same methods as Rinke (2011) for a valid and reliable comparison. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) advise that a Cronbach's alpha of greater than .7 suggests reliability. In this study, all Chronbach's alpha coefficients scored higher than or reasonably close to the .7 threshold as indicated below in Table 4. This provides evidence that the survey and factor analysis for this study were reliable.

Table 4

CC-A & CC-B Student-Athlete Selection Factor Survey Chronbach's Alpha (n = 32)

Number	Name	Chronbach's Alpha
1	Academic Programs and Social Atmosphere	0.90
2	Individual Role on Team and Athletic Goals	0.89
3	Peers, Parents, Friendliness of Campus, and Weather	0.76
4	Secondary Team Characteristics	0.87
5	Team Reputation and Success	0.92
6	High School Influences and Prior Experiences	0.78
7	Aid and Tuition	0.69
8	Campus Life and Location	0.85
9	Facilities and Academic Support for Athletes	0.92
10	Interactions with Coaches and Teammates	0.80

Linking propositions, research questions, and protocols. Table 5 links the propositions for this study to the research questions and appropriate protocols. When performing the cross-case analysis, these specific protocols were used to triangulate the findings from each proposition and research question (Yin, 2013). As can be seen in the below Table 5, at times there are multiple protocols linked to the same proposition or multiple research questions.

Table 5

Proposition Links to Protocols for DIII New Jersey Student-Athletes and Administrators

RQ	Proposition	Protocol Link
1	Proposition 1: Community college student-athletes describe the value and contribution of their participation in athletics as having a direct impact on their personal growth, learning, and development as described by Astin (1984, 1993).	Student Interview
1	Proposition 2: Community college student-athletes describe the value and contribution of their participation in athletics as having a direct impact on their retention, persistence, and integration as described by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993).	Student Interview
1	Proposition 3: Community college administrators describe the value and contribution of athletics as having a direct impact on student personal growth, learning, and development as described by Astin (1984, 1993).	Admin Interview
1	Proposition 4: Community college administrators describe the value and contribution of athletics as having a direct impact on student retention, persistence, and integration as described by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993).	Admin Interview
1	Proposition 5: Community college student-athletes and administrators descriptions of the value and contribution of participating in athletics align.	Student and Admin Interviews
2	Proposition 6: Community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college based on similar factors and rankings as described by Rinke (2011), however, as non-scholarship athletes, they tend to gravitate more towards factors such as the success and reputation of the team, distance from home, their role on the team and athletic goals, and the tuition and aid offered.	Student Survey and Interviews
2	Rival 1: Community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college and participate in athletics for reasons ranked differently than those described in Proposition 6.	Student Survey and Interviews
3	Proposition 7: Community college student-athletes choose to participate in community college athletics because they have been historically involved in athletics, see the benefits that involvement has had on them as described by Astin (1984, 1993) and Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), and because the selection factors described by Rinke (2011) resonate with them.	Student Survey and Interviews
3	Rival 2: Community college student-athletes choose to participate in community college athletics for many differing reasons not related to those listed in Proposition 7.	Student Survey and Interviews

Data Analysis

After collecting the data through interviews and surveys, it was analyzed using pattern matching, explanation building, and compared in a cross-case analysis format (Yin, 2013). To accomplish this, a two cycle coding method as described by Saldana (2013) was utilized with the qualitative data to look for patterns and build explanations (Yin, 2013). Quantitative data was analyzed through a multistep process defined by Creswell & Plano Clark (2010), Greene (2007), and Sandelowski (2001) where patterns were looked for, explanations formed, and results analyzed and triangulated across cases (Yin, 2013).

Qualitative data. During the preparation portion of the qualitative data, the interview transcripts were transcribed for analysis using coding methods outlined by Saldana (2013) to elicit pattern matching to assist with confirming or denying the propositions of this study (Yin, 2013).

Analysis of data. Coding was used to match patterns in the data. Pattern matching to the propositions or rivals detailed above was critical to providing evidence that confirmed or refuted the propositions and ultimately answered the research questions for this study (Yin, 2013). The data was coded in two cycles. For the first cycle of coding, Holistic and In Vivo coding (Saldana, 2013) methods were used. Holistic coding is a simple way for someone who is new to qualitative research to group basic themes in the data. In Vivo coding is best to help with prioritizing and honoring participant's voices. In Vivo coding (Saldana, 2013) is coding that comes right from the participants language. As this study focuses on participant's perceptions, it is important that their voice is effectively represented in the data and In Vivo coding provides this. While the

Holistic method is not as detailed as some other methods by combining it with In Vivo coding there is a mix of large basic themes and small short phrases to review prior to entering the second cycle of coding. This enables a versatile and multifaceted style of coding and enables the participants voice to be heard which ultimately allows the themes in the data to reveal themselves after the coding.

Pattern coding was utilized for the second cycle of coding (Saldana, 2013). Pattern coding identifies emergent themes from first cycle codes and pulls a lot of detailed material into more succinct and useful codes. The large amount of details from the first cycle of In Vivo and Holistic coding made Pattern coding an ideal approach in this instance. A number of themes were directly connected to the student development theories outlined in the literature review following the second cycle of Pattern coding through synthesizing the ideas and themes from the first cycle. Based on the patterns, propositions, and research questions, I was able to build explanations around how DIII NJ community college administrators and student-athletes descriptions of the value of their participation align. This made it easy to triangulate an effective cross-case analysis from the qualitative data along with making effective comparisons to the results of the quantitative data (Yin, 2013).

Quantitative data. During the preparation portion of the quantitative process, the raw data was collected and coded. This was done in order to try to identify patterns in the data as part of an analytic strategy (Yin, 2013). Numerical values were assigned to the Likert scale answers (Sandelowski, 2001) and the data entered as ordinal data for analysis into a computer program. When utilized effectively, numbers can be used to analyze, interpret, and represent qualitative data. Additionally, they can be used to

generate meaning from qualitative data, test interpretations and conclusions, and to re-present data. They added rigor to this research and an additional level of validity. The data was ultimately cleaned so that I could more easily see trends and patterns and the computer program assisted with calculations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010; Greene, 2007; Yin, 2013).

Analysis of data. At this stage, the data was placed into ordinal format and run through multiple reliability tests including a Chronbach's alpha reliability test using the same methods as Rinke (2011). The data was examined using the same method as Rinke (2011) including determining the mean response for the 10 factors and the total number of responses. These tests were carefully chosen and the method of analysis the same as Rinke (2011) to assist with answering the research question posed at the beginning of the study and to be able to make valid comparisons with her findings.

Qualitative and quantitative triangulation of data. Data from qualitative and quantitative strands were constantly checked and rechecked for consistency of the findings from different as well as the same sources. By doing this, I began the process of triangulating, or establishing converging lines of evidence, which assisted in making my findings as robust as possible.

Overall Research Design for this Study

Prior to conducting any research, I conducted a pilot study at another similar institution to ensure the protocols and data collection processes were working and giving me what I wanted (Yin, 2013). The pilot case assisted with the development and practice of relevant lines of questions and provided conceptual clarification for the research

design as well (Yin, 2013). This multiple case study followed a process for case studies as described by Yin (2013).

The initial step in the design of this study was to come up with a developed theory. The next steps were to select cases and the definition of specific measures for the design and data collection process. Each of the two individual cases consisted of their own study, where convergent evidence was looked for. The findings in each case are considered to be the information needing replication by the other individual case. For each individual case particular themes were identified and compared in the cross-case analysis. Across cases, the extent of replication was examined and discussion happened around why these two cases had similar results.

A case study protocol was developed for this study and is included as Appendix C. Yin (2013) describes the need for a case study protocol as it will contain the instrument used in the study but also the procedures and general rules to be followed in using the protocol. It is directed at an entirely different party than that of a survey questionnaire and was an indispensable tool to keep me on target. This is essential according to Yin (2013) for multiple-case studies. Yin (2013) states,

The protocol is a major way of increasing the reliability of case study research and is intended to guide the researcher in carrying out the data collection from a single case (again, even if the single case is one of several in a multiple-case study).

Validity

Yin (2013) identifies four criteria for judging the quality of research designs. They are construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. In this

section, each of these will be discussed as they relate to this study. By using propositions and rivals as a construct for this study, I was able to hypothesize what I believed the answers to my research questions to be and then test if I was correct using my instruments and data. Further, I was able to also test rival hypotheses. These assisted with making the study easier to design, analyze, and ultimately generalize and added to the validity of this as a case study (Yin, 2013).

Construct validity. Construct validity is defined by Yin (2013) as identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied. Throughout this study, multiple sources of evidence were utilized and examined to answer the research questions. Additionally, reliable, well tested instrumentation and data analysis processes (Gill, 2015; Rinke, 2011; Yin; 2013) were utilized to construct a chain of evidence through the data analysis process. Key informants reviewed the results of the case study to ensure the study was constructed and interpreted appropriately. Prior to any data being collected the instruments were pre-tested and adjusted as necessary to ensure they were valid and measuring what was intended.

Internal validity. Internal validity is seeking to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions (Yin, 2013). Utilizing effective coding, pattern matching, confirmation, and analysis techniques of the qualitative and quantitative data was critical in the process of creating key explanations to inform the findings. Additionally, opposing explanations for the findings were addressed to ensure that all possibilities were being considered.

External validity. External validity ensures that a study's findings can be generalized across a broader group (Yin, 2013). By attempting to meet the standards of Krejcie & Morgan (1970) during the quantitative phase, I did my best to maximize participation in the survey so that data could possibly be generalized to the population. Saturation and redundancy were looked for when completing the qualitative interviews to ensure those findings were able to be generalized to the population (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In a broader context the one phase cross-case "most similar" selection process of the cases ensures that the findings should be able to be generalized across the institutions being studied in the state of New Jersey, meeting the "most similar" criteria outlined in the "Setting" section above.

Reliability. Reliability is the degree to which the study can measure what it sets out to measure (Yin, 2013). By adapting well tested instruments into a trustworthy protocol format and testing them myself, I was able to ensure the reliability of the instruments used. Further, stability and equivalence were ensured by comparing the results during the pilot tests and the study. Additionally, a case study protocol was created and utilized according to the format of Yin (2013) during this study.

Ethical Issues

Prior to beginning this research study, I was required by Rowan University to undergo human subject research training. The University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires that I explain the level of risk participants' face by participating in this study; how I would select the participants and keep their identities confidential; and how I would manage data collected. The web-based training and IRB process forced me to

think critically how I would ensure my study was ethical and my participants were protected.

Researcher's role. When performing this study my individual judgment and feelings regarding what I hoped to find were kept separate from what the research data and my subjects were telling me. Since I was very close to the study, as a former Athletic Director in Region XIX, I worked hard to remain a neutral observer throughout the process and ask questions that did not lead on my research subjects.

I took on a multi-paradigm perspective (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011) when approaching the creation of my research questions, protocols, and the selection of candidates. I adhered to the ethics of the profession of being a researcher. Additionally, I protected the confidentiality of my subjects and also viewed my research through an ethics of care, critique, and justice perspective. At all times when conducting and working on this study, I maintained my moral duty to constantly reflect on the ethical considerations from a multi-paradigm perspective.

Limitations

The research for this study was gathered from a geographic region of very similar institutions. Due to the diversity of how community college athletic programs are organized nationwide, the findings of this study should not be generalized. Further, the data gathered is a temporal snapshot of the descriptions given by student-athletes and administrators. Over time, these descriptions and experiences can change.

For this study, students and administrators that are actively engaged in large and well established intercollegiate athletic programs were studied. The experience that

community college intercollegiate athletics provides may not be equivalent to other student activities and functions. For the purpose of this study, we can only apply the generalizations of this study to non-scholarship community colleges studied in this multiple case study and not any others.

Summary

By performing a multiple embedded case study (Yin, 2013), and utilizing valid and reliable methods, I ultimately aimed to answer my proposed research questions. Community colleges do an excellent job educating students at low cost, meeting students where they are, and thus make huge impacts in their lives. Non-scholarship athletics at these institutions, when effectively administered, can add to the growth and development of those it serves.

By utilizing rigorous methodological procedures this study will provide answers to the research questions, describe best practices in community college athletics that can be followed by other institutions, and validate the importance that non-scholarship community college athletics brings to the institution. Additionally, this study will assist non-scholarship community college administrators, coaches, admissions, and recruitment professionals' with finding answers to what matters most to the student-athletes they are recruiting.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine why New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes chose to attend the community college and participate in athletics, what factors influenced their decisions, and how administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of participation in community college athletics align. The three primary research questions for this study include:

1. How do Division III New Jersey community college administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of being a community college student-athlete align?
2. Why do Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college?
3. Why do students choose to participate in athletics in Division III New Jersey community colleges?

Participants and sites in this study were carefully selected to share their experiences. It is important to understand them as a part of the findings. To that end, this chapter will begin with an explanation of each site, the participants, and then move into the data analyses.

Study Findings Community College A (CC-A)

Participants from New Jersey Non-Scholarship Community College A (CC-A)

Community College A (CC-A) is a suburban serving institution enrolling approximately 12,000 students. It offers 14 non-scholarship intercollegiate athletic sport offerings in which approximately 160 student-athletes participate. Five second year student-athletes were selected and interviewed based on criteria for diversity including sport participation, gender, and GPA. There were two male and three female athletes interviewed with GPA's ranging from a 3.70 to a 2.82 as indicated in Table 6 below. Two athletic administrators, the Athletic Director and Assistant Athletic Director, and one chief student administrator were interviewed at CC-A as indicated in Table 6 below.

Table 6

CC-A Student-Athlete & Administrator Interview Profiles (n = 8)

SA/Admin	Name	Gender	GPA	Sport(s) / Job Title
SA	Anthony	Male	3.70	Baseball
SA	Karen	Female	3.14	Basketball
SA	Alexa	Female	2.84	Soccer, Basketball, Softball
SA	Kylie	Female	2.82	Soccer, Basketball
SA	Kaden	Male	2.80	Wrestling
Admin	Tony	Male	N/A	Director of Athletics & Dean of HPE Department
Admin	Judy	Female	N/A	Assistant Director of Athletics & Softball Coach
Admin	Marie	Female	N/A	Dean of Student Affairs

The Student Athlete College Selection Factor Survey was also sent out to all of the 160 student-athletes of which 34 responded for a 21.25% response rate. 21 of the 34 responses were complete enough to use. A number of statistical analyses were completed to ensure reliability of each of the 10 factors measured in the survey. Ultimately a Chronbach's alpha analysis was performed on each factor and is noted in Chapter 3, Table 4.

Kaden. Kaden is a second year wrestler and third year student at CC-A with a 2.8 GPA. He described himself as coming from a lower middle class family. CC-A was his first choice school primarily due to the cost of attendance, academic reputation, and the wrestling program. Additionally, his mother was sick and just received a liver transplant and he described this as being a big factor in attending CC-A as he wanted to stay home and help his family. He is a commuter student that has to maintain employment in addition to being a student athlete. His grades after his freshman year made him ineligible and unable to compete the next year. Despite this, he was encouraged by his coach and the administration to learn from his mistakes and persist. He feels his experiences at CC-A provided him the opportunity to mature, learn time management, build resilience, improve soft-skills, communication, and leadership, and realize the importance to getting a good education while doing well in school.

Anthony. Anthony is a second year baseball player majoring in Mechanical Engineering and currently has a 3.7 GPA. He has enjoyed being able to participate in college baseball, get an education, and do so at an affordable cost. He describes some difficulties being an Engineering major and student-athlete as the Engineering cohort is small and it can be difficult to create a class schedule that fits around baseball. CC-A

wasn't his first choice and he did go away to a four-year school for about a week before returning home and enrolling at CC-A because he believed it was a better option. He feels athletics have provided him opportunities to practice and improve on his time management, relationship building, leadership, communication, team, and self-regulation skills. Further he feels athletics have provided opportunities to gain confidence, mature, and motivated him to be a better student. He believes if he was not a student-athlete his GPA would not be as high as it currently is.

Alexa. Alexa is a second year three sport student-athlete at CC-A with a 2.84 GPA. Money was a big factor in her college selection process. While she did get accepted to a prestigious four-year university, she saw CC-A as a better choice for financial reasons. She is one of four children that her parents have put through college. Three of her siblings began their higher education career at CC-A and she saw the value from her older brother's experience. She has participated in soccer, basketball, and softball and took a year off between her freshman and sophomore years to rehabilitate a severe knee injury that happened at the end of her freshman year. During the year off, she worked full time as a waitress to help finance her education. Her relationship with the athletic administration was one of her highlights and a big part of the reason she returned to the institution. She was able to develop meaningful relationships with the athletic trainer based on her injury and the administrative and coaching staff as they helped her secure a work-study position on campus to assist her with funding her education and pushed her to return to school and sports after her injury. She believes that athletics provided opportunities for her to make friends, meet new and diverse people, practice leadership and self-regulation, mature socially and personally, keep on track

academically, improve time management and integrity, increase grit, practice communication and leadership, and be able to self-regulate.

Kylie. Kylie is a second year soccer and basketball student athlete with a 2.82 GPA. CC-A was not where she wanted to attend at all, however, due to financial reasons and having three other siblings in college, CC-A was the only place her parents could afford to send her. She describes the difficulty in transitioning from high school to college and how she became academically ineligible following her freshman year. She took a semester off, paid for rent, and had to work hard repeating classes to get her GPA high enough to continue participation. She was able to accomplish this based on the support she received from home and the athletic department. She believes athletics has helped her mature and grow tremendously. She learned lessons in time management, teamwork, responsibility, and felt very connected to the athletic program on the whole. Her relationship with the administration and coaches landed her a work-study job as a lifeguard which helped her make money between classes and practice/games. Sports pushed her to persist and work hard academically as well as learn lessons in persistence and determination.

Karen. Karen is a second year basketball player with a 3.14 GPA. She was recruited to attend a number of high level four-year schools but they did not offer her enough money to make it affordable. Because of that she investigated community colleges. The one in her own county was recruiting her and offered her scholarship money but she chose not to attend as during the recruitment process she researched the lack of persistence and graduation at the institution. She wanted to attend CC-A without a scholarship and chose to commute out of county because she saw the athletic program,

particularly the basketball program, graduated their student-athletes, didn't lose student-athletes due to grades, and focused on student academic success first. She describes how basketball became like a family to her and how it saved her life. She grew up in a neighborhood where many people don't get to attend college and participate in athletics. She is one from her hometown that has made something of herself after high school. Basketball pushed her to continue her education and her experience at CC-A helped her grow, mature, and open more doors for her. She feels the community at CC-A welcomed her with open arms and that everyone from faculty and staff to student-athletes made it a great place for her to succeed.

Tony. Tony has a combined 50 years of experience with athletics and education. He served as a coach for 25 and athletic director for 10 years at the secondary level and has been CC-A's athletic director for the past 15 years. He oversees both the athletic programs at CC-A and serves as the Dean of the Health and Physical Education department. He has staff in both areas including administrative assistants, coaches, assistant athletic directors, and faculty. He works very closely with the upper administration and manages two budgets.

Judy. Judy has been involved in athletics her entire life. She was a basketball, bowler, and softball player in high school and continued with bowling and softball in college. She attributes her success in college to her athletic participation, "That's what helped me get through college actually is my participation in sports." Immediately following college she began working in an athletic department and has been doing that ever since. Presently, she is the Assistant Athletic Director and Head Softball Coach at CC-A.

Marie. Marie is the Dean of Student Affairs at CC-A. She has been a collegiate administrator for 25 years and involved in student affairs for over 15 years. She is a staunch believer that involved students persist and do better. She believes in the holistic develop of all students. She truly wants all students to learn and be successful beyond CC-A. She believes in the value of athletic participation at CC-A having a positive impact on the retention, development, and success of student-athletes. She attributes this to the strong leadership provided by the athletic administrators and coaches at CC-A.

CC-A Student-Athlete Themes

Theme 1 - Athletic participation has a positive impact on academic motivation, persistence, and performance. A connection between athletics, academic motivation, and performance was discussed by every student athlete in this study. Student-athletes indicated that coaches and administrators at CC-A consistently focused on academic performance and motivation. During his interview, Kaden stated, "Overall my coach is big on academics. The entire athletic department is big on academics. It's the most important part. They have meetings and talk with us about it."

All student-athletes interviewed believed their athletic participation influenced their academic performance in a positive way. Furthering this point, there was also discussion on the importance of the NJCAA eligibility standards and how those standards assist student-athletes with staying on track. Alexa explains how it impacted her motivation and performance,

I know you have to have a good GPA I have never even gone below a 3.0. That helps a lot of the girls stay on track. The coaches and administrators stressed it

entirely. In basketball it's two semesters and you have to pass all your classes in two semesters so if you weren't passing a class coach made sure in the winter you had a class that was passable and you had your team helping you.

Four of the interviewees described team study halls and college and peer tutoring as having a critical impact on their grades. They made statements that indicated study hall enabled them to work together on academics, college and team policies forced them to keep their grades up, it pushed them to go to class, and encouraged them to come to school and maintain good attendance in class. Anthony describes his motivation to do well academically and persist as follows,

I was different in high school where it was like as long as you pass you can play. And then around you [at CC-A], you have a group of guys around you, trying to get the best grades possible while still trying to play so it gives you an outlet where you can get advice from them and them advice from you. Most of the motivation to do well here was I was able to play here if I got good grades. But even in the long run after this, if I want to go to another college or get a good job they don't want to see a 2.0. If a coach from another school sees that he says, 'I have another guy who can pass his classes and do the same things you can'. I feel like that's a big motivation factor. The athletic piece of me moving on and them seeing a higher GPA.

Similar to the above, all of interviewees described how academics was stressed by coaches and administrators and was used as an incentive to get to the next level and

complete. Another example was found in the interview with Alexa regarding study halls with struggling teammates who had to take winter courses during the season,

So we had like practice and after class they would come and then if they had homework we would help them. I feel like Coach stresses it entirely because we had study sessions. [The administration] gave us tutors. Math was like killing me. Statistics it was crazy. I don't think anyone stresses it as much as Coach does. She doesn't just care about the sport, she cares if you are doing well because she does set you up to go somewhere else if you ask her. Like [student-athlete name] is going on. She's looking at Rowan, all these other colleges and Coach is helping her and she says I can't suggest you to these schools if your grades are not up and that's kind of like how she helps out. She wants to send you there. She doesn't just want to drop you off because you won her a championship and that's it.

There is a clear relationship to what the student-athletes describe and their academic motivation and persistence. The coaches and administrators care enough about their student-athletes that they provided study sessions, tutors, and used athletics and the hope of playing at a four-year as a motivating factor for students to perform academically.

Theme 2 - Athletics provides opportunities for interpersonal connections with others at the institution that foster support, implicit respect, and encouragement. The importance of connections that fostered support, implicit respect, and encouragement were found as a theme throughout every interview. Student-athlete

connections were made with other student-athletes and students, coaches, athletic and other administrators, and faculty across campus.

Athletic department connections. Every student-athlete interviewed indicated a positive connection to the athletic department administrative staff. Student-athletes describe that the staff developed meaningful relationships, assisted and mentored them to be successful, served as a strong support system, provided guidance, set up tutoring, assisted them through the academic process, provided academic advising as necessary, assisted with finding work/study jobs on campus, and developed a sense of community and family. Karen described her interactions with the athletic department, "It's been like family you know. I can come and talk to them about anything. They are all open arms to me."

Further into the interview Karen describes in detail the behind the scenes support she feels the Assistant Athletic Director (Judy) and administration provided her. This provides evidence for the connection, support, and respect that has developed which impacts the student-athletes experience within the athletic department at CC-A,

She helps us with a lot of stuff. She does a lot of behind the scenes stuff and I commend her on everything because if it weren't for her we really wouldn't be in the situation we are in. She helped me when I came here get situated, get my schedule right, benefit me around my school and work schedule like she just helped me... [The administration] always took care of us and made sure we ate coming from games, made sure the uniforms were washed and always ready for us to practice in, even have our bags packed for us ready for us to leave and go to

away games. They are really important. Especially [Judy] making our schedules, making sure we take every class we need to take, making sure they also transferable. They have been very important.

Coach connections. There were multiple connections to coaches described by each student interviewed. The connections to coaches provided benefits for academic support, motivation to persist, inspiration, and assistance with transfer and moving on to the next level. Kylie stated that if it weren't for her coach, she would have not returned after an academically difficult first semester in college,

If it wasn't for Coach I would not have come back to soccer after my first year. He kept pushing me to get my grades up. He said he needed me there and like all this stuff and he kept pushing me to go farther in my education so I would be able to play soccer and he would be able to have me for a second year.

Alexa also felt very strongly about her connection to the coaching staff and was inspired and felt cared about,

She is so inspirational and just cares so much for us and wants us to be successful in life so I take her as a parent figure in that she is pushing us to do our best in everything not just basketball but in school and everything else...I would definitely say coming here my coaches, they would be my connection here. They just like cared so much about me and my soccer coach still texts me asking me how I'm doing... Coach gave me life advice. I never got that from my high school coaches.

Anthony feels the coaches held key relationships to the players not only through the sport but to also provide academic support and motivation,

The coaches do anything they can to help guys that are struggling because they need guys to play. There are midterm and final grades so at some point, the coaches talk to the professors and see the grades and make sure people are on track and if they are not, what they can do to help... I think he was important because he is a big, he's a good leader. He motivates us to do our work on time, get our work done, be there on time, have a good time while we are there, communicate with others. He really motivates us to do, push us in the right path and he tries to do that and he's really helpful with the grades and if he sees somebody struggling maybe in math, he tries to help them himself. If it's something he can help with or gives them advice to hey go to this tutoring center maybe someone there can help you.

Student connections. The student-athletes interviewed all described connections to other students that had a positive impact on their experience. The most common benefits of student connections were providing opportunities to explore the social aspect of their experience, building strong friendships, connecting with and getting to meet diverse and new people, bonding with teammates creating a family atmosphere, and peer to peer support.

For example, Anthony described his relationships with members of the baseball team as having an important impact on his experience,

I would say they are stronger relationships where there are people to go to who are around the same age range. They may not be going through the exact same dilemma, problem, or life situation you are going through but there is always someone there that can provide that support or advice you may need. My teammates kinda help me out... You are introduced to a whole different group of people who you may have not known where it's not like a 4 year school where there are people from all over. Well, I mean we do have a few kids from all over but most are from around this area. Even them, I am meeting people who are close to my areas who if I want to when this is all over I can still be friends with them, meet with them, associate with them but it does also give me the chance to meet people. Like we have a kid from Japan that stays here and plays with us so I do get chances to meet people not as much if I was somewhere else but I think it's good because it builds strong friendships.

Alexa and Kylie attributed their ability to make friends, stay motivated, and do well academically to their connections to other student-athletes through participation in their sport.

None of my friends came here so I had like no friends. Being on the soccer team I met so many girls and they were like so awesome. So we would hang out all the time and do homework between the classes and it made it more enjoyable for me because I am not that outgoing so I wouldn't just go up to people and be like, 'Hey can I sit with you and do homework?'. I feel like they would be like oh look at this weirdo like trying to sit with me so it definitely helped with me wanting to come to school. (Alexa)

When I came here I was afraid of making friends. So with soccer it gave me 10-12 friends to start off with and even if I didn't like them I still had to be with them. So seeing them around campus, like I hung out with them a lot more. So it made me feel like I already started off with friends. So as other people who were coming in as freshman I had one up on them. Where I was already prepared and people knew I was on the soccer team and the basketball team so it was kind of nice...My teammates for soccer. If anybody needed help they would help. If anybody needed a calculator or USB or something or someone needed to help with revising an essay, someone would always answer and be there to assist to make sure you got your schoolwork done before anything else. (Kylie)

Summary. The student-athletes participating in this study describe connections with the athletic department staff, coaches, and other students that fostered support, implicit respect, and encouragement. They described support and implicit respect from things as simple as borrowing a calculator, working together in study groups, asking advising and academic questions to coaches and administrators, and an overall feeling of belonging and family. Support and implicit respect are evidenced through the descriptions of meaningful relationships the student-athletes make with people that assist in reaching a common or understood goal. Examples of encouragement also permeate the interviews as coaches and staff are consistently seen attempting to provide meaningful encouragement to student-athletes and even at times student-athletes encouraging each other in the athletic realm, classroom, and beyond.

Theme 3 - Balancing academics and other responsibilities with athletics requires sacrifice, however, it provides opportunities to learn how to effectively time manage.

Alexa describes how much she has sacrificed to participate in sport and the amount of time she has dedicated to it over the past few years, however, ends with how the drawback has ultimately helped her in the long run,

I always put sports before anything else. I've missed vacations, parties, a wake once just because I put sports ahead. I look back and I regret it I guess, but being happy playing sports, that's what I wanted to do at that time. I did miss out on a family vacation to Cancun. Like, who picks sports over that?! So I guess that is a drawback, that I didn't get to spend time with my family and my friends get mad when I say that I can't hang out because I have homework to do and I don't want to be tired for tomorrow and like they get mad at that but in the end I feel like sports help me. They help me stay on track and that's what I need in my life.

Karen describes the importance of balancing work, school, and athletics, "Oh it's a lot of time. It never stops. I also work so I'm on the move daily. If I'm not at school I'm in the gym and if I'm not in the gym I'm at work." Kylie agrees with the difficulty in balancing academics, work, and athletics, "It's definitely hard to time manage because playing a sport you have to dedicate most of your time to playing a sport. So financially it has been hard because I can't work."

The competition at the collegiate athletic level requires a lot of sacrifice to be dedicated to practice on top of academics in order to be able to compete. Anthony said,

I would say that the real drawbacks are your time commitment. In order to be committed to this you have to put in a lot of time where some people may not want to put in that full however long it needs to be to do it. I think that's the biggest drawback is the time but you have to put it in, in order to compete at this level.

Kaden describes the difficulties watching his friends be able to choose what they want to do in their free time. They can party and have the experience of a social life. To compete in college athletics you have to be willing to sacrifice things like that. He states,

I think some of the drawbacks are, I have friends that are and aren't athletes, some of them that aren't athletes definitely are not more sociable but they are able to kind of do what they want. They can afford to go out late at night and party, fraternities, sororities as compared to when you are in athletics especially wrestling, you need to be on the ball and doing what is right for you. It's just kind of a strict regimen as an athlete. Compared to if you are not an athlete you have a little bit, you can choose, you have more free time.

The student-athletes all indicated that the sacrifice of time was the biggest drawback to being a student-athlete. In general, balancing work, family, life, academics, and athletics was extremely difficult, however, many of the student-athletes indicated that despite the sacrifice, it forced them to learn how to effectively manage time to meet all the expectations placed on them both in and out of the classroom.

Theme 4 - The athletic experience at CC-A provides opportunities to develop soft skills and learn lessons as a result of participation. Student-athletes commented

specifically about their growth and development in a number of areas as a result of their athletic participation. These areas are outlined below.

Communication. An impact and lessons in communication were had and discussed throughout interviews with all of the student-athletes. Athletics was seen as assisting with their growth as a social being and communicator. Student-athletes consistently commented on how athletic participation forced them to communicate with many different people including coaches, teammates, administrators, opponents, officials, and professors. They learned how to communicate particularly with different groups of people in ways that they never had in the past. Anthony describes his growth as a communicator,

I would say coming out of high school even in this interview for instance I wouldn't have spoken as well. I would have been a little bit more apprehensive figuring out what I have to say. It forces you, you need to communicate to do well at this level. It forces you to become a better communicator. Like say I am turning a double play or working with somebody I tell them where they have to get the ball. If they bobble it and I see they are not going to make it to that base I have to communicate to them what to do and vice a versa.

Confidence. Every student-athlete indicated that their self-confidence grew as a result of their athletic participation. Not simply their self-confidence in their sport but socially, academically, and in other aspects of their life. Kaden describes the growth of his self-confidence within sport,

You win a match or you beat a good kid it's a great feeling for all the hard work you put in and knowing that it's paid off. It gives you a huge boost of confidence. Even when you lose it's not detrimental. You learn how to deal with that and you kind of learn how to get better from it and keep working harder and smarter.

Anthony provides an example where he has gained confidence with his ability to be successful academically while still balancing his sport. He describes how he has realized that he can push himself further than he thought,

I think it's shown me that I can do more than I think I can. Even, yea in that aspect I can do more than I think I can do. Like for example everyone says oh my God wow that's a hard major, and it is a hard major and doing it along with baseball is even harder but so far I'm doing pretty well I am able to timeline it and do pretty well, so even in that aspect it's show me I can do more than what my mind may be telling that I can do.

Discipline. This was another common theme among all student-athletes that their participation had an impact on them becoming more disciplined individuals. Karen describes discipline as one of the most important things she learned from her athletic participation,

Socially as well as maturing, it made me much wiser and know that I can't just go out and do anything like maybe I have friends that go out and party and I know I have a game the next day. It taught me discipline and definitely matured me.

Anthony provides a good example of how discipline through his sport can be applied outside of athletics particularly in the workforce. He describes the importance of being on time, working with difficult people, and meeting deadlines. Anthony says,

If you are going to a job interview or you have a job already, you don't want to be late, there's going to be people there already, you're not going to be the only one working there. You have to work with them and get along with them even if you don't like them you have to learn to do it. So it [athletics] shows you how to get stuff done especially it helps you with timelines knowing that hey I might have practice this night so I have to get something done before that or I have practice these two days my only free day is in between I have to get my work done there.

Leadership/Followership. Student-athletes all indicated they were provided opportunities to develop and grow their leadership and followership skills through their participation. Some felt they learned to lead vocally while others indicated they led more by doing. Every student-athlete described the impact being an athlete had on their leadership skills. Further, every student-athlete described the importance of knowing how and when to be a follower and listen. Kylie provides a good example and commented on her development as both a leader and follower and how her experiences with each varied by sport. She describes how she learned to both lead and follow. As a soccer sophomore captain she was looked upon to lead, however, as a latecomer walk on in basketball she had to learn to be a follower and listen to learn the plays, etc. She describes this leadership dynamic below,

A better leader with soccer definitely. I was chosen to be captain most of the games. They chose two each game depending on how you did at practice. Because I was a second year player most of the players listened to me more than someone else and if something was happening they would come to me and ask me what they could do so I feel like I led them even though we didn't make it far like to nationals and to stuff like that. I feel like I was a good leader there. As a follower like with basketball my sister would come up to me and tell me you are doing this wrong or that wrong and this is what you need to do and to learn the plays is difficult to me because everybody already knew them and I was coming straight out of soccer so they already had scrimmages and practices and I came in right after my soccer season so I didn't even have a break and I was expected to know the plays and you had to just jump into it and start to learn in order to play in the games.

Maturity. Every student-athlete indicated they grew and matured as a result of their participation in athletics. Whether it was learning to work with people and socialize with those different from them or helping them grow and mature as an academic, athletics was seen as having a direct impact on maturational growth. Kaden describes how he matured in all aspects of his life and attributed it to his athletic participation,

I have matured so much since freshman year being here in all aspects of life just being a person in all aspects of my education. I think that's one of the huge things that happens when you play a sport in college and you continue your education in college. You mature a lot.

Karen provides evidence of how athletics helped her mature and grow socially through teaching her discipline and self-control,

Socially as well as maturing. It made me much wiser and know that I can't just go out and do anything like maybe I have friends that go out and party and I know I have a game the next day. It taught me discipline and definitely matured me.

Perseverance. Another theme that permeated every student-athlete interview was perseverance. Athletics seemed to impact the ability for a person to respond positively to setbacks and work harder when things weren't quite going their way. Kylie remarked about how she learned to respond and keep a positive attitude even when things weren't going her way,

Definitely to keep fighting even when you are losing, even when things look like they are not going to work out for you to just keep pushing forward and there is always a way to win in the end.

To further this point, Kaden describes the impact athletics has had on his ability to persist and push forward even when he feels like he can't,

It definitely helps you when you are really tired it just helps you build character. Getting through those really tough practices especially when you are not feeling too well which happens during wrestling season. You are not always going to feel your best. It's like life, you are not going to always be in the best situation but you have to do your best to do what you can and keep going. Keep chugging along...[I learned] how to deal with setbacks. One setback isn't the end of the world or one bad thing that happens to you isn't the end of the world. Even if it

does, the sun comes up tomorrow and there are always ways to fix things. You can always fix your situation no matter how bad it is or how stressful it is. You can always improve yourself and your situation.

Self-Control. Student-athletes indicated that their self-control during difficult situations improved as a direct result of their participation in athletics. Alexa had a great story of how her self-control, particularly when she was under pressure, grew as the result of her participation in basketball,

It did teach me a lot about that [self-control] especially in my first year at basketball when some of the girls would yell at me, I would yell back. Coach came up to me one day and was like you know you have to stop that because I am looking at you to be a captain next year and you are kind of like the third captain now and you have to somehow resolve this without screaming back at them because some people do take it differently. This year I understood that more and I was the resolver of problems. If they ever had a problem they would come to me and I would try to talk calmly especially in games when you are down you just have to talk calmly like, okay everyone relax we got this it's 0-0 let's take it from there. I changed and stopped getting mad when they were yelling at me. I understood they weren't just trying to put me on the spot, after the talk with her, I realized they were yelling at me because we want to reach the same goal and I was obviously just doing something wrong. So I needed to fix that. So rather taking it as they were screaming at me I took it as criticism and that I needed to take that criticism and fix it and turn it into something that would help the team out.

Teamwork. Every student-athlete interviewed talked at length about the impact athletics had on their ability to be a team player. Anthony describes his experience,

I feel that being a student athlete promotes teamwork and helps you work in teams better...I think that's a big one because being part of a team now, a big part of being successful as a team, is working together and that transitions over to a job. Say you are working on a team at a job, in my case say you are designing something, you can't have say one person does this part and another does something else. Two bolts don't line up. You need to have good teamwork on that.

Kylie describes her experience regarding teamwork as part of the soccer and basketball teams and how the players learned to stick together no matter what,

Always being a team player was definitely a big thing. And if someone were to get penalized for something it wasn't just one person you had to go as a team. So if one person is yelled at everyone is punished so it kind of makes you work better together. It's the same for basketball so if one person gets in trouble and isn't giving their all in practice or one of the things we are doing everyone has to do suicides, it's not just that one person. So I guess teamwork and sticking together I definitely took that away from it.

Time Management. One of the most prevalent themes was the ability for student-athletes to practice time management. Numerous times it came up that the interviewees had to work hard to manage their time to stay on top of their work, school, athletic, and life commitments as indicated in Theme 3 above. Many times they pointed that it had

positive effects on as they had to compartmentalize and plan to use the little time they had in the most efficient way possible. Kaden spoke to this in his interview,

I think you learn as far as education goes to manage your time and your workouts and stuff... When you are not a student-athlete you have more free time. You don't have to go to practice every day or have competitions on the weekend so I think you just as a student-athlete have to really I don't want to say you have to really budget and plan out your time well with studying. As an example, before this I have a lab report due tomorrow so after my class I just went into the computer lab, did that and finished that up. I knew I wanted to get it done before practice because I knew after practice I would be tired so it's just one less thing that I have to do now... When you are a student athlete you have to focus on education and athletics. A regimented schedule helps me with my grades. Just having a spare hour to study or get a worksheet done or start homework before practice so after practice you don't have as much it makes it a whole lot easier. Just like you have a set schedule, so like I have class here and I can do some of my homework between class and practice and then after practice I can finish my homework and just relax the rest of the night or do another workout.

Summary. Student-athletes described the opportunity to develop skills such as communication, confidence, discipline, leadership/followership, maturity, perseverance, self-control, teamwork, and time management as a result of athletic participation. Student-athletes view the opportunity to develop these skills positively. They also discuss the importance of the quality of the coaching staff and administrators, the level of competition, the satisfaction level of other student-athletes, the lessons learned through

participation, the connection to faculty, and the importance that having the ability to compete in intercollegiate athletics has had in their lives overall.

Theme 5 – Community college athletics provides postsecondary opportunities for students who may not have considered college as an option. Every student-athlete described some form of life circumstance that made getting an education difficult. Most were financial related but some were personal and family related. In every circumstance, these student-athletes saw athletics and community college as a way to provide them the foundation and a path to an education that would not have otherwise existed. Karen described her experience of coming from a depressed area where many people didn't go on after high school to get an education or do positive things. She attributed her participation in basketball at CC-A as a way to get an education, make a positive future for herself which ultimately saved her life,

I think that basketball saved me and saved my life. Without it I wouldn't have went to college because of the cost and all the people that are in debt. Basketball I think saved my life. I think it saved my life. I come from a background where there is not a lot of positive things around me and I know a lot of people around me that just don't go to school and it just helped me. Around my house people know who I am and they motivate me because they tell me I'm like the only person that is doing something positive coming from where they are coming from so they support me.

Kaden also describes his experience of not being financially sound and having to support his mom through medical issues. CC-A was not his only option but it provided

him the opportunity and support to do the best he could with his personal family situation,

There was a lot of other colleges communicating with me and trying to recruit me. The big problem was for me was financials. Financials were a big part of it. I live in a townhome and I live with my mother and my brother, my brother is older than me he is 24/25, but so year financials was the biggest part... A big factor was my mother is sick so I didn't want to leave because my brother commutes to Kean University. I didn't want to leave it all on them. She has liver disease she recently got a liver transplant. That was a big factor. I wanted to stay at home so I could still help out my mom. That was a big factor. Staying at home, sleeping at home, being able to help my family and stuff, the education was solid here, and I knew the wrestling team had a pretty good program going on and then once I found out that [CC-A Wrestling Coach] was the head coach here it definitely helped me because he is one of the best coaches around...I think I'll always remember my time here from the life lessons that I learned just from getting the education and continuing my athletic career here...My coaches for sure. The athletic department here, [Judy] and everyone I think they are great. They try to help everyone as much as they can. They've helped me a lot too so.

Athletics itself provides motivation for some, such as Karen, to attend college and work towards a degree. Athletics provided a pathway to an education which was something that in her community was not the norm. For others, such as Kaden, athletics at the community college was the only option. Personal circumstances with his mother

paired with the desire to continue playing baseball made community college his only real choice.

Theme 6 - Student involvement in extracurricular activities, not just athletic participation, is viewed by participants as valuable because it helps with relationship development, social and academic support, and general college

knowledge. Every student-athlete interviewed had something positive to say about the importance of students being involved in extra-curricular activities. Anthony comments on the important of student involvement and how it creates opportunities to be more social, work with new people, and prepare for life,

I would recommend that people get more and participate more in athletics and clubs because even though people see it as a community college and are going there for school, there are a lot of extracurriculars you can do here. Whether it be academic or athletics there are all sorts of clubs. I think it pushes you to be bigger than yourself to go out and meet people you haven't met before. Being willing to work with all different kinds of people. You see all the different people in the world how different people process different things. It helps you prepare for what may be out there.

Karen describes how getting involved has helped her build relationships with others that have become like family, "Yeah I think people should get involved because it will help them get relationships with people. It creates family and you will always have a bond."

Kylie believes that getting involved helps provide opportunities for people to know what is going on around campus and to get to know the college and community,

I think it's important to know what your college is about and what goes on at your college so if you are not involved in a sport you should definitely get involved in something else. I was looking into a club my freshman year and if I didn't play a sport I was definitely going to get involved in a club because it's important to know that is going on around campus.

The benefits of involvement discussed include developing relationships and making friends with new people, getting support outside the classroom from peers, and getting to know the college. Every student athlete interviewed had nothing but positive things to say about getting involved in extracurricular activities.

Theme 7 - Student-athletes choose to attend CC-A primarily based on affordability, opportunities to participate in athletics, distance from home, and the academic reputation of the institution. The two most prevalent findings related to why students chose to attend the institution included the ability to participate in intercollegiate athletics and the financial benefits of starting at a community college. While the distance to home and the academic reputation of the institution were also important factors every student-athlete indicated they would have most likely attended elsewhere if the institution did not offer athletics and that financials were a deciding factor.

Kylie stated, "If they didn't offer athletics I would probably try to look somewhere else." Kaden also commented on whether he would have attended without

athletics being offered, “I don't think I would have. I would have attended a closer college to me. The deciding factor was that I wanted to wrestle.”

The affordability of community college seemed to be a very important selection factor for all those interviewed. Nearly every student-athlete commented that the choice essentially came down to financials and what their family could afford. Alexa commented on why she chose to attend and said,

I actually got accepted into Ohio State and it just came down to money...I really wanted to go to a four-year first but my brother persuaded me to come here and my parents were unemployed at the time. I got financial aid to fully go here so this seemed to be my only choice although I would have rather gone to a four-year school but we just didn't have the money at the time.

Affordability and the opportunity to participate in athletics paired with the distance from home and reputation of the college seemed to be the most important selection factors described by the student-athletes interviewed at CC-A.

CC-A Administrator Themes

Theme 1 - Athletic participation paired with academic support is perceived by administrators to improve student success. Every administrator indicated the importance of a focus on academics. Academic support such as study halls and tutoring were highlighted. Marie highlights the importance of making academics a focus in athletics,

Again, it is stressed at the beginning of each semester and even during the course of the semester the importance of grades. There's a conversation about, okay, where are you with regard to, you know, midterms and then finals. We're not trying to wait until the end of the semester where we're saying well how did you do and you say you failed out. Then it's too late.

Judy describes her interactions with student-athletes, progress reports, motivation and recognition factors, and how she stresses the importance of academics,

They are and it's by the coaches and by me when they sign eligibility. I tell them what they need to do and they need to go to class...They also get a little extra support within the department with academic progress reports...Most of our coaches do stress that academics is important. We have a team GPA award both male and female that I go through. And it can be competitive at times. I know that some of our teams take pride and I stress that and they want to be the ones at the end at the banquet you know winning that award.

Judy goes further and describes how athletics motivates students to do better in the classroom. She describes how academic performance directly impacts the ability to participate,

An athlete has motivation if they don't get the grades they can't continue playing where the general population, maybe some have a scholarship that they need to keep their GPA up for or their financial aid or the other programs so they are different. They are similar to the athletes. So just the general population, what motivation besides themselves or just their family do they have?

Academic advising assistance is a support offered by the athletic department at CC-A and handled by Judy. Advising is a critical piece of student-athlete success. Tony describes how advising plays a critical role in the athletic department at CC-A in assisting students with meeting the requirements of satisfactory academic progress and NJCAA compliance standards,

We do advising here. We have a general coaches meeting during the month of August just before the students come out and we introduce the new coaches and the old coaches and we talk about how the administration here, both [Judy], my assistant, myself and [staff member], the other assistant, that if they if any of the coaches have any students that have some questions or if the coaches have some questions about students, you know, if the coaches read something here and they're not sure of things, that they can send them in to us. And I do see some, but [Judy] does a lot of athletic advising. She'll say well, you know, depending on the circumstances, to see let her or someone else look at the documents and see where they stand and speak to them. So that would be along the lines of advising. And that's during the year, too. Not just at the beginning of the year. For example, with the in between the sports now, basketball and wrestling so there's advising whether any of them need to go to winter session, or now their programs, they have to, if you remember, they have to be registered as full time students already for the spring term.

Judy describes her role as an academic advisor as being critical to the athlete's academic success,

I believe it helps them time manage and do better in classes. They also get a little extra support within the department with academic progress reports. I actually do a lot of advising and I can help them out with their scheduling and advising and make sure they are on track and they get a little bit more of a personal touch with that.

Marie describes the impact on retention and persistence for student-athletes and those involved in clubs and organizations on campus,

We've had some students we may see that are going by the wayside. We don't just say, uh-huh, you know, just let them go. We make sure we draw them in and see if there's some way we can work with them, but to make them whole again, some students have to sit out maybe for a semester before they can play again, but we work with them to make sure, okay, well maybe you need a tutor. And maybe you need to talk to somebody because there may be some other things that are going on... We don't let students just fall by the wayside, and [Tony] does a wonderful job with his program of assisting all the students. I don't think we leave anybody behind... They know that we care, they want to come to CC-A and participate. Even if that means for some of them, they have to work on getting their grade levels up before they can participate in this sport... Students involved in clubs and organizations are retained.

All administrators interviewed agreed that athletic participation has a strong impact on student retention and persistence particularly during the first year of college.

The risk factors for students differ by sport according to the athletic administration and

thus administration takes steps to be strategic in their interventions for students in these sports and educate the coaches accordingly. Coaches are seen as positively impacting retention and persistence.

Theme 2 - Administration and coaches are critical in creating meaningful experiences for student-athletes through modeling appropriate behavior and providing support. Marie indicated the importance of athletic administration being role models for the students to make the athletic learning experience valuable,

So the athletic director 100 percent has to be a great role model and we have that here because they set the tone for what happens each semester, and also to have the staff that follows suit. Everybody's not perfect. There's nobody perfect on this campus, but I think we are pretty close to having great role models for our students... We all try to provide and present ourselves as really good role models. We have like zero tolerance for a lot of different things and as I said we try not to because this office is also the judicial office as well, we try not to be punitive. We try to have every incident, unless it's something that we just can't avoid, not be it be a learning lesson as opposed to something that sets them up with a record or something like that.

Both athletic administrators point to the importance of coaches in the development process of the student athlete. Hiring the “right” coaches as well as training them to be effective at supporting the student through the development process is critical. Judy describes the importance of the coaches to creating a valuable growth experience,

It starts with them and the how the program is run in day to day operations it all stems from there down and you are sending a message to your staff on how you are going to conduct your program. From how they behave to how they practice to games and how they present themselves every which way it all stems from the coaches.

Tony gives some insight into the importance of the head coach and how he values and teaches them to provide appropriate coaching and advice to the student-athletes in the right situations and time. He particularly discusses how he interacts differently when them based on the situation but ultimately values their methodologies, sport knowledge, attitude, and the impact they are having on the growth of the student-athletes,

I've let some head coaches go that I didn't particularly care for their methodology, their background, their technique, and part of the reason is not that they didn't know the sport...It's their attitude, their motivation. It's their technique. I mean, I just had a conversation with my basketball coach, the young one, who was spending too much time yelling at them, and at this time of the year when your numbers are down, you know, yelling is not the best way to get the most out of them. The ones that you have there are the successful ones academically and so on. Successful in the sense that they're still in uniform there. Where the other, you know, starting five may now be ineligible so now the techniques are important with a head coach. So, you know, I do you do get an idea of people's personalities, you know, you'll get an idea of my personality and so on. You may not agree with it. You may not you may want to know how to make it better, but

it's important because they're affecting, you know, a number of individuals, young individuals. So to me that's important.

There was a general hierarchal theme surrounding the idea leaders as role models. Marie, the Vice President, describes this about the athletic administration, Tony and Judy, who in turn describe the importance of this for the coaches. Administration allude to the importance of the values, methods, and ideals aligning within each level of leadership in the athletic program.

Theme 3 - Athletics provides opportunities for interpersonal connections with others at the institution that foster support, implicit respect, and encouragement.

The importance of connections that had positive impacts on the student-athlete experience were found as a theme throughout every administrator interview. Connection themes included the links between students and administration/staff, the athletic department, coaches, counseling staff, faculty, and other students. These will be further discussed in sections below.

Administration/staff connections. A number of references to the importance of the student-athlete connection with administration and staff was made by all administrators interviewed. Marie even finds ways to keep an open door to connect with students,

I want to say the accessibility to the department, to me. I have on occasion met with student-athletes and I'm thinking of a time when we did have an issue with the women's basketball team where, you know, 'cause what we try to do is not be punitive. We try to present a learning experience for students. So the

accessibility to me is always there. Whether students continue want to come in individually or because there is an issue that we need to talk about collectively, we have done that.

Tony describes the importance he feels and how he is able to build his connections with students at the beginning of the semester when the students are most open to seeking out help,

The best time of the year I like in my job is at the beginning of each semester because that's when students want something, you know, administratively so they come in to see me. And that's when I speak to them more, you know, I used to be a dean of students, you know, at a high school. Not a dean like here, but it dealt with discipline, you know, you dealt with students all the time. And that's more enjoyable because I felt, and I still feel, that that is when you're able to project, able to give a little bit of yourself to students and you're willing to actually listen to them, and that's important... What else have we seen. I think just speaking to them on a one on one basis. I see a difference in a month or two where you can actually have more of a conversation with them, you know, not necessarily personal, but to be able to have a conversation with an athlete and someone who to them is, you know, the boss or the administrator. And you can talk about different things.

Judy believes the connections the student-athletes form within the athletic department staff are critical to their growth, development, success, and retention. The

more connections they build, the more people that support them through their journey at the institution. She says,

I think it's the staff that they interact with in our building. For example our equipment people they interact with them day in and out. You know getting their laundry and their uniforms and stuff. Then I notice, ya know, can I borrow the microwave I need to nuke my lunch and whatever else. I need this extra wash today can you help me out. They get an extra bond with the staff besides just the coaches and administration... I do sometimes hear them [the staff] say you know you gotta go to class so they do send that message in their own way because a lot of them are kind of in a friend relationship.

Judy continues and discusses the importance of the athletic administrator relationship with the student-athlete. The student-athletes need to see you visibly supporting them. This shows you care. Keeping an open door policy is a must and developing meaningful, supportive relationships helps the students know that they can come to you. She states,

I think it can be important but they [administrators] need to be visible with an open door policy. I am here. The student athlete if they see you are at games and care I think they respect and embrace you more. If you are not visible to them then there is a disconnect...I would like to say I develop meaningful relationships with my players and other teams. I've helped and recommended for jobs and everything else then they come back and work here the ones I know I can trust. I like the athletes that work, because then I can hold them more accountable.

Coach connections. The connection the coaches' form with the student-athletes is viewed as critical by all administrators interviewed. Judy describes the connection between student-athlete and coach and how it differs at a community college vs. a four-year institution,

I think they are more of a mentor and more of a parental figure at times because of the life and the type of kids we get here. They are not a coach just about the x's and o's and shut it down. These kids come with a lot of issues and a lot of times you are a psychologist, a parent, a father/mother figure, whatever. At a four-year they don't have that as much, they are usually. If they are at a junior college they are usually here for a reason, whether they didn't have the grades to get it or they weren't mature enough or ready. Where at a four-year school those kids are living away. The parents have guided them in high school to get there so they have that support where I think at this level the kids need that extra support that the coaches have to give them.

Counseling staff connections. A distinct theme was seen at CC-A from the administrators of a connection to the counseling staff at the institution. CC-A administrators described utilizing proactively their counseling staff as advisors for the student-athletes. Tony describes how he introduces counseling to the students at the initial all athlete meeting,

It's at the very first week as I said. The coaches are there. I also bring [name redacted] from counseling and he introduces himself. He spends a few minutes in telling what his services are, why he's there. He had, I think he played basketball

in college. I'm not sure if that was the sport he played, so he let them know that he is aware of what the responsibilities will be, you know, the workload and things like that. And, you know, again by doing that, by giving some material, by giving cards, his own business cards to it, you know, we could have the first meeting like this, we could have 200 people there. So it's an introduction the first week, especially, you know, to the first year student-athletes, but also as a reminder to the second year that these people, you know, or this person or the counseling is there for them so he's good that he never misses anything.

Marie also supports the importance of the connection between the counseling staff and the student-athletes. She describes the importance of the Athletic Director getting counseling involved with the student-athletes to create a proactive connection,

I also want to say that Tony also gets the counseling department involved. In the beginning of each semester they meet with [counseling staff member] who meets with the athletic departments. I mean, the athletic teams and they talk about what's the goal for the semester, and clearly he does step in to provide any type of intervention, should we see a problem arising, so that before it gets to a head, we've already resolved it... He also does go down and, you know, that rah, rah kind of conversation at the beginning of each semester, to talk about the importance of grades. Just as important as winning the game.

Faculty connections. Student-athletes are seen to develop connections with faculty that other students just don't have as a result of their participation in athletics.

Tony describes this,

We have several faculty members that are interested in baseball so when they get a baseball player, they talk more about it, and it starts to talk about, they start to have another relationship than they wouldn't, just about history of Western Civilization or something like that... Then there is a conversation between the faculty member and the coach. You know, again, keeping in mind they're not asking any more questions, but there's just something that makes one student stand out than another student. Than the other 20 students in the class. So that proves helpful.

This connection between student-athletes and faculty is corroborated by Judy. She describes how this connection can be formed simply by the students being in the building more than others,

There is the bond with some of the faculty and staff here. The added opportunities, you know I hired some athletes to work in the building and that creates some opportunities for them elsewhere on campus and stuff. I think they get an overall love for the campus and for the college more so than if you are just someone coming in and out and doing classes. The more you get involved in campus life, the more you have a bond to that institution.

Other student connections. Other connections that administrators see is that between the students. Athletics creates an opportunity for students to connect on levels that wouldn't be possible elsewhere. Tony describes this,

So here with the facilities here or even a lot of our classes are in this building, too, so they do get to socialize in between during the breaks and so on. So it is

important that they have something like this...It's allowing students to deal more with people of the same age group. They deal more with people from different environment or from schools in Pennsylvania where they wouldn't normally, may not have that experience. They're going to possibly if they do well, could be travelling somewhere even further. Our baseball team is going down to Myrtle Beach in a few weeks, so these are experiences that many may not have. So it is important.

Summary. Connections with other students, coaches, staff, administrators, faculty, and counselors were described as an important part of the athletic experience by administrators. These connections were seen as having a positive impact on student-athlete integration, persistence, development, and performance.

Theme 4 - Balancing academics and other responsibilities with athletics can be a drawback to participation. By far the largest drawback identified by all administrators was that related to the amount of time a student must invest to be a student-athlete. Many students have commitments to other areas of their life including academics, work, and family that they must find ways to balance with athletics. Tony describes the typical athlete encountered at CC-A,

The time...the type of student that we have here, and it may be other places, too, this in my opinion, this is more of a blue collar type of situation. The towns or a lot of them are what I call blue collar. They're workers. They come from families that are still working. So many of these students are working...to help pay for their tuition, to help pay for the normal things. Maybe something with the car or

insurance. So they're trying to work with the schoolwork, the athletic part of it, the teamwork and also with just, you know, paying the bills, you know, not house bills but bills, you know, for the things that I had said. A lot of them do help with their tuition payments so they have a busy day, you know, and it is college...

Drawbacks in the sense that they really have to learn how to manage their time, and it's not an easy thing to do. Whether it be a student athlete, whether you're an adult, or a family man. It's hard, you know, you are a teenager or you are 18 or 20 years old, you do have the other students or you do have your other friends at home that may have more time, more free time possibly than you do, so you need to be, you need to be more structured, even though you may not know that, and that makes it more difficult...It's something that makes it more difficult, you know, to mature.

Judy agrees with this and describes the time investment student-athletes must make to on top of their studies, work, and family commitments,

It's like a part time job. It's at least 20 hours a week that they are putting in and don't add travel time to that. If it's a week where they have three road games that's a good 30 hours a week that they are sitting here putting the time and effort into...Getting back late with travel and getting up early for class. That's the only thing. Whether you are at a two or four-year that's the same drawback. To me there is nothing better than being a student athlete.

Marie corroborates this as a drawback in her description of possible drawbacks of being a student-athlete at CC-A,

Some might not have the, I want to say the wherewithal or the maturity to be able to balance the athletic side of the house with the academic side of the house. You know, you have to have a sense of maturity to understand how to manage time in order to do both.

Two other drawbacks identified by individual participants but not discussed by others include special treatment for student-athletes (Judy) and that sometimes the focus is placed on athletics above academics (Marie).

Theme 5 - The administration strives to assist student-athletes growth and development of soft skills. Administration all commented that they do their best to provide meaningful experiences for the student-athletes and that for the most part, they are doing that. They believe they are helpful and caring as well as provide an open door for the students to ask questions or get assistance with just about anything. Tony describes what he sees as his part of being welcoming and providing a positive atmosphere to the student-athletes within the department,

I like walking down a hall and saying hello to people and most of the time I don't know. The faces are familiar, but I don't know who they are. So it's good, it's good to be positive. I always invite them to come into the office here if they have a question. And someone here could possibly help them or we can send them someplace where they can get help. But I tell them that, you know, we're not going to do everything for you. You're an adult. You're a young adult. You got to do something here yourself. This is not high school anymore. And you have responsibilities.

Judy mirrors this sentiment and believes it is important that the student-athletes find their experience meaningful. She adds that the student-athletes are given opportunities to learn important lessons and the administration try their best to provide an environment where this can happen,

The lessons on what they can take into a job on how to get along with others whether they don't like them or not if they are on a team well that could be the same person you have to work with day in and day out next door or they are on your team your work team study. You are going to have to deal with that and learn how to deal with good and bad relationships that take you through the rest of your life. You are going to learn how to succeed and fail and you can take lessons out of that whether personal or work related...It depends on the crowd they decide to follow. They can step up and be that person that wants to have the ball at the end of the game or they could become the follower at the end of the bench... it's a decision and they learn from that...I think they can learn from their mistakes and learn the type of person they are if they are willing to embrace it...[I think they describe their overall experience with the athletic department as] helpful, willing, they want us to succeed.

There were a number of soft skills and areas of growth that administrators believed athletics participation at CC-A had an impact on. These are broken down and described in more detail below.

Community service. Each of the three administrators described the importance of student-athletes participation in community service. Service learning and the idea of

giving back was described by administration as valued and an important part of the student development process. Judy would like to see more teams get involved in community service,

That's one thing I wish we would be able to get our coaching staff on board with is going out into the community a little more and promoting that a little more.

The champions of character award has brought this into them a little more. I have some coaches that will try on their own.

Tony and Marie both made mention of some of the activities the teams took with volunteering at a nursing home and to raise funds for breast cancer awareness. There seemed to be a great appreciation for these types of activities and a value placed on them, however, not all teams were required to participate and only those that did were able to grow as a result of their experience.

Confidence. All three administrators believed that self-confidence grows directly as a result of athletic participation. Tony describes this and uses wrestling as an example,

Yeah, the self confidence is that you're able to participate, you're part of a unit, like I said, of the team. Self-esteem, you know, it's like wrestling, that's more of an individual sport. There what you do is you, you know, it's totally just you, and if the other opponent is if you're better than him, you know, that's one thing at that point. If he's better than you, it is it gives you some confidence in what you can do and what you need to do, you know, in the future to make yourself better.

Discipline/Integrity. All administrators believed that athletic participation had a direct impact on a student-athletes discipline and integrity. Tony describes this and relates it to team dress codes, rules, and standards for representing the athletic program,

I think so because we tell them how to dress, if you know what I mean. If they're going to a game, they're going to be in their travel uniforms. And we tell this to the coaches, too. You're going to look as a team. You're going to look as a unit, you know, and you're representing the school, but just as important, if not more important, you're representing yourself. So the behavior, whether it be getting on and off the van, whether it be going into a restaurant, you know, is important.

And that's a learning situation to us. Behavior, you know, the language or lack of language and things like that, yes, it does make a difference.

Leadership. Administrators all agree that participation in athletics inherently assists with the growth of student-athletes leadership skills through providing the opportunity for students to practice leadership in a safe, monitored, and controlled environment. Marie believes that leadership is one of the top opportunities for growth for student-athletes at CC-A and she is extremely proud of that. She states,

There are some that rise to the top and there are people that are just followers, but I do think it does especially at a community college set them on a course that hopefully when they move forward will help them develop into a leader and it doesn't have to be a global leader that we hear about, but that can, you know, take the lead on certain things because they've participated as a team member. And some people never get to that point. They'll always be a follower. I think the

important thing for me is that they've had some type of growth and they know how to think things through to be able to solve a problem. And that's important, problem solving is important.

Tony describes this at more of a micro level and relates it to the experience of a basketball point guard and their specific role on the team and how as a point guard you have to know when to take charge and lead and when to step back and follow,

Yeah, a leader, yes, because you have the responsibilities I had mentioned a minute ago. You can take charge. If you on a basketball court, if you're a point guard, you know, you have a certain role, and there in life later on you do have certain roles that you have to deal with or do.

Maturity. The ability to mature was a very large theme from all three administrators. They discussed how student-athletes grow as an athlete but also as a scholar and person as a result of their participation in athletics. Tony describes an opportunity to mature through an athletic example of the ups and downs of learning to win and lose but still picking yourself up and working hard the next day,

All these feelings that you have, all these emotions that you have helps grow, helps grow maturity, you know, being able to play a game and lose by 40 points and then go to practice the next day and saying, all right, well we didn't like losing by 40 points so we have to work at something in order to make it better the next time around. Or we will see this team again the next time around. So it is important.

Judy describes how student-athletes mature as academics in an example regarding how important the connection between athletics and academics is to assist with the maturing process,

The lesson that it's going to catch up to them not going to class and trying to 'BS' their way out of it. I think they realize that if I go to class at least I can play and if my teachers see me making an effort and are willing to work with me. Sometimes they don't just get it. It takes them falling flat on their face before they understand the importance of really going to class.

Self-Control. All three administrators have seen growth in student-athletes ability to self-regulate. Tony describes how athletics has an impact on this area of growth,

Difficult situations, yes, because it is competition, you know, you are, one minute you're in the middle of a basketball game and, you know, and fighting it out, and the next minute you're asking to shake your hand and saying, all right, you know, whatever it is, it is, and you hear them as they cross each other saying, you know, good game. Whether they mean it or not, but even just the idea of being able to touch them and say, you know, good game, you know, it is what it is. And you're able to exist. It's not the end of the world. You know, there will be another game. That's what I think is important.

Teamwork. The idea of teamwork was referenced multiple times in that athletes learn how to function in a group and this leads to skills that can be applied outside the athletics area in the real world as an employee. Marie describes her take on this,

Well I think the whole idea of working as a team is an important one because it's just not one person, one woman, one man who is going to win a game. They have to learn how to work as a team. I, you know, to me that's not the, that's not the easiest thing to do. It may look easy, but I don't believe it's easy because I may think that I'm a better scorer than you, but that might not necessarily be the truth. I might have to learn to back off and let you be the person that takes the lead.

Judy describes that this is a skill that is learned through athletic participation and that the coaches really work hard to promote this to their athletes. There are also further gains from these lessons when student-athletes transition to employees. She states,

Yes I think they learn that. I think the coaches try to promote that and make them a better teammate and person. I know for a fact they do...They are gaining the skills and the maturity when they get out to be a team player. That rolls on further on when they get into jobs learning time management to learn how to juggle and multitask.

Time management. Time management was another theme that was pervasive throughout the administrative interviews. It was seen as an important skill to have that athletics builds in participants at this level. Marie describes this and explains how it leads to greater maturity,

The whole idea of time management is very important and students have to understand and recognize what that's all about. That's for everybody. I mean, when you're in school, you have to figure out how do I balance this, you know, how do I put in place the time needed to take care of course work and then be able

to because there's a lot of time that they spend practicing, you know, and then they go off. If we have away games, they're travelling, you know, to be able to bring and I use that word, the maturity that goes along with knowing, how to be able to do that.

Tony reiterates this idea in his own way and believes that being able to effectively time manage creates a responsible person,

If you have a practice or a game that you have to be somewhere at a certain time, you'll learn that through later on that when you make a, when you're supposed to be somewhere at a certain time, you have to be there. And what's expected of you as an athlete will be expected of you in whatever you're doing later on. You do end up with in my opinion being more responsible.

Summary. Administrators describe throughout the interviews the importance of making the athletic experience meaningful for student athletes. The description on how to make the experience meaningful centered primarily on the development of soft-skills such as community service (servant leadership), confidence, discipline/integrity, leadership, maturity, self-control, teamwork, and time management as a result of athletic participation. Further discussion is had surrounding how to best set the stage or environment for student-athletes to have the opportunity to learn these soft skills.

Theme 6 - Students involved in extracurricular activities are perceived by administrators to perform better academically and have more opportunities for development, support, and connections than those that are not. Tony describes the

value of being an involved student providing opportunities to develop relationships and be a part of the community,

There is a value to it [being involved]. For the things we spoke about. As far as having people, common people together, doing an experienced thing. Making you feel like you do belong on campus. Now is it just the athletic team or do you feel more belonging to CC-A? That's important. It gives you something to think about. It gives you communication with other students during the course of the day or the week. So there is value to [being involved], but, again, it may not be for everybody because it's a full plate.

Marie describes the impact of involved students as being retained students. Even though she doesn't have data to back it up, in her experience she believes that they do better academically,

I want to believe that they do a little bit better. I do know, I want to believe because I don't have stats, even those students that are involved in clubs and organizations do a lot better, but I do believe that they do better than just your average come to school, leave here, go to work...Because, again, as I said, an involved student is a retained student, whether it's in the athletic department or any of the other clubs and organizations that we have, or the, you know, like Phi Beta Kappa, big organizations that we have.

Judy feels that involved students are more connected to the school and thus are happier with their experience. She believes they make more friends, perform better, and are provided more development opportunities than those that simply commute just for

class. She provides a good example about how involvement can make all the difference in the experience a student has,

I think it's a good thing always being involved more. The more you are involved on campus the more you feel connected to the school...By coming home that's not enough being there three days a week. You need to be there full time to experience it all. You need to embrace living on campus and experiencing what college is. It's the same thing at a commuter school. If you just drive in and out every day you are not getting the full college experience you possibly could.

Whether you are involved in a club or another organization or athletics. The more you get involved the more you are getting that full experience that you should have. This is so important because of the memories and the people you meet that can become lifelong friends that you can count on. You are getting everything out of those experiences good and bad.

Every administrator interviewed believes that students that are involved do better academically, make connections, and have more opportunities to develop than those that are not.

CC-A Selection Factor Survey Data

The Student-Athlete College Selection Factor Survey was administered to all student-athletes at CC-A (approximately 160). Of the 160 students, 34 began the survey (N=34) and 21 completed enough of it for it to be useful for this study (n=21). The survey had a 21.25% engagement rate and a 13.13% completion rate. Table 7 below provides demographic information for the student-athletes completing the selection factor

survey. The average age was 19.57 years with a range of 18 to 21. 57% of respondents were male and 43% female. 57% were second year athletes and 43% were first year. The average number of colleges applied to was 2. 16.67% made an athletic recruiting visit to CC-A. On average 0.57 athletic recruiting visits were made overall. 42.86% indicated that CC-A was their first choice institution and 33.33% indicated it was the only school they were accepted to. The sports represented in this survey were 30.77% soccer, 19.23% basketball, 11.54% wrestling, 15.38% softball, 3.85% cross country, 7.69% indoor track and field, 7.69% outdoor track and field, and 3.85% baseball.

Table 7

CC-A Selection Factor Survey Demographic Information (n = 21)

Average Age	19.57 years
Male	57%
Female	43%
1st Year Participant	43%
2nd Year Participant	57%
Sports Represented	
Soccer	30.77%
Basketball	19.23%
Wrestling	11.54%
Softball	15.38%
Cross Country	3.85%
Indoor Track/Field	7.69%
Outdoor Track/Field	7.69%
Baseball	3.85%
Average Number of Colleges Applied To	2
Percent That Made a Recruiting Visit	16.67%
Avg. Total Recruiting Visits All Colleges	0.57
CC-A Was First Choice School	42.86%
CC-A Was The Only School Accepted At	33.33%

Student-athletes were asked to rank selection factors as either “No Importance”, “Slightly Important”, “Moderately Important”, or “Very Important”. These answers were given numerical values from "1" to "4" respectively and averaged for each grouping of factors. As is indicated in Table 8 below, the highest ranked average was for factors related to academic programs and social atmosphere, aid and tuition, individual role on team and athletic goals, and interactions with coaches and teammates. This aligns well with the qualitative findings from "Theme SA7" above. This theme indicated student-

athletes choose to attend CC-A primarily based on "affordability" which relates directly to the second highest factor in the survey "Aid and Tuition", "opportunities to participate in athletics" which relates directly to the third highest factor "Individual Role on Team and Athletic Goals" in the survey, the "distance from home" which relates to the fifth ranked factor "Campus Life and Location" from the survey, and the "academic reputation of the institution" which relates to the top factor in the survey "Academic Programs and Social Atmosphere".

It is plausible that the fourth ranked factor, "Interactions with Coaches and Teammates" scored so high based on the fact that the athletes were surveyed after they had participated for a year and had a chance to develop relationships with coaches and teammates. This may have slightly inflated the rank of this factor as students were not answering the questions immediately after choosing to attend CC-A.

Table 8

CC-A Selection Factor Averages (n = 21)

Number	Name	Average
1	Academic Programs and Social Atmosphere	2.97
7	Aid and Tuition	2.90
2	Individual Role on Team and Athletic Goals	2.70
10	Interactions with Coaches and Teammates	2.67
8	Campus Life and Location	2.44
9	Facilities and Academic Support for Athletes	2.38
3	Peers, Parents, Friendliness of Campus, and Weather	2.22
5	Team Reputation and Success	2.21
4	Secondary Team Characteristics	2.09
6	High School Influences and Prior Experiences	1.98

CC-A Summary of Findings

There were three important strands of research from which the findings from CC-A were identified which included student-athlete interviews, administrator interviews, and student-athlete surveys. Seven themes were identified through the student-athlete interviews and six through the administrator interviews.

There was alignment between the student-athlete and administrator themes. Both groups agreed that athletics had a positive influence on academic motivation, persistence, and performance, provided opportunities for important interpersonal connections, and provided opportunities to develop soft skills. Both also agree that extracurricular involvement, not just in athletics, is a valuable tool that provides support, relationships, and integration into the college community. Another finding which aligned was that balancing academics and other responsibilities with athletics and the amount of sacrifice to participate was the main drawback of participation, however, student-athletes were able to use this as an opportunity to learn how to effectively time manage.

Some areas of the interviews had emergent themes that were discussed by one group and not by the other. For example, student-athletes indicated college would not have been an option to them without the opportunities provided by athletics at the community college. Another emergent theme from the administrator interviews included the important part administrators and coaches play in creating meaningful experiences for student-athletes through modeling appropriate behavior and utilizing effective development techniques.

In regards to questions regarding selection factors, student-athletes during interviews indicated they chose to attend CC-A primarily based on affordability, opportunities to participate in athletics, distance from home, and the academic reputation of the institution. This aligned well with the survey results from CC-A as these themes all ranked within the top five of the selection factor survey averages.

Study Findings Community College B (CC-B)

Participants from New Jersey Non-Scholarship Community College B (CC-B)

Community College B (CC-B) is a suburban serving institution with an enrollment of approximately 13,000 students. CC-B offers 11 intercollegiate athletic sport offerings that are participated in by approximately 140 student-athletes. Four second year student-athletes were selected and interviewed based on criteria for diversity including sport participation, gender, and GPA. There were two male and two female athletes interviewed with GPA's ranging from a 3.45 to a 2.35. One athletic administrator, the Athletic Director, and one chief student administrator, the Vice President for Student Success, were interviewed at CC-B as indicated in Table 9 below.

Table 9

CC-B Student-Athlete & Administrator Interview Profiles (n = 6)

SA/Admin	Name	Gender	GPA	Sport(s) / Job Title
SA	Mark	Male	3.45	Lacrosse
SA	Natalie	Female	3.43	Soccer, Basketball, Softball
SA	Sara	Female	2.96	Soccer
SA	Steven	Male	2.35	Baseball
Admin	Elkin	Male	N/A	Director of Athletics
Admin	Ronald	Male	N/A	Vice President for Student Success

The Student Athlete College Selection Factor Survey was also sent out to all of the 140 student-athletes of which 27 responded for a 19.3% response rate. 11 responses were complete enough to use. A number of statistical analyses were completed to ensure reliability of each of the 10 factors. Ultimately a Chronbach's alpha analysis was performed on each factor and is noted in Chapter 3, Table 4.

Sara. Sara is a second year women's soccer player at CC-B with a 2.96 GPA. When selecting a college she had earned herself a scholarship to play soccer at a Division I University in Maryland. Early into her time at that school she realized she was not ready or willing to be so far from home. It was too late to consider any other options for college except community college. Since both of her parents graduated from CC-B, it seemed a good choice. Although CC-B was not her first choice for school, she has enjoyed the experience, made excellent connections to her coaches, and was able to

mature. She is nervous about moving on but believes her time at CC-B was a worthwhile growth experience.

Mark. Mark is a second year men's lacrosse player with a 3.45 GPA. After graduating high school he had a difficult time deciding on a college. He was not comfortable making a decision at that time so he chose to begin his college career at a community college, save some money, and figure out what he wanted to do as a major. He credits his athletic participation and time at CC-B with helping him grow and learn discipline. Now that he has had the opportunity to play college lacrosse, he sees transferring to a four-year and playing as a possibility.

Natalie. Natalie is a second year women's soccer, basketball, and softball player with a 3.43 GPA. She had a scholarship to attend and play sports at a DII school in New Jersey, but chose not to attend as they did not offer the major she was interested in. After turning them down, she realized she wasn't sure if that program of study was what she really wanted to do. In an effort to not spend a lot of time and possibly money figuring that out, she was influenced to attend CC-B by her sister who was also a student-athlete. She believes athletics help keep her on track academically and that she has grown tremendously from her participation.

Steven. Steven is a second year baseball player with a 2.35 GPA. He comes from a modest family and is a self-proclaimed "momma's boy". While he was being looked at by a number of Division I athletic programs, he chose to begin at CC-B based on financials. He wasn't being offered enough money to be able to start in a four-year program. He is extremely satisfied with his selection to attend CC-B and was able to

make a diverse group of friends, save a lot of money, and grow as a person and baseball player. He credits athletics with providing motivation to attend class and do well academically.

Elkin. Elkin has been involved in athletics his entire life. He began his experience working for a minor league baseball team and eventually the New York Yankees before accepting the Assistant Athletic Director position at a DIII Community College in New York. After a few years he was offered the Athletic Director position at a small community college in Maryland which he accepted. A few years later he settled in at CC-B as the Athletic Director which he has done for the past five years. He loves what he does at CC-B and takes a lot of pride in creating an excellent experience for all student-athletes that attend.

Ronald. Ronald is the current Vice President for Student Success at CC-B. He manages the entire division of enrollment management and student development at the institution. With over 19 years of experience at CC-B he has seen many different areas of the college and believes in the importance athletics play in making an institution attractive to prospective students. Further, he sees athletics as a way to provide opportunities for growth, development, involvement, connections, and ultimately retention.

CC-B Student-Athlete Themes

Theme 1 - Athletic participation has a positive impact on academic motivation, persistence, and performance. Student-athletes indicated that coaches and administrators stressed the importance of academics before athletics. To this end,

student-athletes felt supported to get academic help and utilize the athletic study room located within the athletic department. Student-athletes would also assist each other in different subjects if they had questions. All interviewees agreed that without athletics, they wouldn't do as well academically. Steven describes the impact of athletics, how it made him a better student, and some of the motivation it provides,

You had to maintain a 2.0 GPA. That's always in the back of your head if you fail a test, the next one you have to come back and try to ace it. I would say it definitely made me a better student having a neat schedule, not being all over the place, knowing when I have a test, writing everything down. It's just more neat...I would say it made me, say I didn't go to class the one day it affects the whole team, so it's a whole team aspect that I have to do my responsibilities to help the team to play. I've talked to a kid that goes to another community college in state. He said if it wasn't for baseball he wouldn't even go to class. It's in the back of your head that you really have to have and bear down and say if I don't go to class it's really affecting 30 other guys and their whole career pretty much.

Mark describes how student-athletes benefitted from getting tutoring and being able to study together,

You do get benefits if you really need help with classes. The coaches will go the extra way, not to do anything illegal, but they will do extra things to try and get you some sort of tutoring from someone they know or something like that. Being a student athlete doesn't just come with benefits though. If someone on your team, it's a lot of having to count on your teammates too... We would study, it was

a lot of doing stuff on your own but there were weeks where I remember during the fall where we would get together and do some studying. The coaches make sure you were not having issues with classes because if you don't do well in the fall you won't be able to play in the spring. It's very, they are watching but not sitting on your backs breathing over your shoulder. They are there making sure you are doing well in your classes.

Sara describes the influence of coaches on academics and how being a student-athlete has had a positive impact on her grades,

They [coaches and administrators] would always push us to come to the athletic study room. We have our own for student-athletes which is really nice...In order to be a student-athlete you have to be a full time student at least 12 credits. So that was important. Some girls couldn't do that with work, soccer, whatever it was so the one girl couldn't do it the one year so she couldn't play with us. That stunk because we could have used her but I think that, [Coach] always checks up on us and if we are not doing good she tells us don't come to practice go home and study. She's always helped us in that way and especially you have to keep good grades in order to play. I don't think if you are failing you are allowed to, so it's helped me especially because I'm not the smartest but like I said [Coach] will always check up and let us know you have to do this, email this, like always helping us out in case we weren't doing good...[Without athletics] I would just not be pushing myself to do it...I want to pass myself, so I think I gave more effort because I knew I had to pass to play. [Without athletics] I think I would just get by rather than really trying.

The student-athletes are clearly describing the impact being a student-athlete has had on their academic motivation, persistence, and performance. Coaches and administrators are described as reinforcing the importance of academics and providing supports for student-athlete success. Some students even explain that they wouldn't try nearly as hard if they weren't involved in athletics and how getting poor grades could let your teammates down. The motivation to perform and persist was found in every student-athlete interviewed at CC-B.

Theme 2 - Athletics provides opportunities for interpersonal connections with others at the institution that foster support, implicit respect, and encouragement. The importance of interpersonal connections with others at the institution was found as a theme throughout every interview.

Athletic department connections. All student-athletes indicated a strong connection to the athletic administration and staff at CC-B. CC-B provides an academic advisor in the athletic department that is specific for student-athletes. All interviewees found this position was very impactful, positive, and helpful through their experience and time as a student-athlete.

Natalie describes her experience with the student-athlete academic advisor and the importance of her helping find faculty that will work with the schedule and responsibilities of student-athletes,

Definitely picking classes because that's kinda something that is pretty hard because you have to revolve it around your sports. You can't have a class that is during practice because you can't go to both. We have our counselor that is for

the athletes and she is very good with stuff like that. She will tell me what teachers to pick, who is best at what time, she knows all the teachers and she will help me out through that. You will get some teachers who aren't that good, they don't care, or they are very strict. It's really hard to have a teacher like that and she will help you decide on what to do. She keeps you on the right path which is good. She has a sign-up sheet and you sign up and go to her. It's very convenient.

Natalie felt these strong connections had an impact on her during her time at CC-B and helped her stay organized and have a plan to reach her goals,

Yea I would say so. They help you with organizing. The counselor that works with the athletes she helps you get your schoolwork together and organizing everything. She works with putting together your schedule and keeping you on track so you could graduate from here and makes sure you are studying. When I went to her to get my schedule this semester she told me what I had to take and asked me when I wanted to graduate. And she told me what classes to take to graduate. She keeps you in line and pushed me to hand in things. So that was good. They just help you with school and keep saying you have to have school first and not just sports. You have to rely on your schooling.

Mark also found the athletic advisor very beneficial and accessible. He explains this in his interview,

The athletic department has your own counselor that does everything for you. She is very accessible to every athlete, the school. She will help you with your

classes, show you degree audit showing you how much progress you are making in your degree, she will handle your graduation application for you. She understands student-athletes better than a regular counselor for regular students in the counseling center. She was definitely helpful.

Steven explains how he feels connected and supported by the athletic academic advisor,

Definitely [Athletic Academic Advisor] because I found out she is from [my town] so we just talk about everybody in the town. My friend [student name], he is on Basketball team. His dad passed away this year and I saw [Athletic Academic Advisor] at the wake at his house and we talked for a little bit there. She met my family. I'm pretty close with her. Me and [Elkin], I'm pretty close with him. If I have a question I can text him and he will get back to me. I'm also pretty close with [Athletic Department Secretary] and [Assistant Athletic Director]. If I have a problem I can walk in and talk to anybody in the office.

To further the point of connections with administration, Mark speaks directly to his relationship with the Athletic Director Elkin,

[Elkin] is constantly asking and is invested in the programs. He's not just there to organize things. He's invested in the success of the teams at this school. He is always there watching over making sure nothing is bad. If we wanted to do practice and stuff he would always be there ready to help us out. He is very accessible to all of his athletes. Even the whole department. They are all accessible to all of the athletes. They are pretty much here all day. You can

literally walk in, well not just walk in, you might have to talk to the secretary to get in but they are very accessible.

Sara discusses her feelings on connections with the athletic department staff and describes the importance that these relationships had on her experience,

I think there is definitely connections. Especially with [Assistant Athletic Director]. I won't ever stop talking with [her], she is awesome. She just is an awesome person. She talks to my parents all the time. She talks to all of us. Anything we need she is always there. And like I said, [Athletic Equipment Staff] loved my dad and then my mom. There are connections I made through my dad, like he just got honored for the hall of fame for baseball. Going there they were like [Sara] is your daughter?! So I would have a connection with them and then my dad would... [Elkin] is awesome. We love [him]. He was at all of our games. He would work them but even our away games he would be at. Nationals he came to and he would always love to talk to us about it. He would always be there talking to us if we came in he would always talk to any of us and cheer us on. And [Athletic Equipment Staff] when he worked here he was always there and loved to talk to us. So yea.

Coach connections. All interviewees consistently expressed the importance of their connection with their coaches and described the coach as more than just a purveyor of athletic knowledge but a role model and personal and academic mentor. The coach-athlete relationship was viewed as a critical part of the student-athlete's experience, retention, persistence, and success. Sara describes the relationship with her head coach,

We all want to be like [Head Women's Soccer Coach] one day. She's awesome, she's the best. She's always there and she's just great. We look up to [her] all of us...She's one of the best coaches I've ever had even with life. Coached me through everything, not just soccer. She's awesome. I am telling kids at my high school, go to [CC-B]. You want to play for [her], she's the best ever. My high school coach was awesome and we were family friends but I feel like I had a different relationship with [her], just so close to her. She's helped a lot of us out not just myself. She helps us with anything we need. She will try her best with anything we want to do. If we want to go to a school she will contact them every day with anything we want to do. She's always positive with us and never, she would talk to us and her emotions would come out. She felt for us, she loved us and loved our team, and she loves all of her players just for who they are not just the soccer players. [She] is awesome.

Mark describes his relationship with his coach as extremely important across many different aspect of being a college student-athlete,

The coaches have been, other than my parents, they have been always there for you when you are there. So it's always nice to have that extra person to talk to if you are having issues and stuff. They are very there for you...I've learned not just academically, for the sport of lacrosse, I've learned so much from him. He's had so much experience playing and coaching he just knows a lot about the sport and helps you out so many ways when it comes to it.

Natalie had a similar experience and describes her connections with the coaching staff as having a direct impact on her growth, confidence, and development,

My coach from last year, all the coaches are really nice. I feel like I have good relationships with them. If I have a problem with school I can go back to them and they will help me out through that or any other problem...With soccer [Head Women's Soccer Coach] has helped me so much. Like I said before, I didn't have confidence coming in but she like pretty much pushed me and pushed me because she saw something in me that I didn't see in myself so by her pushing me I kept going and going and then eventually realized that I can do it. She pushed me into having more confidence and knowing that I could do something.

Steven describes in detail how he views his head coach as a “father figure” and respects what he does to build a strong program that teaches responsibility and leadership,

I'm very close with him I have a very close relationship with [Baseball Coach]. Pretty much talk every day I trust him with everything. He's pretty much a dad to me and everybody in here are some of the nicest people I've ever met...[Baseball Coach] is like a father figure... Everything Coach told me it made me a better player and person. Specifically with baseball he taught me how to hit the right way and know hitting in general. He is definitely going to get me somewhere different than out of high school...I would have never disrespect him because of who he is and what he has done for me. Definitely having him in the classroom knowing that I have to pass to play, working hard and putting everything into it

and then letting us be adults and men on our own. He says we are men and it's our team and I'm just going to put the best players out there but it's our team. We have to talk to the freshman and everyone that is not showing up to practice. It makes me more of an adult and responsible in a leadership role. As a sophomore I have to lead and pave the way so the freshman look up to me and say he is doing this the right way and coach appreciates that. Hopefully they see it and follow it.

Faculty connections. Most interviewees indicated a connection with faculty on some level. These connections varied in type but one thing seemed to consistently show up. Faculty, for the most part, had a respect for the involvement of time and energy required by a student-athlete and thus connections with student-athletes happened much easier. Mark describes this in his interview, “They really respect you. When you go into the classes and you tell them you are a student athlete and they respect you for being a full time student and an athlete at the same time.”

Student connections. The interviewees valued the connections they were able to make with other student-athletes. They felt as though they were part of a family and a program within the CC-B community. This connection helped them make friends, learn about different cultures, and even assisted with academics. Mark describes his connection to other student-athletes,

[I've made connections with] my teammates and the other players in other sports. You all understand how much work you all put in together here. All the athletes are willing to help each other out if we have to. I was in a Calc II class with a girl

that played soccer. She's a freshman but if we need help, we would help each other because we understood we were both athletes.

Steven describes his ability to grow personally and socially as a result of the connections he has made with his teammates,

Making friends from all over, we have a kid from Italy on the team, Puerto Rico, my best friend is from Florida and I would have never met him if I never came. Staten Island, so it's very diverse and you get to learn different things and ways of playing and different viewpoints on everything, life, baseball, on and off the field...I am pretty much with the team every day. Maybe we get a few days off where I don't see everybody but we pretty much talk every day on our group chat. Besides off the field we all hang out with the kids that have the houses. It helps you get along with everybody. You get to know who likes what or whatever if you have the same likes as somebody else. I think it does have a benefit.

Natalie thinks making connections with new people is the best part about playing sports and ultimately makes her college experience. She describes how you become like a family and look out for each other,

I like that you get to meet new people and I think that is the best part about playing sports while you are in college, because you get to meet new people so it's like you are not going in alone because you have other people to talk to. I think it was just good because sometimes with classes you get help with the people on your team. I think that's a really good plus with playing sports and especially if you need a book or something, books are really expensive, you have somebody

you can borrow their books with...I think it is because you get to become more of a family. You will have pasta parties before a game and I think you get to know people better like that more than just on the field and you become more of a family and that's nice...I would just go here and go home but if you play sports it's definitely satisfying. You build another family with people that are on your team instead of just people at home. You get other friends and meet new people and I think that is very satisfying.

Sara felt the importance of being connected as a team and the impact that had on and off the field,

All the girls would meet up in the parking lot before practice and we would always be so excited to be here. So excited to go out and have fun and we would hang out afterwards. Coming here we would always meet up even if it's not just for sports. We would all meet up and go to the library to study it's just brought all of us more together... I think in anything it is important to be a part of your team and close to your team. It brings you together even playing on the field, like you have connections.

Summary. Student-athletes made connections with other student-athletes and students, coaches, athletic and other administrators, and faculty across campus. These connections all had positive impacts on the student-athlete, facilitated support, implicit respect, and/or encouragement. The feeling of belonging, respect, encouragement, and team permeated the student to student interactions. Students were proud to represent their institution and teammates and encouraged each other to work hard. Student to

coach and staff interactions provided multiple examples of how students felt supported and encouraged. Coaches and staff were consistently described as supportive, respectful, and encouraging of students both in and out of the classroom.

Theme 3 - Balancing academics and other responsibilities with athletics requires sacrifice, however, it provides opportunities to learn how to effectively time manage. All interviewees described in one form or another the amount of time that athletic participation requires and the sacrifices they made in order to participate in athletics, get good grades, and meet other responsibilities. Some of the students emphasized that balancing commitments was a struggle. Since these students are, by definition, successful because they have persisted to their second year, the data on these students suggest they may have benefited from the experience of prioritizing and “being disciplined”. Mark describes this,

The work that goes with it. You are doing, for me, I'm a full time student so I am running 12-15 credits usually. Last semester I ran 17 credits and it was between lacrosse, school, and work it's a lot of, just the amount of discipline it takes to get through it is probably the hardest part...If there were, I would just say the idea of how much discipline and responsibility it takes. That is something that has both drawbacks and positives. It can be really hard to manage sometimes.

Steven agrees that staying focused academically, setting up classes, and fitting your work schedule around athletics is one of the drawbacks as is the sacrifice of not being able to spend as much time with non-athlete friends,

The in season schoolwork. I was warned about it last year and then it hit me like a train how hard it is. We have so many games and you really have to stay focused and do your schedule a certain way. You have to wake up every day, go to class, do your work, then have a game, get home nine o'clock at night and gotta really just focus, bear down and get through it. That's probably the hardest part...My friends from home I only see if we have a day off or in the summer. We talk everyday on the phones but everybody is pretty spread out. The whole social life, I'm with the team and the team only, so I don't see my friends from home as much.

Sara agrees that the amount of time invested is a drawback but is currently more nervous about having to transfer. She talks about how she wishes CC-B was a four-year school,

I guess taking up a lot of time. That wasn't a big deal to me. I liked playing. Some of the girls were there just to get to do something...Ummm the toughest part, I was actually just talking to [Coach] and we were talking about leaving I think is going to be toughest. As much as it's not a college, I've met a lot of people but not staying here with dorms, leaving. I would if I could play four years here. I would like to play at a higher level but I would definitely play here because I love it here and everybody is great. I've never had a problem here at [CC-B] with anything.

Natalie finds the most difficult thing is balancing all her commitments together.

She describes this,

Probably like balancing everything all together, school and sports it's really hard. You have to time everything and be more organized because you will have practice one day and then you will have to go straight to class. I remember one day we had a game then I had class right after that game and I think I had a test that day. So it's kind of like you have to study one second, then you have a game, then you are going right to your test so it's kind of hard balancing school and work but it helps you. I'll have like hours of homework every night but you have to balance it throughout the day. If you have free time then you want to work on your schooling and stuff, then you have practice, then you want to work some more on your schooling and I also have a job too. I have two jobs actually. Just working out between school, jobs, sports.

Most student-athletes discussed the drawback of having to make sacrifices to balance athletics with academics and other responsibilities. Some described how they had to balance what they were doing to meet their commitments. One student-athlete described being disciplined and taking responsibility for meeting his commitments as the hardest part of participating.

Theme 4 - The athletic experience at CC-B provides opportunities to develop soft skills and learn lessons as a result of participation. All interviewees described their experience at CC-B as meaningful. A major theme that emerged from the all the interviews involved the lessons and skills student-athletes learned as a result of their participation in intercollegiate athletics.

Sara provides an overall description of her athletic experience below and how the athletic program made her feel welcome,

Coming here I was just a little nervous joining a new team, you are scared and nervous trying out and stuff, not just my coach, everyone here I feel so welcomed always. They are always talking to you asking what's up, how are you, how are things. Not even just so much about sports, like how you doing at school, they worry about you. Not just how's soccer and what they have to ask. They care about us which is good.

Steven describes his experience as, “More than satisfying. It made me a better person and player. I would say [Baseball Coach], the team, everyone made me a better person, student, and player in general.”

The personal athletic experience as described by Mark explains how athletics provide important life lessons, opportunities for accolades, and excellent learning opportunities,

Athletics are definitely something that a lot of people overlook. It provides so much extra to your life and to you as a person...I've learned so much of myself and learned so many things like being prepared. I constantly go to class and I'm always prepared during class. I am constantly making sure I am looking on the websites making sure I'm constantly ready. I always am making sure I'm passing my classes without issue, getting A's...Being a student athlete, it's not just in classes that the professor get to know you. When you get to college it's different. In high school there isn't much written, grades and policies, media access to it.

There's not a lot of media to high school. Here if you have a big game, last year I had a big game towards the end of the season and I put seven goals in that game. It wasn't just my team that knew about it. I was getting asked to say something in the paper, for the school, and when you are successful here people in the whole athletic department know who you are. The other day I was talking to the soccer coach and she knew my name and I never met her before. You get so much out of playing sports not just here in any college or high school or level... You get so much out of playing them I don't see how anyone would not have some sort of learning opportunity from it or something like that.

The above description by Mark leads into a larger discussion regarding the student-athletes soft skills and growth and development as a result of athletic participation. These specific areas are outlined below.

Communication. All student-athletes interviewed described some form of social and communicative growth as a result of their participation in athletics. Natalie describes how athletics have assisted her with opening up more and learning when to communicate which made her more sociable,

I've grown because I feel like I've opened up more and I think I've learned to communicate more with people if I need help or if I need something or just to talk to somebody. Rather than just keeping to myself, I will do more teamwork type things because of the sports. I think it's the whole interaction thing that caused me to open up to more people.

Mark was asked if he felt athletics has had an impact on his ability to communicate and describes how he feels it provided opportunities for him to improve his communication skills as he has always been a quieter person,

Yes. I think it does. For me I've always been a quieter person. I've never been really good at communicating things effectively sometimes. I think just again the idea of meeting new people helps you understand what to say and how to say stuff. I think also part of what helped me was being an athlete and when I started my job it was about communicating with people so that helped me too.

Steven discusses his growth as a communicator and feels that he has grown much more as a result of his participation in athletics at CC-B. He describes his growth,

Now I can walk up to any athlete and say hey how you doing how is the season going? I am more comfortable talking out publicly. I can now see things from different aspects a worker, a student, a player pretty much everybody is always doing something to benefit your mindset. Talking to the fall and winter athletes. You can ask anybody how did you do this, even kids on the team I don't really talk to I can just walk up to them and ask them how they are doing with class. Now I can walk up to people and have a whole conversation with them. I would do that since I was young but now I got better at it especially here.

Confidence. Every interviewee described athletics as having an impact on their self-confidence in multiple aspects including in the sport, community, and in the classroom. Sara makes a point about her confidence growth as a player and socially while at CC-B,

It's definitely built confidence in myself, especially in soccer. I was always confident but my mom would be like, "You can do this!" and I thought you are my mom you have to say that! Having a lot of success at [CC-B] which was awesome helped me also build my confidence as a person to realize my parents were right...I think I've come out of my shell a lot more. I talk a lot more. [Coach] has made me just come out of my shell and talk to people. Don't be scared of anything you do and always strive for what you want to do and do it. Don't give up.

Similarly, Mark felt his confidence grow as a collegiate lacrosse player. In his interview he stated,

For me, I wasn't too sure if I was going to be the right fit for a college lacrosse player coming in to college. My father, even last year going into last season, we weren't sure how I fit playing college lacrosse. Last year he told me at the end of the season you could play lacrosse at any of the schools you are looking at. After the season I had we had no doubt about it.

Natalie describes how athletics helped her confidence not only in sports but also in the classroom and life in general and explains how that impacted her communication and academic success,

I have gotten complimented by a lot of people. In the beginning I didn't think I was that good at soccer. People would be like oh you're so good and that would make me think, oh maybe I am. Like maybe I do have potential and I think that really helped me better myself because I was like maybe these people see

something in me that I didn't see in myself and that really impacted me...I think just the whole confidence thing and believing in myself. If you put yourself out there and you go do something whether on the soccer field or just anything. In school I didn't think I was as smart as I am and if I study I can get a better grade. The whole thing I've learned is that if I actually try to do something I definitely can...When I was in high school I was a really shy person but going into college you get a new start I feel and even being on a team you get to grow with the people on your team. You get to interact with them and see what everyone else is about which is really nice and it helps me in a classroom because instead of staying to myself and just going to class and going home not talking to anybody you get to make friends in the classroom. I think that's nice to make friends in the classroom because you always need that one person especially if you don't understand some things.

Discipline. Discipline and responsibility are mentioned by all interviewees.

Mark describes how discipline is worked into every practice and is applicable outside of athletics,

A lot of our practices, especially because our coach is an Army guy, are designed for discipline. You are going to be doing a lot of running during it, but it's designed so you don't make mistakes during the drills. So if you are not going to make mistakes there when you are tired, you shouldn't be doing it when you are in a full time playing game. You can apply that outside when you are working hard to get something done you should not make a mistake, outside of, in class or when you are working... I keep going back to discipline. You make sure you are

always doing stuff. It really prepares you. It's funny you say that it really gets you prepared when you get out of college. My coach says it. He runs his own business and he looks for athletes, people who were athletes in college because they have that discipline in them and they show more maturity when they get into the full time field for working.

Leadership/Followership. All interviewees expressed growth in their leadership and followership abilities. Steven describes his growth as a leader,

As a leader I had a good year and all the freshman now look up to me. I like being a leader. I can go out and be the first one to get to know everybody. That whole leadership aspect I enjoy having that role on me. Being in a clutch situation I don't get nervous. I just breathe. I've struck out and gotten hits in big spots. There's no reason to be nervous. I love being looked at as a leader. I don't know why I would do anything less.

Mark talks about the importance of not only leading but being able to follow. He describes the yin yang relationship between leadership and following,

With the idea of leadership you understand there are certain times you have to quiet down and follow someone else's lead. I think sports and my coach especially is about discipline. There are times that you have to follow someone else's lead.

Maturity. This theme is seen through all interviews in multiple examples that help the student-athletes mature. Sara describes the influence of her coach on helping her

to mature through coaching her during difficult times that in the past may have derailed her,

I think [Coach] has matured me and a lot of the other girls being that mom figure as well. Some coaches will just scream and curse at you and she was just like if you can't do it take a step back and try again. Don't get yourself all heated up. She always had an answer to everything, like you can do it if you just relax and take a little step back and try again so I think it's helped us mature, not just in soccer but in class I would go to her and I would after class be like [Coach] I can't do this, I hate this class, I'm not going to pass. She would be like, relax. Do what you have to do, take a step back and try a different way. Email your professor and so I think she's helped me mature a lot in that way.

Self-Control. Each interviewee discussed the impact athletics had on their self-control. Sara describes again how athletics and her coach had a strong impact on her self-control,

I used to be so angry when I was little playing. I would get so mad at anything when I was playing, like angry and my mom would be like what is wrong with you, this is not my child. [Coach] would always tell us to just wink and walk away. Don't fight back, just walk away because it's not worth it in the end. Don't stoop down to their level. You are going to be fine and it will be over with the next day so I think she's helped me out with that a lot. I think that had to do with my confidence a lot, just not having confidence in myself so I would be so angry about a stupid little thing in a game and I would just burst out. Especially with

her rule about not being allowed to curse so you couldn't be angry or show it.
Helped me control myself.

Steven describes how learning to control his frustrations in sport applied outside of sport to the classroom and assisted him with his persistence both as a player and student,

In the beginning of the season I started 0-18 in Florida the first few games, like 10 strikeouts. I couldn't even touch the ball I was going up there defenseless. Then I was talking to my friend from home. He's a bit older than me and played pro ball. He helped me with the mental aspect. So what if you strikeout, you can't care! Sorry, failure is going to happen and you just have to stay mentally tough. The mental toughness definitely helped me in school. Things are going to happen you have to get through it. Even with baseball I started awful and slow but then I got into a groove and I ended up very strong and had a very good year last year. That helps me mentally. I started slow and ended well. That helped me this year in school. The beginning of the year I was struggling in one class, I got like a 50 something on the first test and then I progressively got better because I said to myself you are going to fail. It's going to happen. You have to get through it. You can't change the past. So I got a 75, 85, then a 96, then an 88 on the final. It helped me realize failure will happen and you have to just push through it. I applied it outside of baseball.

Teamwork. This theme was prevalent in all interviews. It permeated stories and examples from all student-athletes. Natalie does a great job representing the accounts of

the other student-athletes by her description of the benefits of athletic participation on learning teamwork skills that apply on the field, in the classroom, and socially,

It's nice when you get to play on a team because it gets you to work together and not be on your own. It gets you to ask people for help with whatever it is. If you are in a school environment and you need help instead of keeping to yourself and thinking I will figure this out while you are struggling, you will ask someone else. Because on a team somebody else helps you out and you won't be afraid to ask other students or teachers for help...It definitely helps you work together with people because that is literally what a team is, working together. There is always going to be differences between people but you have to get past that. You are not going to like everybody but you have to get over that and work together...Going back to the teamwork stuff. You know there is people you are not going to get along with and you have to find some type of reason to get along with them and find something in common with them. You have to know the only way you can get through something together is if you get along.

Time Management. All student-athletes interviewed believed they learned how to be effective time managers as a result of their athletic participation. Natalie talks about her experience with time management,

For soccer we would have Wednesdays off which was really nice so I would just put most of my classes on Wednesday so that was nice. For basketball we have practice or a game Monday through Saturday and it was only two hours a day so it wasn't that bad. I would go to work either before or after and I would also have

class. I don't think it was really that hard at all just organizing because I've been doing it for so many years, like even in high school after school I had sports and work so I've been doing it for a while and I learned to organize my time so I could do it easily. I mostly try and do my jobs on the weekends because on Sundays we don't have school or sports so that's good. Other than that it's just organizing your time well. It's taught me that.

Steven also describes how athletics keeps him on track and forces him to time manage effectively,

I have class, eating, practice, homework, 10 o'clock every night and then it's just kind of just like a whole different schedule that no one knows about and I think that benefits me. It helps me mentally that I have to get everything done.

Summary. Student-athletes described the opportunity to develop several soft skills such as communication, confidence, discipline, leadership/followership, maturity, self-control, teamwork, and time management as a result of athletic participation. Student-athletes view the opportunity to develop soft skills as meaningful and attribute their personal growth to examples of how they learned these skills through athletics.

Theme 5 - Student involvement in extracurricular activities, not just athletic participation, is viewed by participants as valuable because it helps with relationship development, social and academic support, and general college knowledge. Social growth, connections, assistance with classes, exposure to diversity, and support are just a few of the benefits student-athletes listed when discussing

involvement. Every student-athlete interviewed saw getting involved as a benefit to athletic participation.

Mark sums up his feeling about involvement and believes that sports aren't for everyone, however, involvement in one form or another has great benefits,

I would recommend it for specific things. Sports aren't for everyone. I'm not going to tell every person I look at that they should be playing a sport. So for a specific person it might not be sports. I always think that doing extracurricular stuff is always a benefit. There is no negative that can come from it. What's the worst that could happen from doing it? You make new friends, find new connections, you find people that can help you, you find someone you are taking a class with in your major that can help you get through it.

Natalie recommends students get involved and describes the benefits it has in regards to getting to meet new people and seeing diverse perspectives,

I definitely would recommend it because I said before you get to know a lot more people. Rather than keeping to yourself or your social group you've always had. You get to meet more people and I think it's nice that you get to meet more people because you get more perspectives on things and meeting other people can change your mind on things and I feel like that's a plus in life. You need to get out there and meet other people rather than just stay in one group.

Sara weighs in with her thoughts on involvement and explains that she believes that it benefits students beyond the classroom and academics, "I think involvement is so

important because of some of the other benefits. There are benefits besides just the class schedule and academics, I think so."

Theme 6 - Student-athletes choose to attend CC-B primarily based on affordability, opportunities to participate in athletics and transfer, distance from home, and the academic reputation of the institution. Natalie describes her selection process as CC-B was not her first choice, however, what she ultimately decided on,

Actually it was not my first choice. I was looking to get a scholarship to Bloomfield. I actually got a scholarship there and I was going to go there but I wanted to do physical therapy and they didn't have that program. So then I was looking at other schools and at the time part of me wanted to do physical therapy and the other part of me was like I'm not sure. So I got thinking that I should just go to CC-B because it's cheaper and better for you. You can do math, science, and get it all done and then think about what I really wanted to do instead of wasting the money. I get to play soccer at CC-B which was good and my sister was on the team so I had her. So I felt it was more beneficial to not waste money...I knew from my sister and I watched her games. Every single game and she looked like she had so much fun and I played soccer since I was little and always wanted to play in college so just watching her play I just knew I wanted to do that and wanted to play with her too...My sister was already coming here which is why I chose CC-B over another community college. My drive is nothing more than 15 minutes. I knew I wanted to play soccer. I wasn't sure about playing any other sport. CC-B was a better choice for money and I wasn't sure if I wanted to do physical therapy or not. I rather would not start at a four-year and

waste all the money to go away. I think money wise it was the cheaper option. I still want to do physical therapy and decided while coming here to stick with it...Honestly [without athletics], I probably wouldn't have attended. I think athletics keeps me on track with school because you need to keep a GPA to play and it keeps me more focused.

Mark choose to attend to save money, have the ability to participate, based on reputation, and make sure that he wanted to pursue the academic major he had picked out before going to a four-year college and spending a lot of money.

When I came here it was a weird decision process for me. I had many schools, it was hard to make a decision. I just decided to go to [CC-B] and save some money coming in. I wanted to play sports and it gave me the opportunity to play here. When I came here me and my family we made a decision that this school we needed to make it fit the time frame as if I was going full time the entire time. So I would be here for two years transfer out and get to the next school within that time frame so I don't get stuck... [CC-B] is a very well-known school and it's a school that if you have the right mindset going in, you can have a lot of success after it. So that is part of the reason why I chose [CC-B], reputation. Lacrosse was just another added benefit of coming here. To me it's been mainly purely about academics. I wanted to make sure I was getting the right teaching and I wanted to make sure my degree is something I really want to get.

Steven discusses how his decision making process primarily came down to finances and that when the baseball coach contacted him and offered him a starting spot, that put him over the edge,

I wouldn't say I'm like poor but we are not the richest family in town. That was the main reason I came was because of money. I could have went to Seton Hall and walked onto the team cause I got in grades wise. But it's \$50 to \$52 thousand a year and that's too much for us to do for four years. Pretty much every school that contacted me was expensive. When [Baseball Coach] contacted me he told me I would start at center field, my position, right away and have the ability to kind of just come right in, play, save money, I don't have any debt right now the first two years of college. All my friends that went away are already complaining about it and we are only sophomores. The biggest thing was probably money.

The most prevalent findings related to why students chose to attend the institution included the ability to participate in intercollegiate athletics, the financial benefits of starting at a community college, and the reputation of CC-B. Other key factors included the ability to transfer with other opportunities that weren't there out of high school, the ability to get playing time during the first two years, and the distance from home. Three of the four athletes interviewed said they would not have attended if CC-B did not offer athletics.

CC-B Administrator Themes

Theme 1 - Athletic participation paired with academic support is perceived by administrators to improve student success. Student-athletes at CC-B are retained

and persist at much higher rates than non-student-athletes. Both Elkin and Ronald describe the retention rates of athletes as nearly 30 percent higher than that of non-athletes. Elkin explains,

Actually I just did something, tracked our athletes last year for retention. It was 91%. And I believe the school, I want to say the school was 63% maybe? So from retention I think we're a home run for, you know, a bad word, but it's a home run, I think. Could it be 94? Could it be 95? Absolutely, but I think 90% I think is a pretty good retention rate... I don't think you can be complacent, but I think student-athletes because they play sports feel connected to the school. It gives them something to look forward to. Like I said, they come together, they meet new friends, they feel a part of something, and I think when you feel a part of something, I think that keeps you around and helps retain you.

Ronald describes his take on student-athlete retention and persistence and attributes it to the above average engagement and involvement of student-athletes,

When we look at fall to spring retention rates, our student-athletes, and we have about 160 of them, our student-athletes are retained in the 90 percentile, so about 90% of those students come back fall to spring. When we compare that to college average, 66%, so we're far above in athletics with students being retained. Some of them obviously has to do with students continuing to play sports through both their fall and spring and if they're a winter athlete, they're straddling both terms. So there's, I think there's some explanation for that. And even when we look at the fall to fall retention rates, we're still above average in terms of the comparison

to the college average. So I know for sure it's helping the students to be retained. It gives them the motivation to keep coming back... But I think above average engagement that they have with the institution and what's really so encouraging is when you see those faces of students studying together, you know, they're engaged even in that together, which I think is a cohesive, it keeps them here.

Not only does Ronald provide evidence for higher retention and persistence rates, but he also purports that student-athletes and those that are involved are provided more opportunities to transfer and have better GPA's,

So it aligns with that piece also that we provide opportunities for students to participate here that may help them to transfer and move on and to continue to play their sport when they transfer. So student development transfer wise and then, and I believe very strongly in this, if it weren't for students being able to participate in their sport, this is also for student life and activities, the activities that they do outside of the classroom, co-curricular stuff increases their GPA. It helps them to perform better academically. So if a college is all about helping students to perform better academically, athletics is an integral part of that for these students.

Elkin believes that student-athletes perform better academically for a number of reasons including the motivation factor of having to maintain a certain GPA to continue participation. He states,

I think the student-athletes do better because I feel you have a carrot that they're dangled in front of them that they know, they know if they don't do well, that they

won't be able to participate in something they enjoy doing. And, again, a 2.0 isn't something that I don't think we all strive for, you know, I'd rather see a 3.0, but some students maybe a 2.5, 2.0 is good for them. So I think overall it's better.

Additionally, a focus on academics as a priority was made clear throughout the interviews. While athletic skills are an important part of the college experience and a motivational factor for some athletes, CC-B removes athletes who are not making the grade from athletic competition. There is an attitude and theme that starts from the top and works its way down that academics come first. Elkin describes this,

I think it starts with me, you know, I think I'll go right down, you have [Assistant Athletic Director], [Other Athletic Administrator], you know, even [Athletic Office Manager], you know, the coaches, the faculty. I think anybody that comes in contact knows that that's their ticket.

This top down academic focus is corroborated by Ronald, "It's pushed down from the top, and in this case I'm going to use [Elkin] as the, you know, he's the top there. As the athletic director he's constantly on top of them for their academics."

When student-athletes are struggling, CC-B pushes to help get them on track. Elkin describes one of these experiences,

A couple of years ago we had a student that was struggling and I made him come see me once a week, you know, and he had to go to our resources. Yeah, tutoring. He had to come every week, show me what his work was, how he was doing and that worked. I mean, one on one, you know, he got a 3.0 so he can do it.

The idea of intervention with struggling student-athletes and athletics as a privilege was corroborated by Ronald,

So the coaches, they're on top of the students academically. We've had situations here where we've had star athletes that we've had to tell you're not going to play because you need to focus on academics, so... So we really try to get the students to focus on their academics first. And [Elkin] will say that in his meetings with students. It's academics first here so if you're struggling, then we may have to reconsider what is your goal here.

Both administrators believe by setting the system they have up, focusing on academics, remediating struggling students, making athletics a privilege and secondary to academic performance, and stressing the importance from the top of the department down to the coaches, they set up a system for success. This is evidenced by Ronald,

I see them hanging out together studying. I think that they invest more time here than the average student does. Between their academics, their practices and their competitions. But I think above average engagement that they have with the institution and what's really so encouraging is when you see those faces of students studying together, you know, they're engaged even in that together, which I think is a cohesive, it keeps them here.

Elkin believes that the academics first model at CC-B provides the groundwork for student-athletes to leave with a good education and be prepared for what awaits them at the four-year school,

I think they do walk out of here with a good education. I've had students transferring in from other institutions two and four-year that said, wow, it was hard here. And when you hear that, it makes you feel like, okay, it's not a cake walk. They say some of the classes here are difficult and hard. And I don't think that's a bad thing because I think it helps them learn it and get prepared for a four-year school.

Advising is viewed as a key part of the academic success and mentoring of student-athletes at CC-B. They have had athlete specific orientations and a part-time athlete specific academic advisor that assists with course selection, monitoring, tutoring, and transfer. Elkin describes this as a benefit,

We actually have an advisor that just does athletics. She comes in twice a week, Tuesdays, Thursdays for five hours. That's been great. It started last year. She's comes in for, yeah, ten hours a week and it's been great because what she'll do is probably start in February, meet with all the students and basically say, hey, these are the classes you need. She won't pick up the times, but these are the classes you need and then that way by the time enrollment starts that first enrollment our students can go and, boom, they're ready to go with their sheets. Yeah, it's been great.

Ronald believes that by providing specific academic advisors to the student-athletes, they can be set up for success as sometimes athletes are encouraged to take classes together and approach even class as a team,

So we also have academic advisors that work with student-athletes and I think, although I don't have any proof of this, their academic advisors encourage their students to take their courses together so they can lean on each other even in the classroom which I think is something that the average student doesn't necessarily have, where they're approaching even a class as a team.

Both administrators discussed numerous times throughout their interviews, the important connection between athletics and academics. They provided statistical evidence that student-athletes perform better than non-athletes based on the opportunities they have to connect with teammates and other resources to get academic assistance and tutoring help, the monitoring that occurs by coaches and administrators, the focus placed on the importance of academic performance from the athletic administration and coaches, and the academic standards set by the NJCAA.

Theme 2 - Administration and coaches are critical in creating meaningful experiences for student-athletes through modeling appropriate behavior and providing support. There was a general hierarchal theme surrounding the idea leaders as shaping the learning environment for those in their charge. Ronald describes this about the athletic administration particularly Elkin, who in turn describe the importance of this for the coaches. The relationship formed between the student-athletes and staff with the athletic administrator is key to the quality of the growth, development, and experience that CC-B provides. Ronald describes this,

I'm going to speak specifically about [Elkin] here. I think I mentioned before that my higher education experience has been entirely here so I can only really use

him as the model. I think he shapes the atmosphere there. He shapes the environment. And the students respect him so he has that ability to be able to sort of create the environment for them. If he wants them to take something very seriously because there's a violation that's been committed or there's a rule that's been broken, student who is not performing well academically, he has that ability to be able to be very hard on them, which I think can help to set them straight. But he has a personal relationship with everybody. He knows every student athlete and he knows their story, which I think is one of those things that, and I know that you know this from all your doctoral studies and even before, when the student connects with somebody at the institution, they're far more likely to stay, they're going to persist, they're going to do better and they're going to achieve their goals. And the fact that the athletic director knows things about them personally, there's that bond that forms and it's like an instant bond that they have with the institution. So I think that's an integral part to their success here.

Both Ronald and Elkin view coaches as critical to the success of the student-athletes. Hiring the right coaches, training and mentoring them, and ensuring they are connecting with and holding their student-athletes accountable was viewed as a critical part of what makes CC-B successful. Ronald explains the importance of the coach,

The coach not only is focusing in on their performance on the court or on the field, but they're also focusing on their academic performance. So the coach holds their feet to the fire. They demand that the student perform and so I think that the student relationship with the coach is one of great respect. They also, the

coach, knows every kid intimately. Every kid, every student intimately. So again that retention bond forms between them. Less so with the administration.

Elkin describes the importance of him hiring the right people, staying in touch with them, and ensuring they are doing the right things the right way,

A lot of it is a trust. I believe you hire people 'cause you trust them, but a lot of it is, I know I personally walk around a lot of the practices. I try to talk to the coaches face to face or on the phone as much as I can. Some more than others because I feel there's some sports that maybe need the help a little bit more than others. But I do. I try to make a time to go out to practices and to talk to the coaches, probably more hands on, again, maybe than a lot of other people, but I feel it is important to see that they are doing the right thing and I try to talk to the student-athletes as well. 'Cause I think if you build that rapport and relationship, that's the key to get student-athletes to kind of follow your lead and do things in all of this.

Elkin provides further discussion regarding the importance of finding a coach that can build a program and provide longevity in the position. This builds trust in the community. Additionally he describes how coaches that are full time employees at the college tend to have an impact as they are involved in the day to day. He states,

I think in the community people are comfortable because they see it's the same person, you know what you're getting out of that person, you know, some of the negatives could be stagnant, could be lack of change or maybe they're a little opposed to change, but I think having coaches that have been here a while

definitely help out instead of getting turnover because if you get turnover... [you] just can't get it going. You know? And that's a program that I wouldn't say that has excellence. As I said before, it just doesn't exude anything because we just can't figure that out...A full time coach at I think any level, but I'll say non-scholarship two-year school has a huge impact as compared to a part time coach at this level because I think they see a bigger picture. They see a picture, but not maybe as big of a picture, aren't involved in that day to day everything. So when you look at women's soccer and women's softball here, when we had the two full time, always had good grades. Where you take a part time sport, whether it be men's lacrosse, maybe men's basketball, you know, students did great, but there were students that struggled, too, a lot more than these did...I think there's a lot to say to the full, part time. I think the full timers just they're here, so they're physically here so if a student has a problem, it's just easier to find them. They're here. They can run in quick. They see them all the time. The full timer when they get an e-mail from the admin that says, hey, I don't know, sign up for your classes begins today, that teacher can get that group together a lot quicker than a part time coach who maybe only checks his e mail every other day.

There was a general hierarchal theme surrounding the idea leaders as role models. Ronald, the Vice President, describes this about Elkin, who in turn describes the importance of this for the coaches. Both Elkin and Ronald allude to the importance of the values, methods, and ideals aligning within each level of leadership in the athletic program. In order to ensure a meaningful experience for the student-athletes administrators describe when someone isn't aligned, he or she is remediated or removed.

Further, Elkin alludes to the importance of longevity in a coaching position. Finding coaches that are good and retaining them helps build the reputation of the program and trust in the method and ideals of the coach.

Theme 3 - Athletics provides opportunities for interpersonal connections with others at the institution that foster support, implicit respect, and encouragement. The importance of connections that had positive impacts on the student-athlete experience were found as a theme throughout every administrator interview. Connection themes included the links between students and administration/staff, the athletic department, coaches, faculty, and other students. These will be further discussed in sections below.

Administration/staff connections. Administration and staff connections to student-athletes were seen throughout all administrator interviews. Elkin tries to push the importance of connecting with the student-athletes to his staff and does so by example. He states,

I think we try to I mean, I personally try to make it a point to get to know all the student-athletes. I mean, I think every student athlete except I'll say maybe the spring sports coming up, but I know them and I built a connection, relationship, you know, going to the games, encouraging the students of other teams to go to games I think is huge because they see that and then it makes those students go to their games. So I think trying to build a synergy of people trying to come together and be one and help each other. We try to push that.

Ronald describes evidence of the existence of these connections based on his experiences with the athletic department,

They're [students] spending so much of their time there that they form relationships with our assistant director, coordinator, athletic trainer, with our athletic director. As I mentioned before, we have academic advisors that work right in the department. Most other students have to go to the one stop academic advising center, but we put the advisors right there with them, especially for eligibility purposes. So they develop strong relationships there with their advisors.

Coach connections. Coach connections to student-athletes are seen as a critical part of the development experience for student-athletes. Coaches are often times the first line of defense as they work so intimately with the student-athletes. Both interviewees strongly believed that coaches at CC-B develop meaningful connections with the student-athletes. Ronald describes the importance of these connections,

Coaches absolutely the same as the administrator, as the athletic director. The coach not only is focusing in on their performance on the court or on the field, but they're also focusing on their academic performance. So the coach holds their feet to the fire. They demand that the student perform and so I think that the student relationship with the coach is one of great respect. They also, the coach knows every kid intimately. Every kid, ever student intimately. So again that retention bond forms between them. Less so with the administration. As I mentioned before, that relatively transient nature. I go into a student athlete club

meeting, they don't know who I am. I think they like the fact that I'll go and talk to them, but hopefully they don't see me. If they do, they're in trouble for something, so or I think they appreciate when I go to games.

Faculty connections. Faculty connections with student-athletes were also seen as a theme throughout the interviews. Faculty were shown to develop strong and meaningful connections to student-athletes both in and out of the classroom. Ronald describes these connections,

And then I think we have faculty members that develop strong relationships with our athletes. Many of our student-athletes will choose to take classes with the same faculty members. I don't know if you know [Faculty Name]. He's one of our, former athletic director and he teaches winter classes in literature and every athlete wants to get into his class because they've formed that bond and that's true for several other faculty. I think those are the probably strongest, teammates, athletic department, faculty advisors, very strong relationships. I've seen faculty attend athletic events. I've seen them at soccer games, baseball, basketball. So there is a certain investment that the faculty also make and if they know that they have a student-athletes that's in their class they'll often participate even in that. Also, in any extra monitoring that we do of the student's performance, the faculty are, they're more engaged in monitoring of the athlete than they are of the average student. Average student they just plug a couple numbers in into a monitoring system, but for the athletes, they go a little bit more in depth in terms of telling us what is happening in the classroom. So I think, while that's academic, it also means that they have that investment in them as athletes, too.

Other student connections. Another theme that came out of the administrator interviews was the connections student-athletes were able to make with each other. Elkin describes these connections,

Because it's not all, are from the [CC-B] county area, you know, they come from different high schools and they may have heard of another kid or say, yeah, I know that person played soccer or baseball or basketball or whatever, but until they get here, they may have thought of themselves as "enemies," that's the other person. But then when they come together and they build that friendship and that bond, it's something that's fun to see. You see kids walk out of here, or I say kids, students that walk out of here that they just have this great relationship that's going to carry forward and that's great to see.

Overall Connections. Connections between student-athletes and stakeholders at CC-B were seen as having a positive impact on things from grades to social development. Elkin does an excellent job describing the development of and importance of these connections,

I think when you come here, you play athletics, sport, you get to know the coach, you get to know your teachers, you get to know the student-athletes from other sports. Then you notice they start supporting each other at the games. They feel part of at least maybe from an athletic standpoint they feel part of that athletic circle. That's a small circle in the big picture of [CC-B], but it's still a big connecting point because it's something that you can relate to whether you can invite your teacher to a game, and say, hey, listen, I'm playing tonight, or may the

teacher saying, hey, I saw you play last night, great job. Like there's just a lot of different spider webs that come out of athletics. The connections, whether it's for, where do they go to school afterwards, whether it's one of our coaches saying, hey, I think you'd be a great fit at so and so college, I know their coach, let you know, I just think there's a great transition from when they get here to when they begin practice, to now they're part of this team because they feel comfortable and meet people to now I meet other student-athletes. To come back my second year, now I'm comfortable, I'm a little bit established. Now I understand the lay of the land of [CC-B]. I know a lot of the students. Now I have new students coming in. I teach them what others before me have taught to try to pass that torch. I now figure out what's the next step in life, whether it's going to work, which is fine, or in our case I think a lot of our students go on to a four-year school and it's talking to other students, maybe other alumni, coaches of what's the best fit to move on. So I think there's a progression from when they get here to when they leave and all this stuff that happens in between, all the stuff that happens in between is I think they build a sense of belonging, a sense of pride, they built connections, relationships that I think helps them feel a part of [CC-B] and the school...I mean, so there's so many relationships that can come out of this athletics community, club, whatever you want to call it that I think has, I don't know, I just think it's a great thing...So I think trying to build a synergy of people trying to come together and be one and help each other. We try to push that.

Summary. Connections with administration/staff, the athletic department, coaches, faculty, and other students were described as an important part of the athletic

experience by administrators. These connections were seen as having a positive impact on student-athlete motivation, integration, persistence, development, and performance.

Theme 4 - Balancing academics and other responsibilities with athletics can be a drawback to participation. The most common drawback both administrators discussed dealt with the amount of time and commitment participation in intercollegiate athletics requires. Additionally, the pressure it puts on the student-athlete to balance academics, work, family responsibilities, and friends was also seen as a common theme. Elkin describes what he sees as the drawbacks,

Yeah, a lot of time absolutely and then you factor in schoolwork, you factor in the fact that I think a lot of our students work, have jobs. A lot of our students maybe come from single family homes or have to take care of a brother or sister or a sick mom. So I think there's a lot of outside interference as well that maybe takes up a lot of time as well so I would say there's a lot of time that's taken up...I guess it's very possible you could miss out maybe on some alternate social experiences. In other words, you have this group of people that are now your teammates, but maybe in your I'll say your other life, which is your, you know, you may miss out on going out one night or hanging with this group that's going to the movies.

Ronald agrees about the drawbacks regarding the amount of time and pressure athletics place on the student, however, he sees this as a potential benefit also,

So practices, the competitions, the travel, all of those put pressures on the student I think that can make it more difficult for them, but the interesting thing is the flip side of that is they learn how to navigate that and they learn how to balance all of

those other things so their time management improves. I think in a lot of ways the ability to use that as an outlet for the stress that they're experiencing in the classroom is also another positive aspect that we may not have mentioned before.

An additional drawback that Elkin sees that was not evidenced in Ronald's interview is that at times student-athletes can get an inflated sense of accomplishment when they receive accolades at the non-scholarship community college level. He states,

I think you can get students sometimes that think they're better than they are sometimes? You know, awards and accolades, I think they're great, but I think sometimes we're a non-scholarship junior college and while we have had great players, we've had great players that are non-scholarship junior college. And I think sometimes our kids that do well and get a lot of accolades and are great athletes all of a sudden think that they can go on and play at this, at this huge level, maybe Division I, and the reality is they probably can't. So maybe it kind of fills their mind with false hopes, as maybe a negative. And I don't know if it's a negative or maybe just more of a reality, maybe it blurs the reality because then you get their parents that kind of feed into this, well, geez, he was or she was player of the year, you know? Geez, they got to be able to play and the reality is they can't. And you try to tell them in the nicest way and just sometimes it's not.

Both Ronald and Elkin believe that the amount of time required to participate in athletics and school paired with personal responsibilities can be a potential drawback if not effectively managed by the student-athletes. Ronald sees this as an opportunity to develop time management skills.

Theme 5 - The administration strives to assist student-athletes growth and development of soft skills. Both Ronald and Elkin provide examples of how they strive to provide meaningful experiences for student-athletes at CC-B. Further, they detail the primary areas that athletics can impact a student-athletes growth and development.

Elkin describes the experience of being a student-athlete at CC-B and explains how many students wish it was a four-year school. They get comfortable, connect with the institution, and enjoy their time. Elkin states,

The one thing I noticed when I got here, that I kept hearing, is a lot of students would say I wish [CC-B] was a four-year, and that kind of resonates because I heard it a couple of days ago actually, and I think what they mean by that is they enjoy their time here so much they want to stay longer. And I think that's a good thing. I think that, again, goes back to either what we're doing as an athletic team and program, what the school is hopefully doing, you know, from their academics, from their schoolwork, you know, from their social, you know, encounters...

To further this point, many student-athletes benefit from their time at the community college and receive opportunities that were not there for them out of high school. Elkin explains,

I think they're very satisfied their experience here. And then a lot of them are fortunate to get scholarships or to go somewhere else to play for the next two years at a four-year school and that can be academics and athletics. Sometimes combined. There are students that come out of high school that are not very good

high school students that for some students figure it out and they're a great student all of a sudden.

When asked to describe the overall experience afforded to student at CC-B, Elkin explains that he strives for excellence in the program, from championships and recruiting the right kids to academics and even alumni-recognition. He says,

I think excellence would be a good word and it's a word that we've put on our web site. We try to say a history of excellence and I think that encompasses whether I think championships is part of that. I think recognizing our alumni, our past people through like a Hall of Fame that we have I think is very important, people that come before you and try to pass the torch on I think helps breed a culture. I think any academic success, accolades, when student-athletes do well. We try to do a good job of making sure we try to nominate students for awards not because other students at other institutions don't, but I just think it's important to recognize people for their academic achievements. We do that at an end of the year banquet as well, you know, we do give awards for MVP and most improved, but we also make sure to recognize our student-athletes that do well in the classroom as well, both male and female, highest GPA, you know, student athlete of the year, scholar athlete I should say which is important. But I just think excellence. I just think that the way that we try to portray and try to teach the kids. Again, winning has been part of the culture that's been created. I think we've been lucky to get coaches that have been here. We have a lot of long term coaches that I think has helped, you know, our baseball coach has been here 16 years now. He played at [CC-B]. He played for the coach before him who he took over for so, you know,

our softball coach has been here for a long time and has built that culture in his program as well. Understands the right kid to recruit. I think that's a key, right kid. You can go out and find the best player, but they may not be the right kid for the program or for the institution, you know.

Ronald mirrors Elkin's opinions on the positive experience that student-athletes have at CC-B. He goes on further to describe the opportunity to participate in athletics as an important selection factor for many students who are considering community college. He states,

I think the vast majority of student-athletes have enjoyed their participation. I think it's basically what keeps them coming back. They understand that their participation in athletics helps them to achieve higher grades, keeps them motivated. So I think their experience has been for the most part very positive...I think it helps to keep them motivated and there's something for them to do that it attracts them to keep coming back every day, so it's not all about academics. It's not all about studying. But they have their sport that they love and they get to participate in that here. They get to compete. Those things that the athletic drive that they have that also helps their academic drive so that they come here and stay here. And I think that's also one of the reasons that attracts them to come to community college to begin with. It's not always necessarily the most attractive place to be at a community college, but the opportunity to be able to participate in the sport, it makes it attractive for them to come.

There were a number of soft skills and areas of growth that administrators believed athletics participation at CC-B had an impact on. These are broken down and described in more detail below.

Confidence. Both Elkin and Ronald described the idea that student-athletes gain confidence as a result of their participation. Ronald describes this using the reverse transfer student as an example,

We have had students who have transferred in who have sort of gotten beat up along the way on their transfer in and you can just see them blossom when they're here. So in that respect, absolutely. You see that confidence developing, smaller classrooms. It may be in some cases where our students return from a Division I school where they just might have gotten their butt kicked and they come here and developing their skills on a smaller scale. I think one of the things that they learn about themselves here is that they actually have the ability to be able to function as a college student while they're also participating in their sport. So that they can challenge themselves. They can do things that they may have doubted that they could do.

From an athletic standpoint Elkin agrees that student-athletes gain confidence as a result of their participation. He states,

You see a lot of kids that come in that have no confidence and by the time they leave as a sophomore, you know, they just being part of the team or maybe they got a chance they didn't before or were just taught how to be confident,

Discipline/Integrity. Discipline and integrity were two themes that came up in both administrator interviews. Student's at CC-B come from a variety of different backgrounds and means. The impact that their athletic participation can have on them from this standpoint is tremendous. While Ronald's examples were surface level, Elkin describes this theme well using an example of a story about a former student-athlete,

And we had a young man that came back for a Hall of Fame that played basketball. He was from Passaic County, you know, from a rough area, had a bad upbringing, and to hear him come back and the fact that he is now a teacher and he's trying to help develop these young minds that he says CC-B helped him get to the point where he learned what it was like to be cared for and learned that there's more to life and learn that there is sort of a right and wrong way. And that he says that CC-B had a big part of that and he's trying to teach that to the young people back up in Passaic where he came from. I think stories like that are probably a lot more out there, but those are the ones that you really say, it's really not about athletics. It's not really about maybe your grades at that point. It's really about changing somebody as a person to realize that there's more to life and that you can change and become maybe a better person and hopefully pass that on.

Leadership. Both administrators agreed that athletics provides opportunities for student-athletes to practice and learn about their abilities to lead and follow. Ronald says,

It's definitely a student development aspect, so I see that it's helping students to development leadership characteristics, personal characteristics...I think that they also learn about their ability to lead and also their ability to follow.

Maturity. Both administrators believed student-athletes learned lessons and matured as a result of their participation. Elkin describes his experience and believes that maturity is one of the biggest things he sees that students develop during their time at CC-B,

I think you see more of a maturity growth than anything from a lot of the students, you know, you see student-athletes grow, you know, from a maturity standpoint. Even socially, you know, maybe that kid that was quiet when they first came here, all of a sudden opens up and now is the chatterbox because they feel comfortable. So I think, you know, I think socially a lot of kids can grow from that.

Self-Control. Both administrators feel student-athletes develop self-control as a result of their participation. Elkin discusses how he hammers into the student-athletes to always maintain control and composure,

I think for some students it takes more time, but, yeah, absolutely because I know we hammer into the kids do the right thing. If somebody doesn't do the right thing to you, don't retaliate because if you retaliate, it's always the person that gets in trouble, but do the right thing, just walk away.

Ronald recognizes this and gives examples of what he witnesses when he attends games and events regarding the student-athletes ability to control themselves,

Actually when I've gone to watch, you know, I'm a spectator, I don't get to go to as many as I'd like to, but I've seen them deal with really difficult situations when they're playing their sport. I have never seen a student athlete lose their cool when they're playing. Never. And obviously they deal with some really difficult situations when they're out there. If they're getting tripped or pushed. I would say I've seen the coaches lose their cool far more than I've seen the students and even in the face of that, when they're coaches are in their face, I've seen them deal with that very maturely.

Teamwork. Teamwork was also seen as a lesson student-athletes learn as a result of their participation in athletics. Ronald describes in detail how teamwork plays in to what is learned as well as how it crosses from one team to another in regards to sportsmanship,

It doesn't really matter what sport. They're developing that relationship with their teammates, also with their coach, with the athletic department, seen those individuals as authorities. They're developing those career skills when they're playing on the court, on the field. So, yes, absolutely helps them in terms of their ability to work within a team and working with a supervisor that translates into their career...I think very similar to that teamwork aspect. That that's absolutely something they have to rely on and I've seen that respect also on the court when they're dealing with their opponents. There isn't a disrespect that you see there. Obviously they're competing hard with each other, but they're respectful of each other, you know, so, yeah, I think that that has a positive effect as well.

Elkin agrees and provides examples of how student-athletes learn to connect and work in teams and with people that they may not always see eye to eye with,

I think you make connections so you never know. Connections are a huge thing. You never know that you want to be in the business world and your old teammate's father was something and, you know, could be as simple as that...Because I think, again, when you meet everybody, even though you're a team, there's people that you just may not see eye to eye with, but you have to figure out a way how to work with them.

Time management. Both administrators felt strongly that student-athletes learn to time manage as a result of their participation. Ronald explains this,

Their time management skills, that they are, that they work and that their ability to juggle multiple priorities, that that is also something that works. I think those are all things that they'll learn here. Maybe they didn't necessarily get when they were in high school because their high school day is so structured, and when come to college it's so unstructured and they still have the ability to be able to succeed in that environment, and that's a pretty strong thing that they learn about themselves.

Summary. Administrators describe throughout the interviews the importance of making the athletic experience meaningful for student athletes. The administrators describe how they measure that the experience is meaningful and it centers primarily around student-athlete feedback and the things they have heard such as student-athletes wishing CC-B was a four-year college, etc. The development of soft-skills such as

confidence, discipline/integrity, leadership, maturity, self-control, teamwork, and time management as a result of athletic participation was something both administrators said they strive to provide to student-athletes in their program.

Theme 6 - Students involved in extracurricular activities are perceived by administrators to perform better academically and have more opportunities for development, support, and connections than those that are not. The theme of student involvement is discussed by both administrators as having a positive impact on student success. Involved students are believed by administrators to persist and do better academically than those that simply come to class and go home. At times, students can get too involved but both administrators agree, when this happens the administrator helps the student athlete to refocus and prioritize academics first. Elkin describes the importance of being involved,

Because I think just being involved is what helps. You know? I'm in the athletics world, but whether you want to join the drama club or chess club or dance club or even our cheerleading here is technically a club, I just think being involved, again, just connects you and builds relationships and starts that whole ball rolling.

Student government or whatever else it might be. I just think that being involved connects you more to the institution and you want to be here and you want to do better and you have a sense of belonging.

Ronald describes the importance CC-B places on student involvement and the importance of monitoring to make sure students are not getting too involved. He also

describes how in his experience involved students perform better academically, make connections, and grow and develop more positively. He says,

From day one we have an involvement fair, get the students involved in clubs and activities. And it's only when we see if they're not doing well that we'll tell them to back off...I believe very strongly in this, if it weren't for students being able to participate in their sport, this is also for student life and activities, the activities that they do outside of the classroom, co-curricular stuff increases their GPA...So if a college is all about helping students to perform better academically, athletics is an integral part of that for these students... Our average student we know goes to class, leaves class, gets in their car, goes to work or goes home, goes to see their friends. Our student-athletes, they hang out together between classes. They stick around for practice together. Sometimes they're here from 8:00 in the morning until they're done with their sport at 9:00 at night, so that relationship that they're developing on the team translates into the classroom into their study partnerships, no doubt... Students that are engaged, they have those same similar positive aspects. But the student that's disengaged, the student that comes here sort of as a pass through, I don't think that the college helps as much to develop the student in those ways. The average student I would say that athletics and student life and activities provide a more positive aspect in terms of their growth.

Both Ronald and Elkin believe that on the whole, students that are involved do better academically, make connections, and have more opportunities to develop soft skills than those that are not.

CC-B Selection Factor Survey Data

The Student-Athlete College Selection Factor Survey was administered to all student-athletes at CC-B (approximately 140). Of the 140 students, 27 began the survey (N=27) and 11 completed enough of it for it to be useful for this study (n=11). The survey had a 19.29% engagement rate and a 7.86% completion rate.

Table 10 below provides a broad demographic representation of the student-athletes that completed the selection factor survey. The average age of all participants was 19.63 years with a range of 18 to 21. 45% of participants identified as male and 55% female. 73% of participants were second year and 27% were first year athletes. The average number of colleges each student applied to during their college search was 2. 9.09% of students indicated they made an athletic recruiting visit to CC-B.

On average each athlete made 1.18 athletic recruiting visits overall during their college selection process. 63.64% of those surveyed indicated that CC-B was their first choice institution and 18.18% indicated it was the only school they were accepted to. A wide range of sports was represented in this survey that spanned across all three collegiate athletic seasons - 31.25% baseball, 25.00% basketball, 18.75% softball, 12.50% soccer, 6.25% outdoor track and field, and 6.25% volleyball.

Table 10

CC-B Selection Factor Survey Demographic Information (n = 11)

Average Age	19.63 years
Male	45%
Female	55%
1st Year Participant	27%
2nd Year Participant	73%
Sports Represented	
Baseball	31.25%
Basketball	25.00%
Softball	18.75%
Soccer	12.50%
Outdoor Track/Field	6.25%
Volleyball	6.25%
Average Number of Colleges Applied To	2
Percent That Made a Recruiting Visit	9.09%
Avg. Total Recruiting Visits All Colleges	1.18
CC-B Was First Choice School	63.64%
CC-B Was The Only School Accepted At	18.18%

Student-athletes were asked to rank selection factors as either “No Importance”, “Slightly Important”, “Moderately Important”, or “Very Important”. These answers were given numerical values from "1" to "4" respectively and averaged for each grouping of factors. As is indicated in Table 11 below, the highest ranked average were for factors related to facilities and academic support for athletes, aid and tuition, academic programs and social atmosphere, individual role on team and athletic goals, interactions with coaches and teammates, and team reputation and success. This aligns fairly closely to Student Athlete Theme 6 above as student-athletes during the interview process

indicated they chose to attend CC-B primarily based on affordability which is directly related to the second ranked factor "Aid and Tuition", opportunities to participate in athletics and transfer which is directly related to the fourth ranked factor "Individual Role on Team and Athletic Goals", and the academic reputation of the institution which is directly related to the third ranked factor "Academic Programs and Social Atmosphere". The distance to home theme found above in the qualitative interviews was ranked near the bottom as the "Campus Life and Location" factor.

Surprisingly there was no real connection between the top factor from the survey "Facilities and Academic Support for Athletes" to the Student-Athlete Theme 6 - Student-athletes choose to attend CC-B primarily based on affordability, opportunities to participate in athletics and transfer, distance from home, and the academic reputation of the institution. It is plausible that this is because the athletes were surveyed after they had experienced the athletic program and academic support services for at least a year and had a chance to utilize the robust academic, tutoring, mentorship, and advising support services offered through the athletic department at CC-B. This may have slightly inflated the rank of this factor as participants did not complete the survey immediately after choosing to attend CC-B.

Table 11

CC-B Selection Factor Averages (n = 11)

Number	Name	Average
9	Facilities and Academic Support for Athletes	3.64
7	Aid and Tuition	3.52
1	Academic Programs and Social Atmosphere	3.49
2	Individual Role on Team and Athletic Goals	3.44
10	Interactions with Coaches and Teammates	3.36
5	Team Reputation and Success	3.30
4	Secondary Team Characteristics	3.04
8	Campus Life and Location	2.98
6	High School Influences and Prior Experiences	2.55
3	Peers, Parents, Friendliness of Campus, and Weather	2.45

CC-B Summary of Findings

Similar to case CC-A there were three important strands of research from which the findings from CC-B were identified. These included student-athlete interviews, administrator interviews, and student-athlete surveys. For CC-B, six themes were identified for each the student-athlete and administrator interviews.

There was alignment between the student-athlete and administrator themes. Both groups indicated that athletics had a positive influence on academic motivation, persistence, and performance, provides opportunities for important interpersonal connections, and provides opportunities to develop soft skills. Both also concur that extracurricular involvement, not just in athletics, is a valuable tool that provides support, relationships, and integration into the college community. Another finding which aligned was that balancing academics and other responsibilities along with the sacrifice required

to participate in athletics was the main drawback, however, student-athletes and administrator Ronald saw this as an opportunity to learn how to effectively time manage. One emergent theme that was discussed by the administrators and not by the student-athletes included the important part administrators and coaches play in creating meaningful experiences for student-athletes through modeling appropriate behavior and utilizing effective development techniques.

In regards to questions regarding selection factors, student-athletes during interviews indicated they chose to attend CC-B primarily based on affordability, opportunities to participate in athletics and transfer, distance from home, and the academic reputation of the institution. This aligned fairly well with the survey results from CC-B as these themes all ranked relatively high on the selection factor survey averages. The one selection factor that was not discussed by student-athletes but showed up on the survey was "Facilities and Academic Support for Athletes". The student-athletes described at length during the interviews the importance of the academic advisor at CC-B in many other areas but did not discuss it when questioned about selection factors. I believe that student-athletes mistakenly ranked it highly on the survey because of the value they place on the position after having experienced it, however, I do not have evidence to support this.

Cross-Case Analysis

Yin (2013) emphasizes the importance of a cross-case analysis when completing the analysis of multiple individual case studies. Cross-case analysis allow for learning from one case to another and strengthens the individual case findings through the ability

to examine the replication of data. The below analyses provide many opportunities to observe replication of thematic data across both the administrative and student-athlete qualitative and the student-athlete quantitative strands of this study. As this study had three distinct research strands per case, this section will analyze each strand as a function of the data from both cases.

Thematic Cross-Case Analysis

To be able to provide a meaningful analysis of themes, Table 12 below was created to visually depict similarities and differences in data across students and administrators at CC-A and CC-B. Themes were numbered and lettered for alignment purposes and will be further discussed below. Overall, student-athlete qualitative themes were fairly consistent across both cases and provided strong examples of replication.

Table 12

Student-Athlete and Administrator Qualitative Themes

#	Themes	Students	Admins	Students	Admins
		CC-A	CC-A	CC-B	CC-B
1	Athletic participation has a positive impact on academic motivation, persistence, and performance.	X	X	X	X
1a	Meaningful academic supports include:				
	Administrators	X		X	
	Advising		X	X	X
	Coaches	X	X	X	X
	College and Team Policies	X			
	Intervention for Struggling SA's				X
	NJCAA Eligibility Standards	X	X	X	X
	Progress Reports/Monitoring		X	X	X
	Study Halls	X	X	X	X
	Tutoring	X	X	X	
2	Athletics provides opportunities for interpersonal connections with others at the institution that foster support, implicit respect, and encouragement.	X	X	X	X
2a	Interpersonal connections that were most important for the student included those with:				
	Athletic Advisor			X	X
	Athletic Department Staff	X	X	X	X
	Coaches	X	X	X	X
	Counseling Staff		X		
	Faculty		X	X	X
	Other Students	X	X	X	X

Table 12 (continued)

#	Themes	Students CC-A	Admins CC-A	Students CC-B	Admins CC-B
3	Administrators and coaches are critical in creating meaningful experiences for student-athletes through modeling appropriate behavior and providing support.		X		X
4	Balancing academics and other responsibilities with athletics requires sacrifice and can be a drawback to participation.	X	X	X	X
4a	Balancing academics and other responsibilities provides opportunities to learn how to effectively time manage.	X		X	
4b	Getting an overinflated sense of accomplishment is a drawback to participation.				X
5a	The athletic experience at CC-A/B provides opportunities to develop soft skills and learn lessons as a result of participation.	X		X	
5b	The administration strive to provide a meaningful experience while assisting student-athletes growth and development of soft skills as a result of participation.		X		X
5c	Student-athletes develop the following skills as a result of their participation:				
	Communication	X		X	
	Community Service (servant leadership)		X		
	Confidence	X	X	X	X
	Discipline	X	X	X	X
	Leadership/Followership	X	X	X	X
	Maturity	X	X	X	X
	Perseverance	X			
	Self-Control	X	X	X	X
	Teamwork	X	X	X	X
	Time Management	X	X	X	X

Table 12 (continued)

#	Themes	Students CC-A	Admins CC-A	Students CC-B	Admins CC-B
6	Community college athletics provides opportunities to educate students who may not have considered college as an option.	X			
7a	Students involved in extracurricular activities are perceived by administrators to perform better academically and have more opportunities for development, support, and connections than those that are not.		X		X
7b	Student involvement in extracurricular activities is viewed positively because it helps with developing relationships, social and academic support, and general college knowledge.	X		X	
8	Student-athletes chose to attend primarily based on:				
	Affordability	X		X	
	Opportunities to participate in athletics	X		X	
	Opportunities for successful transfer			X	
	Distance from home	X		X	
	Academic reputation of the institution	X		X	
	Most students would have attended elsewhere if the institution did not offer athletics	X		X	

Cross-Case Theme 1 and 1a – Athletics and Academics. As a whole, both CC-A and CC-B agreed that athletic participation has a positive impact on academic motivation, persistence, and performance. Student-athletes and administrators at CC-A and CC-B also indicated and agreed that coaches, NJCAA eligibility standards, and team study halls were viewed as meaningful supports. Student-athletes at both CC-A and CC-B indicated the importance of administration as a meaningful support. While administration did not directly engage in the discussion about themselves as meaningful supports, they did indirectly posit their commitment to an academics first mentality and described how their leadership affects the motivation, persistence, and performance of student-athletes.

Advising was seen as a meaningful support nearly across the board. Administration at CC-A and CC-B discuss it as being extremely valuable. Student-athletes at CC-B discussed advising, particularly having a dedicated advisor on staff within the athletic department as having a strong impact on their experience and success. This support was not nearly as pronounced among students at CC-A. It is plausible that this is due to the fact that while administration at CC-A does value and advise student-athletes, there may not be enough time for them to make as large of an impact as the advisor at CC-B. While the advisor at CC-A has shared job responsibilities as an athletic administrator, advisor, and coach, the advisor at CC-B is fully dedicated to student-athlete academic advising. Based on this, the students at CC-B are more likely to respond, the advisor at CC-B has more time to dedicate to all the student-athletes in the athletic department, and the quality of the advising support is improved.

Tutoring was also discussed as a meaningful support nearly across the board. Students at both CC-A and CC-B discuss the importance of this support as having an impact on their success. Administration at CC-A discuss it as well. Administrators at CC-B do not however. This may be due to the fact that it goes overlooked as they have a full time academic advisor and a team study room where athletes have indicated they are engaging in peer tutoring sessions.

Progress reporting and academic monitoring is also viewed as a meaningful support nearly across the board. Administrators at both institutions agree that it is important. Students at CC-B also discuss the academic monitoring process. Students at CC-A, however, do not discuss it as much as a meaningful support. This is an interesting finding that may be due to the fact that they do not know it is occurring or perhaps it was just an anomaly based on a lack of knowledge of the student-athlete sample selected for interview.

Another meaningful support was intervention for struggling student-athletes. Only administrators at CC-B really discussed this in detail. They described how they would remove academically struggling athletes from participation and set them up on a remediation plan to get them back on track. While there was discussion regarding assisting students that had become ineligible with regaining their eligibility at CC-A, intervention was not discussed beyond that. Surprisingly, student-athletes did not discuss intervention as a theme either. This was a surprising finding as three of the interviewed student-athletes at some point had become ineligible and needed an intervention to get back on track. It is plausible that the student-athletes during the interview were

embarrassed of this and thus less willing to discuss during the interview. It did seem to be a difficult topic to extract information for the participants about.

Finally, college and team policies were also viewed as a meaningful support for student-athletes at CC-A. Administration at CC-A and CC-B did discuss the importance of training and hiring the right coaches to impact students. Although administration at both institutions did not discuss college and team policies as having a direct impact as a meaningful academic support, they did value training and hiring coaches that did. Student-athletes at CC-B did not discuss college and team policies as a meaningful academic support.

Cross-Case Theme 2 and 2a – Athletics and interpersonal connections.

Students and administrators at both institutions across the board indicated that athletics provides opportunities for interpersonal connections with others fostering support, implicit respect, and encouragement. Connections with specific groups of people were discussed and it was agreed by student-athletes and administrators at both institutions that connections with athletic department staff, coaches, and other students were extremely important.

Faculty were discussed by administration at both CC-A and CC-B and students at CC-B as providing a meaningful and important connection for student-athletes. Student-athletes at CC-A, however, did not discuss this as an important connection. This was a notable omission in data as the Athletic Director at CC-A is also an Academic Dean. Further, the office space is shared amongst faculty and athletic-staff. This may be an area that would be worth of further study at CC-A.

Connections with the student-athlete advisor were also pronounced by both administration and students at CC-B. This position seemed to be viewed as extremely important for creating a planning, academic, and personal connection for student-athletes at CC-B. This was not a theme at CC-A, most likely because the advisor had shared responsibilities as the Assistant Athletic Director.

Administration at CC-A believed strongly that the connection students had with the counseling staff was very important to them, however, none of the student-athletes indicated any benefit or even discussed connection with counseling staff. Administration at CC-A brought in counseling staff during meetings with teams to assist the student-athletes with their success. While there may be successful outcomes from this, none of the student-athletes indicated they formed a meaningful connection with the counseling staff. This was not discussed at all by either administrators or student-athletes at CC-B and seemed to be a unique program/relationship to CC-A.

Cross-Case Theme 3 – Coaches and administrators are critical to creating meaningful experiences for student-athletes through modeling appropriate behavior and providing support. Administrators at both CC-A and CC-B describe how administrators and coaches are critical in creating meaningful experiences for student-athletes through modeling appropriate behavior and providing support. Further, every chief student administrator and the athletic administrator interviewed agreed that coaches and administrators play a critical role in the learning and development of student-athletes. This theme addresses an administrative perspective and is not relevant to the student-athlete perspective.

Cross-Case Theme 4 – Drawbacks to athletic participation. Administrators and student-athletes at both institutions agreed that balancing academics and other responsibilities with athletics required sacrifice and can be a drawback to participation. Despite this, student-athletes at both institutions felt that this drawback provided the opportunity for them to learn how to effectively time manage. This can also be seen as a meaningful learning outcome later in our findings.

Another drawback to athletic participation at this level was at times student-athletes can get an overinflated sense of accomplishment. This was discussed by administration at CC-B as students many times get awards and accolades at the DIII Junior College level and think they are ready to get a full scholarship to an NCAA Division I program or even go professional. This theme was not discussed anywhere else in the study but may be worth further investigation.

Cross-Case Theme 5 – The athletic experience and soft skills. Student-athletes at both institutions agree that the athletic experience was satisfying, positive, and provided opportunities to develop what I have framed as soft skills and to learn lessons as a result of participation. Administrator themes aligned with that as at both institutions they strive to provide a satisfying and positive experience while assisting student-athletes growth and development of soft skills as a result of participation.

Specific skill development was discussed as a result of athletic participation. Student-athletes and administrators at both institutions described how athletics provides growth for student-athletes in the areas of confidence, discipline, leadership, followership, maturity, self-control, teamwork, and time management. Student-athletes

at both institutions discuss their growth in the area of communication. They believe they have gained communication skills that will make them less shy and able to express themselves in appropriate ways even in difficult situations. This was not found to be a theme that was discussed by administrators.

A few outlying themes that were discussed at CC-A included community service (servant leadership) and perseverance. Administration discussed the importance of community service (servant leadership) as being something they are espousing to teach the student-athletes. They describe how this is a new initiative that they are trying to get across to all teams. This may be why the student-athletes have not yet recognized it as an area of their growth. Student-athletes at CC-A did, however, indicate that athletic participation did influence their perseverance. The athletes described how athletic participation impacted their ability to respond positively to setbacks and work harder when things weren't quite going their way. This was not a theme found with student-athletes at CC-B. It was interesting to note that it seemed most of the student-athletes interviewed at CC-A had stories about being the underdogs or on teams that were under rostered. There is something to be said about this as learning outcomes may be directly related to circumstances surrounding the team, i.e. the success of the program, roster size, etc.

Cross-Case Theme 6 – Community college athletics provides opportunities to educate students who may not have otherwise attended college. There is no cross-case replication for this theme as it was only described by student-athletes at CC-A, however, it is an emergent theme that is important to recognize. Two student-athletes interviewed at CC-A described how athletics provided opportunities to get an education.

Based on their life circumstances they may not have considered college as an option without the community college athletic opportunity. By participating, they felt it provided them the access to an education. This is a very personal theme that could be sensitive and difficult for many people to talk about and may be worthy of further investigation in the future.

Cross-Case Theme 7 – Student involvement outcomes. Administrators at both institutions described that they believed students involved in extracurricular activities perform better academically and have more opportunities for development, support, and connections than those that are not. Student sentiment around involvement align with this as students at both institutions believe that involvement is positive and helps with developing relationships, getting social and academic support, making connections, and getting to know the college. Involvement across the board is seen as a critical piece of student-athlete development, academic performance, and the college experience.

Cross-Case Theme 8 – Student athlete selection factors. Only student-athletes were asked during the interviews to describe why they chose to attend and participate in athletics at their community college. The qualitative analysis of selection factors for students from both institutions seemed to align quite well. Student-athletes across the board agreed that affordability, the opportunity to participate in athletics, the distance from home, and the academic reputation of the institution were the top reasons they chose to attend where they did. Seven of the nine student-athletes interviewed said they would not have attended CC-A or CC-B if the institution did not offer athletics. Additionally, students at CC-B indicated opportunities for successful transfer as another important selection factor when choosing a college.

Student-athletes ranked selection factors slightly differently in the survey across both CC-A and CC-B. Table 13 below provides a detailed tabular representation of factors and their ranks from the data collected at CC-A and CC-B. The four factors that overlapped in the top five for both sites include Factor 1 - Academic Programs and Social Atmosphere, Factor 7 - Aid and Tuition, Factor 2 - Individual Role on Team and Athletic Goals, and Factor 10 – Interactions with Coaches and Teammates. This is triangulated quite well in the qualitative findings in that factors 1, 7, 2, and 10 relate directly to the academic reputation of the institution, affordability, and role on the team including opportunities to participate in athletics.

Table 13

Student-Athlete Quantitative Themes

#	Selection Factor	Avg. CC-A	CC-A Rank	Avg. CC-B	CC-B Rank
1	Academic Programs and Social Atmosphere	2.97	1	3.49	3
2	Individual Role on Team and Athletic Goals	2.70	3	3.44	4
3	Peers, Parents, Friendliness of Campus, and Weather	2.22	7	2.45	10
4	Secondary Team Characteristics	2.09	9	3.04	7
5	Team Reputation and Success	2.21	8	3.30	6
6	High School Influences and Prior Experiences	1.98	10	2.55	9
7	Aid and Tuition	2.90	2	3.52	2
8	Campus Life and Location	2.44	5	2.98	8
9	Facilities and Academic Support for Athletes	2.38	6	3.64	1
10	Interactions with Coaches and Teammates	2.67	4	3.36	5

The additional factors at CC-A that were in the top five but not replicated in CC-B include Factor 8 - Campus Life and Location. This is not surprising as during the

qualitative interviews CC-B administrators tended to focus recruitment on local student-athletes and believed strongly in importance of the student-athlete coach relationship. Student-athletes from CC-B also discussed the importance of their relationship with their coaches and teammates and the distance to campus as important factors to them.

The additional factor at CC-B that was in the top five but not replicated in CC-A includes Factor 9 - Facilities and Academic Support for Athletes. This is also not surprising as during the qualitative interviews CC-B administrators tended to focus on the importance of their academic advisors, support personnel, and their commitment to excellence and a strong reputation. Student-athletes from CC-B also discussed the importance of their connection with the athletic academic advisor as well as the importance of the reputation of their program. What this shows in both cases is that recruitment strategies and administrative focus has a direct impact on who is attracted to and what is important to those that select each institution, however, affordability, the opportunity to participate in athletics, and the academic reputation of the institution are important across the board.

Summary

This chapter was separated into three main segments including Case CC-A, Case CC-B, and a cross-case analysis. Each individual case began by describing the site and all participants in the qualitative interviews. It continued and themed data in two distinct areas separated by student-athletes and administrators. Following this, the quantitative selection factor survey analysis and results were presented. This was then repeated for the second site and followed by a cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis examined

replication and dissimilarity in the data across both sites as a function of the three different strands of research done which included the qualitative student-athlete themes, the qualitative administrator themes, and the student-athlete quantitative selection factor survey findings. The data presented provides a foundation to answer the research questions in this study.

The discussion of the results as they pertain to the research questions for this study along with a discussion of the implications for policy and practice will continue in the next chapter. A discussion related to the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research will also be had.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

Increasing numbers of students are choosing to attend community colleges to start their post-secondary education (Ma & Baum, 2015). Castaneda (2004) reports that community college athletic teams are among the most popular activities found at American community colleges. While there has been a large amount of research done in regards to student development at the four-year level, research into the community college experience is sparse (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The purpose of this multiple case study (Yin, 2013) was to examine why New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes chose to attend the community college and participate in athletics, what factors influenced their decisions, and how administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of participation in community college athletics aligned. With the tremendous increase in enrollment and popularity of athletic programs at the community college level, it was imperative to consider its importance to student development and the institution. This is the first known study of its type on community college student-athletes in the geographic region of New Jersey and builds upon the work and recommendations for further research of Castaneda (2004), Gill (2015), Holland (2009), Rinke (2011), and Schulz (2007). New Jersey community colleges are part of one of the largest and most competitive non-scholarship Division III regions and conferences in the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). With the tremendous increase in enrollment and popularity of

athletic programs at the community college level, it is imperative that we consider its importance to student development and the institution.

This study examined the experiences of student-athletes and athletic administrators who were part of a New Jersey non-scholarship community college intercollegiate athletics program. Participants shared their experiences through interviews and surveys and the analysis of responses resulted in multiple themes identified and described in Chapter 4.

This chapter begins with a discussion answering each of the research questions developed for the study. The extant literature from Chapter 2 is utilized as a baseline for the discussion as well as the theoretical propositions derived from Chapter 3. Implications of the findings are further discussed in the next section and followed by limitations of the research in this study. Finally, a section providing suggestions for future research and a summary finish this chapter.

Findings

The findings in this study support the extant theoretical positions described in Chapter 2 as well as the propositions from Chapter 3. Each research question is answered below and tied back to the literature and theoretical propositions posited earlier in this document.

Research Question 1 - How do Division III New Jersey community college administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of being a community college student-athlete align?

Proposition 1 and Proposition 3. Proposition 1 and 3 posit that Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes and administrators describe the value and contribution of participation in athletics as having a direct impact on student-athlete personal growth, learning, and development as described by Astin (1984, 1993). A number of findings emerged from this study supporting both Proposition 1 and Proposition 3 and relates to learning, growth, and development.

The cross-case findings in this study indicate that athletic participation has a positive impact on academic motivation, persistence, and performance while providing meaningful academic supports. Student-athletes and administrators describe this in detail and include the importance of specific supports and relationships with administrators, advisors, and coaches. Further discussed were policies, intervention processes, NJCAA eligibility standards, progress reporting, academic monitoring, study halls, and tutoring. Findings indicated that the relationships developed between student-athletes and administrators/coaches were critical in creating meaningful experiences through modeled behavior and effective development techniques. This is corroborated by Astin (1984, 1993) who purports that student development happens through many different mediums such as engagement in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities like athletics, and interaction with institutional personnel such as coaches, advisors, faculty, and administrators. He further describes a direct relationship between the student's involvement in college and their learning and personal development.

Other cross-case findings indicate that balancing academics and other responsibilities with athletics requires sacrifice and can be a drawback to participation, however, it was found to also provide opportunities to learn how to effectively time manage. Student-athletes and administrators consistently described the enormous amounts of time involved and invested in sport and studies. They also describe how this involvement created connections the institution, people, and motivated and supported athletes to perform academically. Every student-athlete, regardless of sport or time spent on the field, court, etc. described some level of development as a result of their participation. This was supported by administration. This is corroborated by postulate one of Astin's Involvement Theory (1984, 1993) that states involvement is related to the amount of physical and psychological energy the student invests in objects or programs. Throughout the findings we see student-athletes and administrators describing the large amount of time student-athletes dedicate to both athletics and academics and the development of their ability to effectively prioritize and time manage.

Student-athletes and administrators also described across both cases how athletics provided opportunities to develop soft skills and learn lessons as a result of participation particularly in the areas of communication, community service, confidence, discipline, leadership, followership, maturity, perseverance, self-control, teamwork, and time management. Both administrators and student-athletes agreed that students involved in extracurricular activities performed better academically and had more opportunities for development, support, and connections than those that did not and student involvement in extracurricular activities was viewed positively and helped with developing relationships, getting social and academic support, making connections, and getting to know the

college. This is corroborated by postulate two of Involvement Theory (1984, 1993) which states that involvement occurs along a continuum, regardless of its object. Different students have shown how they manifest different degrees of involvement at different times. Not every student had the same experience, however, the findings indicated that both administrators and student-athletes agreed, students that invested more time and energy in extracurricular activities had far superior development outcomes than those that did not. Further, multi-sport student-athletes discussed how they learn and develop more in some sports rather than others based on the amount of time they spend in that sport and the quality experience they get out of each sport program which can be influenced by coaches, connections to other athletes, and other factors.

Another cross-case finding in this study related to the student-athletes and administrators descriptions of how participation in intercollegiate athletics has assisted with learning, growth, and development. This was then able to be quantified in a number of ways in the interviews particularly where persistence rates are discussed and time spent studying and practicing were discussed. This is directly corroborated through postulate three of Astin's Involvement Theory (1984, 1993) which describes how involvement has both qualitative and quantitative features.

In another cross-case finding, administrators and student-athletes find critical the importance of working together with committed, trained, and caring coaches, staff, and administration. Administrators described how it was imperative to find good coaches and train them properly in order to maximize student development. Student-athletes agreed with this and described the importance of having well trained, caring, and supportive coaches, administrators, and staff. This finding is corroborated by postulate four (Astin,

1983, 1994) that indicates that the amount of student learning and development in any educational program is directly proportional the quality and quantity of the student involvement in that program.

Another cross-case finding showed how department policies and practices combined with NJCAA eligibility standards were shown both by student-athletes and administrators to have a strong impact on student academic success and development. Developmental processes, counseling, tutoring, and advising in particular for student-athletes that may have fallen short of academic eligibility standards played a huge role in teaching the student-athletes to take responsibility for their actions and improve study habits and priorities. This is corroborated by postulate five (Astin, 1983, 1994) which describes how the effectiveness of any educational policy of practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement.

An emergent finding in one of the cases described how athletics provided support to students through difficult life circumstances while providing them with the opportunity to get an education. One student-athlete in particular indicated that athletics saved her and her life by providing an avenue for education and getting her out of an impoverished and depressed community. This was not something specifically discussed through Student Involvement Theory and may be an area that warrants further investigation.

Proposition 2 and Proposition 4. Proposition 2 and 4 respectively depict Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes and administrators descriptions of the value and contribution of their participation in athletics as having a direct impact on academic eligibility, retention and persistence at the institution, and integration as described by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993). Numerous findings emerged

during the cross-case analysis in Chapter 4 that support both Proposition 2 and Proposition 4 in particular athletic participation impacting academic eligibility, retention, persistence, and integration.

Athletic participation was found across both cases to have a positive impact on academic motivation, persistence, and performance while providing meaningful academic supports. Student-athletes and administrators described the importance they placed on academics particularly as it relates to maintaining academic eligibility and the number of supports available for student-athlete success including monitoring, tutoring, and athletic specific advisors. Athletics is seen as providing student-athletes opportunities to grow, find their way, and get support through the relationships they develop with faculty, staff, administration, and other student-athletes. Across both cases, student-athletes were found or described by administrators to persist at higher rates than the organic population of the college primarily because of the integration and academic and social supports they develop as a part of being an involved student-athlete. Students describe having multiple areas of support including but not limited to peer and professional tutoring, counseling, and advising. This is corroborated by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) as he identifies three major areas of student exodus in higher education: academic difficulty, the inability of individuals to determine their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain integrated in the intellectual and social life of the institution. Tinto's believes that for students to persist they need to be integrated into formal and informal academic systems and formal and informal social systems such as athletics.

Also found across both cases was that athletics provided opportunities for interpersonal connections with advisors, department staff, coaches, counselors, faculty,

and other students at the institution and fostered support, implicit respect, and encouragement. Further, administration and coaches were deemed critical in creating meaningful experiences for student-athletes. Students involved in extracurricular activities were described as performing better academically and having more opportunities for development, support, and connections than those that are not. Student involvement in extracurricular activities is viewed positively and helps with developing relationships, getting social and academic support, making connections, and getting to know the college. Integration was found throughout this study particularly within the themes above related to connections as social integration. Student-athletes and administrators agreed that involved students are retained and persist at higher rates than those that are not involved because they are more integrated in the community and thus have more support, better connections, and are more motivated to model academic norms and values. These findings are supported by Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) description of integration as it relates to his central idea of "integration". The main factors related to whether a student persists or drops out can be very strongly predicted by their degree of academic and social integration in the institution. Academic integration can be determined based on grades, personal development (or students judgment of the value of how they are developing), academic self-esteem, enjoyment of subject matter, and ability to relate with academic norms and values and role as a student. Social integration can be determined based on finding a group of friends you fit in with and personal meaningful contact outside the classroom with staff, faculty, and administration.

The recruitment and retention process is described throughout the study in many different but meaningful ways. For example, coaches are evidenced throughout the study

to recruit students and assist them with getting admitted to the college. During this time, realistic expectations of what to expect and the benefits of participation and attendance at the community college are delivered to the student so they can make an appropriate choice. Student-athletes were orientated to requirements of the academic system in particular NJCAA, departmental, and team academic standards. This typically happened at team or athletic department meetings with coaches and athletic administrators but also was described informally happening in player to player interactions. This is corroborated by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) in stages one and two of Student Retention Theory. During stage one, students are recruited and admitted to the college. During this time, realistic expectations are delivered to the student so they can choose an appropriate institution. In stage two, students are orientated to requirements of the academic system. This aligns directly with the findings of what a student-athlete experiences during their recruitment and orientation into both CC-A and CC-B.

Another cross-case finding described how student's needs were identified through use of progress reports and intrusive counseling and advising performed in the athletic department. Both CC-A and CC-B utilized distinct monitoring and advising models for their student-athletes. For student-athletes that did not meet academic eligibility criteria, each institution had its own way of remediating, counseling, and advising students as they worked to get their grades up to meet eligibility standards. Students additionally described being assisted with their transition to college through integration into the college community primarily through team meetings, peer to peer interactions, interactions with coaches and administration, and sport participation. Many times when student-athletes are recruited into a program they receive more intrusive admissions

counseling not only from the staff at the college but also their coaches, peers, and athletic administration. These practices are corroborated to provide positive results through stages three and four of Tinto's Retention Theory (1975, 1987, 1993). In stage three, student's needs are identified through their placement in appropriate first year courses and counseling and advising. In stage four, students are assisted with their transition to college through things such as a first-year experience courses and integration into the college community. Needs assessment, counseling, advising, transition assistance, and integration were found to be critical parts of the athletic experience as a cross-case finding in this study.

Proposition 5. Proposition 5 states, Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes and administrators descriptions of the value and contribution of participating in athletics align. Student-athletes and administrators from both cases discuss the positive impacts athletics has on academic performance, connections to people at the institution, the meaningful learning outcomes that arise as a result of being a student-athlete, the opportunity to learn to manage time, the development of soft skills, and the importance of being involved. Further, even the drawbacks of athletic participation were aligned as both administrators and student-athletes agreed that balancing academics and other responsibilities required sacrifice and was difficult but ultimately benefited the student-athletes as they were able to practice time management skills. The findings in this study support this proposition.

Summary. Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes in this study described the value and contribution of their participation in athletics as having a direct and positive impact on their personal growth, learning, development, academic

eligibility, persistence, and integration at the institution. Administrators' descriptions of the value and contribution of athletic participation was exceptionally aligned when compared to the student-athletes. The themes established throughout this study support Kuh's (1995) overarching out-of-classroom experience model as a method to provide opportunities to apply knowledge learned in the classroom through experiences and lessons that do not happen simply by themselves. While colleges cannot force students to participate in these experiences, both student-athletes and administrators in this study agree that colleges should create conditions that promote experiences that require involvement as they are a crux for student development and success.

In both cases of this study, student-athletes are viewed by administration as having higher grades, better retention, and more soft skills development than those that are not participants. Intercollegiate athletics certainly has a holistic impact on the student and plays a critical role in meeting the mission of the NJCAA, Region XIX, and the GSAC. Student-athletes and administrators consistently describe athletics having an impact on academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies, persistence, educational attainment; and out of college performance as described by Manning, et al. (2014).

Research Question 2 - Why do Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college?

Proposition 6 and Rival 1. Proposition 6 purports that Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college based on similar factors and rankings as described by Rinke (2011), however, as non-scholarship

athletes, they tend to gravitate more towards factors such as the success and reputation of the team, distance from home, their role on the team and athletic goals, and the tuition and aid offered. Rival 1 states Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college and participate in athletics for reasons ranked differently than those described in Proposition 6.

A number of patterns emerged from the qualitative and quantitative data in this study related to selection factors and supported Proposition 6. There was no evidence found to support Rival 1. It was found across both cases in this study that student-athletes chose to attend primarily based on affordability, opportunities to participate in athletics, opportunities for successful transfer, distance from home, and academic reputation of the institution. Most students would have attended elsewhere if the institution did not offer athletics. The factors and rankings found by Rinke (2011) support these findings, however, as non-scholarship athletes in this study, it was found they gravitated more towards and found critical the importance of affordability, the opportunity to participate in athletics with the potential for playing time and transfer, the distance from home, and the academic reputation of the institution. Many student-athletes described affordability as the leading factor in selecting the community college. For some, they did not know what they wanted to major in and were afraid to spend a lot of money figuring it out. For others, the choice was community college or nothing, as four-year colleges were perceived to be too expensive.

Some student-athletes described the fact that without athletics they may have not attended college at all or they would have gone elsewhere. The student-athletes in this study, while they may not have been able to afford to attend a four-year institution, still

found athletic offerings an important part of the college selection process. Some said they would have commuted to attend another community college if the one local to them did not offer their sport. Seven of the nine interviewed directly stated they would not have enrolled if the current institution they attended did not offer athletics. Simply offering intercollegiate athletics is a draw for many to attend community college.

Student-athletes also saw the opportunity to attend the community college, get playing time their freshman and sophomore years, and have another chance at being noticed for a scholarship at the next level before transferring to play as another big part of their selection process. Student-athletes consistently described the importance of being able to compete their first two years and not have to contend against juniors and seniors for playing time. They saw the community college as a stepping stone to build their confidence, serve as a proving ground, and provide opportunities for them to be seen by four-year programs that may have overlooked them during high school. While each student-athlete's individual goals may have been slightly different, these themes held fast for nearly every participant. Many of those who were overlooked during high school described how after two-years of participation at the community college, they were now fielding offers from four-year coaches and felt more confident in their abilities to make an impact in their sport and academically at that level.

Another important factor that student-athletes discussed was that their academic program of interest was offered and that the institution had a good reputation for student success and transfer. While there was not too much discussion surrounding this topic in the interviews, it was brought up multiple times as an important part of the selection process and further validated by the survey data.

Quantitative survey data reinforced much of the qualitative findings. The top selection factors for both case CC-A and CC-B in no particular order included academic programs and social atmosphere, aid and tuition, and individual role on team and athletic goals. This directly aligns with what was found in the qualitative interviews and on many levels validated the comprehensive findings from the qualitative strands in this study.

Research Question 3 - Why do students choose to participate in athletics in Division III New Jersey community colleges?

Proposition 7 and Rival 2. Proposition 7 states Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to participate in community college athletics because they have been historically involved in athletics, see the benefits that involvement has had on them as described by Astin (1984, 1993) and Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), and because the selection factors described by Rinke (2011) resonate with them. Rival 2 purports Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to participate in community college athletics for many differing reasons not related to those listed in Proposition 7.

The findings for why student-athletes chose to participate in community college athletics support Proposition 7. There was no evidence found to support Rival 2. Multiple times during the interviews, student-athletes described that being part of a team, being able to connect with other people, and the pursuit of a common goal was an important part of why they chose to participate in athletics. They often times referred back to their past experiences and growth through youth and high school athletics as evidence. Further, student-athletes knew that by joining a team, they were building a

network of support that would help them grow, develop, and reach their goals whether they be academic, athletic, or both. On multiple occasions, student-athletes described how participation in athletics made them feel more connected to the institution and fostered relationships with faculty, administration, staff, and other students. These connections and descriptions are directly supported by involvement and integration theory as described by Astin (1984, 1993) and Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993). Student-athletes and administrators consistently describe across both cases the importance of being involved, level of involvement, and support on development and the importance of integration into the college community on retention, persistence, and success. Further, student-athletes describe affordability, opportunities to participate in athletics, opportunities for successful transfer, distance from home, and academic reputation of the institution as critical parts of why they chose to participate. Most students indicated they would not have attended had the college not offered their sport. These findings were supported and similar to what was found by Rinke (2011).

Implications for Research, Practice, Leadership, and Policy

This study revealed multiple findings that may be of interest to community colleges including athletics as an enrollment management tool and athletics as a model for student success. This section will discuss each of these implications as they relate to practice, leadership, and policy and tie them back to the findings of this study and literature.

Practice. Increasing numbers of students choosing to attend community colleges (Ma & Baum, 2015) paired with reports that community college athletic teams are some

of the most popular activities found at American community colleges (Castaneda, 2004), stimulates the need for community college leaders to see athletics as a possible part of their strategic enrollment management planning process. It is often found that offering intercollegiate sports adds an attractiveness to an institution that can help build enrollment. Student-athletes in this study, for example, would not even consider attending a community college without an athletic program. Additional studies will need to be conducted in order to generalize to larger populations as there are many different types of community colleges with multiple levels of athletic programs around the country, however, these findings are useful to discuss as they will ultimately assist with the discussion on whether sport programs can bolster enrollment.

There are many examples of community colleges that look to athletic programs as an option for new streams of enrollment growth (Ashburn, 2007; Miller & Fennell, 2015). The idea of athletics as an enrollment tool is supported by and highlight the findings of this study which further adds to the current body of research (Castaneda, 2004; Gill, 2015; Holland, 2009; Rinke, 2011; Schulz, 2007). While athletics as an enrollment tool was not thoroughly investigated in this study across all stakeholder groups that are not participants, i.e. marching bands, booster clubs, alumni organizations, statisticians, video staff, cheerleaders, and student body pride/support, it certainly impacted the enrollment of prospective student-athletes.

Community college athletics can play a large role in the personal development and academic success of involved student-athletes. The out-of-class experience described by Kuh (1995) combined with the student involvement and development theories of Astin (1984, 1993) and Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) provide a foundation of

evidence that athletics provides engaging programming that requires students to devote time, energy, involvement, and integration into what they are doing. This may lead to better college experiences, student growth and development, and better student success outcomes. Student-athletes in this study experienced positive growth, development, and experienced more success than regular students who were not involved at all as described by both student-athletes and administrators. Additional studies will need to be conducted in order to generalize to larger populations, however, with multiple ongoing studies related to the promotion of student success, athletics can add to this conversation. Administrators should examine how parts of the athletic experience can be used as a model for providing positive academic and developmental growth outcomes for students.

Leadership. It is important to note that positive growth experiences and valuable athletic programs require strong leadership. Throughout the study and across both cases, the chief student administrators and athletic administrators described the importance of strong leadership, from coaches to athletic administration to college administration, as being the most important part of providing an atmosphere where positive growth experiences can occur for student-athletes. Holding coaches and student-athletes accountable, meeting NJCAA, departmental, and team policies, providing guidance and support, and setting boundaries was continually discussed as imperative to the ensuring the integrity of student development within the athletic experience.

There was great value placed on allowing participants opportunities to make decisions and learn to take responsibility for their decisions. Good leadership with an athletic program is aligned with Model II leadership as described by Argyris and Schon (1974). In this model both stakeholders are able to express themselves and share tasks. It

allows for maximized internal commitment to decisions and encourages feelings of responsibility for choices. There are many examples of this found in both cases of this study particularly when remediating student-athletes and coaches who make mistakes. Discussion and reflective practice (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004) were utilized within the scope of Model II leadership (Argyris & Schon, 1974) and allowed for growth and development in these situations. This study exemplifies how intercollegiate athletic programs with strong leadership provides a safe environment which can enable decision making and consequences that provide opportunities for learning, growth, and development.

Community college athletic administrators and leaders should continuously look for and encourage professional development opportunities. The world of athletic leadership, policy, and practice is fluid. To stay up to date on not only the changing technologies and policies but also the relevant leadership practices and theories administrators should look to continually improve themselves and their leadership styles. Attending workshops, conventions, and professional development seminars and belonging to professional organizations can help with staying current with the best practices for community college athletic leadership.

Policy. Policy makers at the NJCAA and member institutions should then understand that every policy they enact also impacts the learning, growth, and development of the student-athlete. If the primary goal of athletics is the total development of the student with goals of individual and team growth, responsibility, and teaching soft skills while increasing student retention and persistence rates and providing

an enriched college experience (Kuh, 1995; Manning et al., 2014), then certainly policy should always be created with these tenants in mind.

The NJCAA, its regions and conferences, and member institutions should maintain the highest standards and expectations for satisfactory academic progress, eligibility, sportsmanship, ethics, and integrity. These policies can be as broad as NJCAA minimum credit and GPA standards for all student-athletes to have to earn each semester to specific institutional or team policies regarding required tutoring hours per week for student-athletes that have been identified as struggling in a class. They also can include dress codes for travel, student-athlete codes of conduct, and other standards for behavior. Student-athletes in this study made reference to policy throughout and tie it back to pushing them to work harder and grow as people. The ability to participate was the "carrot" that pushed them to work harder and perform. It is important to note that policy alone does not add value to athletics. Policy must be properly applied and bought in to from all stakeholders. When it is mixed with strong leadership and good practice, however, policy can provide a valuable framework for student-athlete learning, growth, and development.

Limitations

Researcher bias was a concern since, as a former coach and athletic administrator, I had multiple pre-existing beliefs about the value of intercollegiate athletics and the research questions in this study. Throughout the creation of the survey and interview protocols, I worked closely with my dissertation committee to ensure the survey and interview protocols were properly worded as to not lead on my subjects. Further, I

worked hard to remain objective and unbiased during the interviews and while coding and analyzing my data. My use of Yin's theoretical propositions and rival explanations as well as the use of a standard interview protocol combined with survey data to support triangulation were deliberate attempts to minimize the influence of biases on this research.

Also of concern is the presence of non-response bias and the implications of a sample of second year students since, by definition, second year students are already successful and other unmeasured factors besides athletic participation may contribute to the observed outcomes. Although the data suggest student athletes have positive experiences and benefit from their athletic participation in ways that may influence retention and persistence, this study only gathered data from student-athletes who have persisted to their second year and been successful; it is not possible to say anything about the experiences of students who were student athletes who did not persist. They may have had a very different experience from those students in this study who had a positive experience regardless of their athletic experiences.

The response rate for the selection factor survey were low. From CC-A, 21 of 160 students completed the survey. From CC-B, 11 out of 140 students completed the survey. This means my quantitative findings for research questions two and three related to selection factors in this study were influenced by a small number of participants. Every attempt was made to temper this limitation through the use of qualitative inquiry and follow up questions regarding selection factors.

Finally, the selection factor survey was distributed after (sometimes nearly two years after) students underwent the selection process and experience. This may have affected their answers as they have had time to experience the community college, the athletic program, and think further about the benefits of the community college rather than why they chose it to begin with. Their memory of reasons for attending and first experiences may have been positively impacted by their successes in athletics and academics since enrolling at the community college.

Recommendations for Future Research

As participation and involvement in non-scholarship community college athletics continues to grow, further research should continue to assess the impact on student development and the value it may provide an institution. While community colleges differ in many ways across the nation, multiple case studies by geographic region would help create a national scope of the value non-scholarship athletics brings.

Furthering this notion, additional research on non-scholarship community college athletics both in and out of New Jersey that encompasses persistence rates, retention rates, transfer rates, graduation rates, and student development outcomes should be conducted and compared to the same outcomes for non-student-athletes. This study was not designed to capture the difference between the value and contribution of athletic participation and student development theories as they are experienced through team and individual sports. This is an area that may be of further interest as some believe that athletes on team sports develop and experience different growth outcomes than those involved in individual sports.

Another area that could use further study includes the part faculty play in the experience of the community college student-athlete. While some minor discussion and ideas emerged from this topic, it was not a focus of this study. A study on the role faculty play in the community college student-athlete experience would be interesting and add to the body of research particularly if it was compared to the experience of a four-year student-athlete.

The positive descriptions about the student-athlete academic advisor at CC-B provided an unexpected emergent theme from this study that also warrants further research. Athletic programs utilize many methods to ensure the success of their student-athletes. Further research should be done to examine the efficacy of these success reforms including but not limited to athletic specific advisors and tutors.

My final recommendation for future research deals with the addition of non-scholarship community college athletics or individual sports as an enrollment booster for both student-athletes and those connected to athletics at an institution (i.e. marching band, cheerleaders, journalists, video staff, statisticians, etc.). There seems to be a large draw for many students to attend community college based on the existence of athletics programs. This recommended study should serve to integrate the connection between non-scholarship athletic programs and enrollment outcomes as a result of the existence or addition of a new non-scholarship intercollegiate athletics program or sport.

Summary

This study assisted with determining why New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes chose to attend the community college and participate in

athletics, what factors influenced their decisions, and how administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of participation in community college athletics align.

Detailed descriptions of what administrators believed student-athletes gained as a result of non-scholarship intercollegiate athletic participation and what student-athletes actually described getting out of athletics became clear in this study. A direct and positive impact on personal growth, learning, development, academic eligibility, persistence, and integration at the institution along with positive academic performance, connections to people at the institution, meaningful learning outcomes, time management skills, the development of soft skills, and the importance of being involved became clear and agreed upon outcomes for both student-athletes and administrators.

Further findings indicated that a student-athlete's selected the community college based on affordability, the opportunity to participate in athletics with the potential for playing time and transfer, the distance from home, and the academic reputation of the institution. The research also indicated that a significant portion of the athletes engaged in athletics at the community college would not have selected the institution but for the opportunity to play sports. A theme of historical involvement in athletics and understanding of benefits that athletic involvement has had during their life was a leading factor in why student-athlete chose to continue to participate in athletics at the community college. Student-athletes seemed to know that by participating in intercollegiate athletics they were building a network of support that would help them grow, develop, and reach their goals whether they be academic, athletic, or both.

As discussed previously, the results of this study may have implications for administrators and institutional leaders who are considering the addition or elimination of sports or intercollegiate athletic programs. In addition, the results of this study suggest intercollegiate athletic programs may positively impact student persistence, success, and development of soft skills and have implications beyond the athletic arena. It also appears that athletics attracts certain students to a community college that without athletics, would not have otherwise chosen to attend. This has implications on the field of enrollment management.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocols

Student-Athlete, Athletic Administrator, and Other Administrators

Adapted from Gill, M. (2015)

CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE OF STUDY: The Value of Non-Scholarship Community College Athletics in New Jersey: A Student-Athlete and Administrative Perspective

Principal Investigator: Anthony J. Trump

This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you to decide whether you wish to volunteer for this research study. It will help you to understand what the study is about and what will happen in the course of the study.

If you have questions at any time during the research study, you should feel free to ask them and should expect to be given answers that you completely understand.

After all of your questions have been answered, if you still wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this informed consent form.

Mr. Anthony J. Trump or another member of the study team will also be asked to sign this informed consent. You will be given a copy of the signed consent form to keep.

You are not giving up any of your legal rights by volunteering for this research study or by signing this consent form.

A. Why is this study being done?

This study is being conducted for a doctoral dissertation. It will examine why New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college and participate in athletics and what has the most impact on their decisions. It will also look to compare administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the benefits of participating in non-scholarship community college athletics in New Jersey.

Why have you been asked to take part in this study?

You have been asked to participate in this study as you have valuable experience in non-scholarship community college athletics as either a student-athlete or an administrator.

B. Who may take part in this study? And who may not?

New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes (2nd year only for interviews)

New Jersey non-scholarship community college administrators

C. How many subjects will be enrolled in the study?

This study will enroll approximately 36 subjects. Approximately 12 will be from this site.

D. How long will my participation in this study take?

The study will take place over a period of one year. As a participant, we ask to meet with you on two separate dates. The first meeting will be the interview meeting and last no longer than one and a half hours. The second meeting will last no longer than thirty minutes and will serve as a follow up to the interview. This second meeting may take place over the phone.

E. Where will the study take place?

You will be asked to come to (*Input building/location name here*), located at (*Input address of building here*). You will be asked to come to the above location potentially during the week of (*Input week here*) at (*Input time here*) to complete an interview. During the week of (*Input week here*) you will be contacted for a follow up to the interview.

F. What will you be asked to do if you take part in this research study?

You will be asked to sit down with the primary investigator to discuss your experiences in community college athletics and answer prepared questions.

G. What are the risks and/or discomforts you might experience if you take part in this study?

There are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

H. Are there any benefits for you if you choose to take part in this research study?

The benefits of taking part in this study may be increased self-awareness of the benefits of non-scholarship community college athletics.

However, it is possible that you might receive no direct personal benefit from taking part in this study. Your participation may help us understand which can benefit you directly, and may help other people to understand the benefit of non-scholarship community college athletic programs in New Jersey and why students attend and choose to participate.

I. What are your alternatives if you don't want to take part in this study?

There are no alternatives available. Your alternative is not to take part in this study.

J. How will you know if new information is learned that may affect whether you are willing to stay in this research study?

During the course of the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you, you will be contacted.

K. Will there be any cost to you to take part in this study?

There will be no cost to take part in this study.

L. Will you be paid to take part in this study?

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

M. How will information about you be kept private or confidential?

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential, but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Your personal information may be given out, if required by law. Presentations and publications to the public and at scientific conferences and meetings will not use your name and other personal information. Records will be stored in a safe and secure location only accessible to the primary investigator and names will be changed in all electronic transcriptions of interviews.

N. What will happen if you are injured during this study?

If you are injured in this study and need treatment, contact (*Input Counseling Services, Healthcare provider, Wellness Center, etc. here*) and seek treatment.

We will offer the care needed to treat injuries directly resulting from taking part in this study. Rowan University may bill your insurance company or other third parties, if appropriate, for the costs of the care you get for the injury. However, you may be responsible for some of those costs. Rowan University does not plan to pay you or provide compensation for the injury. You do not give up your legal rights by signing this form.

If at any time during your participation and conduct in the study you have been or are injured, you should communicate those injuries to the research staff present at the time of injury and to the Principal Investigator, whose name and contact information is on this consent form.

O. What will happen if you do not wish to take part in the study or if you later decide not to stay in the study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may change your mind at any time.

If you do not want to enter the study or decide to stop participating, your relationship with the study staff will not change, and you may do so without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also withdraw your consent for the use of data already collected about you, but you must do this in writing to Anthony J. Trump - [Email Removed]

If you decide to withdraw from the study for any reason, you may be asked to participate in one meeting with the Principal Investigator.

P. Who can you call if you have any questions?

If you have any questions about taking part in this study or if you feel you may have suffered a research related injury, you can call the Principal Investigator:

Anthony J. Trump
Rowan University
[Phone Number Removed]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call:

Office of Research Compliance
(856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU

What are your rights if you decide to take part in this research study?

You have the right to ask questions about any part of the study at any time. You should not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have been given answers to all of your questions.

**ROWAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM**

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Anthony J. Trump. We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for transcription, analysis, and citation by the research team.

The recording(s) will include everything discussed during your interview.

The recording(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet and labeled with subjects' name or other identifiable information and will be destroyed upon publication of study results.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read this entire form, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed. All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered.

Subject Name: _____

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent:

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject and those of his/her parent or legal guardian have been accurately answered.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Interview Protocol (Student)

Introduction of Study

To facilitate this interview I will begin taking notes and have started the recorder. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. I am Anthony J. Trump a student in the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at Rowan University. As I mentioned to you earlier I am conducting a study on student development in student-athletes. I plan to use the information gained in this interview for my doctoral dissertation. It will be published, however, all participants' responses will remain anonymous and confidential. There are no right or wrong answers. I am very interested in your experiences and what you think, so please feel free to be honest and open with your answers.

This interview has been planned to take no longer than 90 minutes. During this time I have several questions I would like us to cover. You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who can share a great deal of information as a student-athlete at [COLLEGE NAME]. Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study.

Questions

1. Tell me about yourself particularly who you are, how long you have been at [COLLEGE NAME], and what sports you participate in?
2. Describe the quality of the experience afforded to you by the athletic department here at [COLLEGE NAME].
 - a. Describe the best part of the experience.
 - b. Describe the toughest part of the experience.
3. Why did you choose to attend this college? Was it your first choice?
 - a. Why did you choose to participate on the [SPORT] team at this institution?
 - b. What were the most important factors to you when selecting this institution and deciding to participate in athletics?
 - c. If the institution did not offer athletics, would you still have attended?
4. Was your experience satisfying with your participation in the [SPORT] program?
 - a. Were there benefits of being a student-athlete? Explain.
5. How much time did your participation require you to invest in being a student-athlete at [COLLEGE NAME]?

- a. Were there required study hours or team activities besides practices and games?
 - b. Were there any departmental policies or team rules that assisted you with your growth as a student and person? Explain.
6. Was your athletic participation at [COLLEGE NAME] engaging?
- a. Were practice drills designed to teach you something other than athletic skills?
 - b. Was it important to be connected to the team outside of practice, games, and/or team time?
7. Did your participation in athletics assist with:
- a. The admissions process to the institution? How so?
 - b. Orientation and advising? How so?
 - c. Your transition from high school to college? How so?
8. Do you feel your participation in athletics has created any connections to [COLLEGE NAME]? Please describe?
- a. What relationships would you say have made a difference for you?
9. What impact, if any, has being a student-athlete had on your _____? Give examples.
- a. Grades?
 - b. Moral Compass and integrity?
 - c. Team skills and employability?
 - d. Self control in difficult situations?
 - e. Ability to get along with others?
 - f. Self confidence and self-esteem?
 - g. Social growth and maturity?
 - h. If you were not a student-athlete do you think this would be different?
10. Was there anything unique about your experience that made your involvement something to remember?
11. What did you gain from this besides your participation in athletic competition?
- a. Describe the drawbacks of your participation?
12. What do you feel the benefits of being a student-athlete are at your institution?
- a. What do you feel the drawbacks of being a student-athlete are at your institution?

- b. Do you feel student-athletes are satisfied with their experience? Explain.
13. Has being a student-athlete had an impact on your grades? How? Why?
- If you were not a student-athlete do you think this would be different?
 - Were academics stressed as an important part of being a student-athlete at [COLLEGE NAME]? How? By whom?
14. In what ways have you grown as a result of your participation in intercollegiate athletics at [COLLEGE NAME]?
- What lessons have you learned as a result of your participation here at [COLLEGE NAME]?
15. Would you recommend that others get involved on campus in student clubs, activities, athletics, etc.? Why or why not?
16. Are life lesson situations you dealt with as a student-athlete similar or the same as those that you have to deal with outside of the athletics arena?
- Describe a life lesson that you learned from athletics.
17. Has your participation in athletics made you a better communicator? Leader? Follower? Engager? Explain.
18. Did you find something out about yourself as a result of your experiences? If so, what did you find out?
19. Was your Head Coach an important influence in your experience? How so?
20. Was the Athletic Administration an important influence on your experience? Describe how.
- Do you feel you developed a meaningful connection/student-athlete relationship with an athletic administrator?
 - What were the main points of emphasis you took away from your interactions with the athletic administration?

Interview Protocol (Athletic Administrator)

Introduction of Study

To facilitate this interview I will begin taking notes and have started the recorder. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

I am Anthony J. Trump a student in the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at Rowan University. As I mentioned to you earlier I am conducting a study on student development in student-athletes. I plan to use the information gained in this interview for my doctoral dissertation. It will be published, however, all participants' responses will remain anonymous and confidential. There are no right or wrong answers. I am very interested in your experiences and what you think, so please feel free to be honest and open with your answers.

This interview has been planned to take no longer than 90 minutes. During this time I have several questions I would like us to cover. You have been selected to interview because you have been identified as someone who can share a great deal of information from an athletic administrative perspective at [COLLEGE NAME]. Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study.

Questions

1. Tell me about your background in athletics particularly who you are, how long you have been involved in college athletics, and what athletics represents to you?
2. How would you say your student-athletes describe their athletic experience here at [COLLEGE NAME].
3. What do you feel the benefits of being a student-athlete are for students at your institution?
 - a. Do you feel the student-athletes are satisfied with their experience? Explain.
4. How much time do student-athletes invest in being a student and an athlete at [COLLEGE NAME]?
 - a. How do you encourage the coaches to hold sport study hours or other team activities besides practices and games? What specifically do you encourage?
5. Do you encourage the coaching staff to formally or informally teach things other than athletic skills? What is that?

- a. How do you ensure that the coaches are teaching those things?
 - b. What is the role of a coach at a community college? How does that differ from the role of a coach at a four-year institution?
 - c. How do you define success in your athletic program?
 - d. Is it important that student-athletes are connected to the team outside of practice, games, and/or team time?
6. Does participation in athletics assist with retention of students? How so?
 - a. Do you specifically assist with admissions process to the institution? How so?
 - i. Orientation and advising? How so?
 - ii. The transition from high school to college? How so?
7. What types of connections are created between student-athletes who participate in athletics at [COLLEGE NAME] and the institution that other students may not have?
 - a. Please describe?
 - b. What relationships make a difference for the student-athletes?
8. Does being a student-athlete at [COLLEGE NAME] have an impact on the student-athletes _____? Can you give some examples?
 - a. Moral Compass and integrity?
 - b. Team skills and employability?
 - c. Self control in difficult situations?
 - d. Ability to get along with others?
 - e. Self confidence and self-esteem?
 - f. Social growth and maturity?
 - g. Do you think this is different than those that are not involved or not a student-athlete? Why?
9. What specifically do you do to engage student-athletes to connect with your athletic program?
10. What do student-athletes gain from being a student-athlete besides participation in athletic competition?
 - a. Describe the drawbacks to being a student-athlete?
11. Does being a student-athlete have an impact on grades? How? Why?
 - a. How does this compare to non-athletes?

- b. Are academics stressed as an important part of being a student-athlete at [COLLEGE NAME]? How? By whom?
- 12. Can you provide examples of ways student-athletes have grown as a result of their participation in intercollegiate athletics at [COLLEGE NAME]?
 - a. What lessons are learned as a result of participation here at [COLLEGE NAME]?
- 13. Do you recommend that others get involved on campus in student clubs, activities, athletics, etc.? Why or why not?
- 14. Do you feel that life lesson situations dealt with as a student-athlete are similar or the same as those dealt with outside of the athletics arena?
 - a. Describe life lessons that can be learned from athletics.
- 15. Do you feel a student-athletes participation in athletics makes them a better communicator? Leader? Follower? Engager? Explain how?
- 16. Would you say students find something out about themselves as a result of their experiences? Explain.
- 17. How important of an influence is the Head Coach to the student-athlete experience?
- 18. How important of an influence is the Athletic Administration to the student-athlete experience? Describe how.
 - a. Do you feel student-athletes develop meaningful connections with athletic administrators?
 - b. What do you think student-athletes describe as the main points of emphasis they took away from their interactions with the athletic administration?

Interview Protocol (Other College Administrators)

Introduction of Study

To facilitate this interview I will begin taking notes and have started the recorder. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

I am Anthony J. Trump a student in the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at Rowan University and the Athletic Director here at Ocean County College. As I mentioned to you earlier I am conducting a study on student development in student-athletes. I plan to use the information gained in this interview for my doctoral dissertation. It will be published, however, all participants responses will remain anonymous and confidential. There are no right or wrong answers. I am very interested in your experiences and what you think, so please feel free to be honest and open with your answers.

This interview has been planned to take no longer than 90 minutes. During this time I have several questions I would like us to cover. You have been selected to interview because you have been identified as someone who can share a great deal of information from an athletic administrative perspective at [COLLEGE NAME]. Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study.

Questions

1. Tell me about your role on campus, who you are, and how long you have been involved in community college education?
2. How would you say your student-athletes describe their athletic experience here at [COLLEGE NAME].
3. What do you feel the benefits of being a student-athlete are for students at your institution?
 - a. Do you feel the student-athletes are satisfied with their experience? Explain.
4. How much time do student-athletes invest in being a student and an athlete at [COLLEGE NAME]?
5. Do you believe that athletics at this level is aligned with the mission and goals of the institution? How so?
6. Does participation in athletics assist with retention of students? How so?

7. Do you believe that connections are created between student-athletes who participate in athletics at [COLLEGE NAME] and the institution that other students may not have?
 - a. Please describe?
 - b. What relationships make a difference for the student-athletes?

8. Do you believe that being a student-athlete at [COLLEGE NAME] has an impact on the student-athletes _____? Can you give some examples?
 - a. Moral Compass and integrity?
 - b. Team skills and employability?
 - c. Self control in difficult situations?
 - d. Ability to get along with others?
 - e. Self confidence and self-esteem?
 - f. Social growth and maturity?
 - g. Do you think this is different than those that are not involved or not a student-athlete? Why?

9. What specifically is done at [COLLEGE] to engage student-athletes to connect with the institution?

10. What do student-athletes gain from being a student-athlete besides participation in athletic competition?
 - a. Describe the drawbacks to being a student-athlete?

11. Does being a student-athlete have an impact on grades? How? Why?
 - a. How does this compare to non-athletes?
 - b. Are academics stressed as an important part of being a student-athlete at [COLLEGE NAME]? How? By whom?

12. Can you provide examples of ways student-athletes have grown as a result of their participation in intercollegiate athletics at [COLLEGE NAME]?
 - a. What lessons are learned as a result of participation here at [COLLEGE NAME]?

13. Do you recommend that others get involved on campus in student clubs, activities, athletics, etc.? Why or why not?

14. Do you feel that life lesson situations dealt with as a student-athlete are similar or the same as those dealt with outside of the athletics arena?

- a. Describe life lessons that can be learned from athletics.
15. Do you feel a student-athletes participation in athletics makes them a better communicator? Leader? Follower? Engager? Explain how?
 16. Would you say students find something out about themselves as a result of their experiences? Explain.
 17. How important of an influence is the _____ to the student-athlete experience?
 - a. Athletic Director
 - b. Coaches
 - c. College Administration
 18. Do you feel student-athletes develop meaningful connections with these groups?
 - a. What do you think student-athletes describe as the main points of emphasis they took away from their interactions with these groups?

Appendix B

Survey Protocol

College Selection Factor Survey – Non-Scholarship Community College Student-Athletes

Adopted from Rinke (2011)

STUDENT ONLINE SURVEY CONSENT

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled “The Value of Non-Scholarship Community College Athletics in New Jersey: A Student-Athlete and Administrative Perspective”. You are included in this survey because you have valuable experience in New Jersey non-scholarship community college athletics as a student-athlete. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be approximately 300, 100 from this site.

The survey may take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey. We expect the study to last approximately one year.

The purpose of this research study is to examine why New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college and participate in athletics and what has the most impact on their decisions. It will also look to compare administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the benefits of participating in non-scholarship community college athletics in New Jersey. There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand the benefit of non-scholarship community college athletic programs in New Jersey and why students attend and choose to participate.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact the investigative staff at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Monica Kerrigan - [Email Removed]

Co-Investigator: Anthony J. Trump - [Email Removed]

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Rowan University Glassboro/CMSRU IRB at 856-256-4078.

Your participation in the survey will afford you the opportunity to enter a raffle for a \$100 VISA gift card. To be entered into the raffle, you must provide your name and phone number. This information will only be used to contact you should you be selected the winner of the raffle.

Please complete the checkbox below:

To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older. Place a check box here

Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey

Selection Factor Survey – Non-Scholarship Community College Student-Athletes

Section 1. Demographic/Background Information

1. Name of Institution Attending_____
2. Age_____
3. Gender: a. Male b. Female
4. Athletic Participation Year
 - a. Freshman (1st Year)
 - b. Sophomore (2nd Year)
5. Number of colleges you applied to_____
6. Did you take a recruiting visit with the athletic department at your present school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Total number of recruiting visits taken for all colleges_____
8. Sport(s) Participation
 - a. Soccer
 - b. Cross Country
 - c. Volleyball
 - d. Tennis
 - e. Basketball
 - f. Wrestling
 - g. Indoor Track and Field
 - h. Outdoor Track and Field
 - i. Baseball
 - j. Softball
 - k. Golf
 - l. Lacrosse
 - m. Other(s)_____
9. Is your current institution your first choice during the recruitment process?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
10. Is your current institution the only institution you were accepted to?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Section 2. Choice Factors

For each of the following factors, identify the degree of importance on your decision to attend your community college:

Factor	No Importance	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Did not experience or learn about during college search process
1. Head Coach	1	2	3	4	N/A
2. Assistant Coaches	1	2	3	4	N/A
3. Interaction with team members during college search process	1	2	3	4	N/A
4. Tradition and reputation of the athletic programs	1	2	3	4	N/A
5. Weight room and/or training facilities for athletes	1	2	3	4	N/A
6. Fields, courts gyms, or facilities for competition	1	2	3	4	N/A
7. Academic support for athletes	1	2	3	4	N/A
8. College's athletic conference	1	2	3	4	N/A
9. Game schedule	1	2	3	4	N/A
10. Potential to travel for tournaments or competition	1	2	3	4	N/A
11. Historical success of team	1	2	3	4	N/A
12. Team's previous two-year win/loss record	1	2	3	4	N/A
13. Potential to transfer to a competitive four-year college athletic program	1	2	3	4	N/A
14. Size of team roster	1	2	3	4	N/A
15. Diversity of team membership	1	2	3	4	N/A
16. Opinion of fellow high school teammates	1	2	3	4	N/A
17. Opinion of high school athletic coach	1	2	3	4	N/A
18. Potential for playing or competition time	1	2	3	4	N/A
19. Potential for leadership opportunity on team	1	2	3	4	N/A

20. Potential to be 'first string' or starter on team during first year	1	2	3	4	N/A
21. Potential to be starter or 'first string' before graduation	1	2	3	4	N/A
22. Team uniforms and colors	1	2	3	4	N/A
23. Distance of college to home	1	2	3	4	N/A
24. College campus' size	1	2	3	4	N/A
25. Academic programs available	1	2	3	4	N/A
26. College's academic reputation	1	2	3	4	N/A
27. High school counselor's opinions	1	2	3	4	N/A
28. High school teachers' opinions	1	2	3	4	N/A
29. Prior experience with this community college	1	2	3	4	N/A
30. Community size where college is located	1	2	3	4	N/A
31. Cultural activities available in campus area or town	1	2	3	4	N/A
32. Social atmosphere of campus and/or community	1	2	3	4	N/A
33. Classroom facilities on campus	1	2	3	4	N/A
34. Quality of student life/activities	1	2	3	4	N/A
35. Opportunity for internships within major	1	2	3	4	N/A
36. Preparation for transferring to another institution	1	2	3	4	N/A
37. Job placement rate	1	2	3	4	N/A
38. Contacts with Admissions Office	1	2	3	4	N/A
39. Campus visit	1	2	3	4	N/A
40. Tuition and fees for this institution	1	2	3	4	N/A
41. Non-athletic scholarships offered	1	2	3	4	N/A

42. Financial Aid package					
43. Friendliness of the campus atmosphere	1	2	3	4	N/A
44. Weather climate of the college community	1	2	3	4	N/A
45. Parent(s) opinions on where I should attend college	1	2	3	4	N/A
46. Friend(s) opinions on where I should attend college	1	2	3	4	N/A

Section 3. Comments / Open Ended

Please list any other factors not listed above that were important to your decision making process: _____

Please provide any other comments: _____

Appendix C

Case Study Protocol

Section A - Overview of the Case Study

Purpose

In this multiple case study (Yin, 2013), I will examine why New Jersey non-scholarship community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college and participate in athletics, what factors influence their decisions, and how administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of participation in a community college athletic participation align. To keep with the principle of replication logic (Yin, 2013) I have employed a one phase "most similar" cross-case selection process (Yin, 2013; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Three New Jersey community colleges will be selected. These institutions will be selected as "most similar" based upon the criteria that they each offer a robust intercollegiate athletic program in the state of New Jersey with over 10 sport offerings, participate in non-scholarship Division III of the NJCAA in all sports, and are considered suburban serving institutions.

Research Questions and Propositions

The research questions and propositions for this study are:

1. How do Division III New Jersey community college administrators and student-athlete descriptions of the value and contribution of being a community college student-athlete align?
 - Proposition 1: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes describe the value and contribution of their participation in athletics as having a direct impact on their personal growth, learning, and development as described by Astin (1984, 1993).
 - Proposition 2: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes describe the value and contribution of their participation in athletics as having a direct impact on their ability to stay academically eligible, continue at the institution, and become integrated as described by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993).
 - Proposition 3: Division III New Jersey community college administrators describe the value and contribution of athletics as having a direct impact on student personal growth, learning, and development as described by Astin (1984, 1993).

- Proposition 4: Division III New Jersey community college administrators describe the value and contribution of athletics as having a direct impact on student retention, persistence, and integration as described by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993).
 - Proposition 5: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes and administrators descriptions of the value and contribution of participating in athletics align.
2. Why do Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college?
- Proposition 6: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college based on similar factors and rankings as described by Rinke (2011), however, as non-scholarship athletes, they tend to gravitate more towards factors such as the success and reputation of the team, distance from home, their role on the team and athletic goals, and the tuition and aid offered.
 - Rival 1: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to attend the community college and participate in athletics for reasons ranked differently than those described in Proposition 6.
3. Why do students choose to participate in athletics in Division III New Jersey community colleges?
- Proposition 7: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to participate in community college athletics because they have been historically involved in athletics, see the benefits that involvement has had on them as described by Astin (1984, 1993) and Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), and because the selection factors described by Rinke (2011) resonate with them.
 - Rival 2: Division III New Jersey community college student-athletes choose to participate in community college athletics for many differing reasons not related to those listed in Proposition 7.

Propositions and rivals, rather than hypotheses, are exceptionally important to case studies as they bound the research and develop the framework that can later become the method for generalizing to new cases (Yin, 2013). The importance of generalization to new cases is a fundamental part of this study. The tenants of replication logic are used to inform sampling in this study and to assist with the development of theory (Yin, 2013).

Units of Analysis

The primary unit of analysis in this multiple case study will be the student-athletes and administrators at the two institutions being studied.

Theoretical Framework

There are a number of theorists who believe that extracurricular and out-of-classroom experiences are critical to the development, persistence, and retention of students (Astin, 1984, 1993; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). Student Involvement Theory (Astin, 1984) and Student Retention Theory (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993) are at the center of this study. Astin (1984, 1993) describes the development of a student as a direct result of their involvement within an institution. Involvement is defined as the amount of psychological and physical energy the student devotes to their college experience. Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) believes that for students to persist they need to be integrated into formal (academic performance) and informal (faculty/staff interactions) academic systems and formal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interactions) social systems such as athletics. This study will serve to draw connections between these theories and the descriptions of the experiences of student-athletes and administrators.

This study will also examine the question of what draws New Jersey students to participate in non-scholarship athletics. According to Rinke (2011), the most important factors influencing college choice by prospective student-athletes at this level were academic programs and social atmosphere, individual role on the team and athletic goals, peers, parents, friendliness of campus, and weather, secondary team characteristics, team reputation and success, high school influences and prior experiences, aid and tuition, housing and campus life, facilities and academic support for athletes, and interactions with coaches and teammates. The study will serve to elucidate which factors are most important to the students that attend and choose to participate in non-scholarship athletics.

Role of the Protocol

This protocol will serve as a standardized agenda for my line of inquiry. It is composed to guide my research and ensure that each case stays on track.

Section B - Data Collection Procedures

Names of Contact Person for doing Fieldwork

Anthony Trump
Doctoral Candidate
Rowan University

[Email Removed]

[Phone Number Removed] (cell)

Data Collection Plan

Prior to collecting data, all participants will be required to complete an informed consent and agree to participate in the study. All participants will be protected according to the procedures and policies in line with the IRB and made aware of the level of risk they face by participating in this study; how the participants will be selected for the study; that their identities will remain confidential; and the methods used to collect data. Multiple steps will be taken to ensure the ethical treatment of human subjects within this case study.

Section C - Data Collection Questions

Level 1 Questions – Questions asked of specific interviewees. To include:

- All interview, survey, and follow up questions. See Appendix A & B.

Level 2 Questions – Questions asked of the individual case.

- Do students at [COLLEGE NAME] experience the benefits of athletic participation as described by student involvement and retention theories?
 - What are these benefits specifically?
- Do administrators at [COLLEGE NAME] see that students are benefitting from athletic participation as described by student involvement and retention theories?
 - What are these benefits specifically?
- Do the responses of the student and administrator to the above questions at [COLLEGE NAME] align?
- What are the most important factors related to college choice for student-athletes at N.J. non-scholarship community colleges?

Level 3 Questions – Questions asked regarding the patterns of findings across institutions.

- What similarities and differences exist between the responses of the students from each case?
- What similarities and differences exist between the responses of the administrators from each case?
- Do students and administrators descriptions align in all three cases?
- What similarities exist amongst the college choice factors for students at each institution?

Level 4 Questions – Questions asked of an entire study.

- Do the results of this study align with the results of similar studies of community college student-athletes?

Level 5 Questions – Normative questions about policy recommendations going beyond the narrow scope of the study.

- Are non-scholarship community college athletic programs in N.J. meeting the missions of the institutions they exist within?
- To what degree is the investment in non-scholarship community college athletic programs in N.J. worthwhile to the institution?

Section D – Guide for the Case Study Report

The case study report will be geared towards community college educational professionals and scholars alike to provide further study into the field of community college athletics particularly at the non-scholarship level. A number of studies have guided the creation of this study and include:

Cindy Castaneda (2004)

Castaneda's dissertation (2004) outlined an overview of athletics in public community colleges. She began the conversation regarding a lack of research done within the field of community college athletic programs nationwide. In her dissertation, she became the first person to complete a nationwide study on public community colleges within the United States that sponsor intercollegiate athletics programs. She created the foundation for future research to be carried out in this realm. Her study focuses on many aspects of community college athletics, but specifically on the involvement of public community colleges in athletics and how this involvement varies by college type.

In some of her findings, Castaneda (2004) describes how athletic participation in community colleges is not evenly distributed nationwide. Further she points to the inverse relationship between population density and the importance of athletics and the direct relationship between the size of the institution and the number of intercollegiate athletic sports offered. She also found that intercollegiate athletics is one of the most popular activities on community college campuses and that most of them, over fifty percent, offer their student-athletes aid in the form of scholarship.

Castaneda (2004) points to the need for future research in the relationship between the engagement in intercollegiate athletics with student retention and development and the role that athletics plays on each campus. She also points to the need to examine what motivates students to attend institutions and participate in athletics that do not offer scholarship aid.

Michele Gill (2015)

Gill (2015) carried out a study on the value and contribution of the participation in intercollegiate athletics on the personal development of community college-aged

students. In her study, she looked at how students described the influence on personal development and the development of soft skills as a result of participation in intercollegiate athletics as an out-of-classroom experience in a small Midwestern Community College. Her findings indicated that student-athletes learned a number of soft skills as a result of their participation including trust, confidence, the ability to set and complete goals, communication skills, the ability to develop relationships, opportunities to practice leadership, and follower skills. Additional findings included the impact of their participation on personal development. As her study was only on one small Midwestern Community College, Gill (2015) calls for further study in regional case study format of the value and contribution of the community college intercollegiate athletic experience.

Daphne Holland (2009)

Daphne Holland (2009) studied the perceptions of community college student affairs administrators regarding intercollegiate athletics. Specifically she examined the relationship between student engagement, attractiveness of the institution, school spirit, and support of the mission against financial earnings, student enrollment, and retention rates. In her findings, Holland found that the majority of community college student affairs administrators' strongly agreed that intercollegiate athletic programs benefited the community college and the general student body, students' memories of their college experience, and student engagement outside the classroom. They also agreed that athletics led to higher enrollment, school pride/spirit, reputation enhancement of an institution, mission support of the institution, and increased financial earnings due to donations for winning programs. Some recommendations from her study for future research include continued implementation of research methods to provide generalization for community colleges in the area of intercollegiate athletics particularly examining and comparing the students and student affairs administrators' perspective on the benefits and challenges of community college athletics.

Patricia Rinke (2011)

Patricia Rinke (2011) studied the influence of the chance to compete in intercollegiate athletics at the community college level on college choice. She sought to identify the factors associated with college choice of student-athletes at the community college level as well as the satisfaction with the factors influencing their choices. The top factors included academic programs and social atmosphere, individual role on the team and athletic goals, peers, parents, friendliness of campus, and weather, secondary team characteristics, team reputation and success, high school influences and prior experiences, aid and tuition, housing and campus life, facilities and academic support for athletes, and interactions with coaches and teammates. Rinke (2011) calls for future research into the factors affecting college choice on community college student-athletes

to confirm or repudiate her findings. She believes more research should be done on non-scholarship student-athletes as much of the current research has been completed on Division I and II athletes in regards to college choice factors. She also points to the need for more qualitative research into community college athletics to provide a true student voice.

Karyn Schulz (2007)

Karyn Schulz (2007) conducted research on the impact of academic and athletic motivation on the academic achievement of community college student-athletes. Her purpose was to determine how academic and athletic motivational factors impacted the academic achievement of student-athletes. She found that a number of factors including race/ethnicity, sport played, and gender had a direct impact on the academic achievement as measured by Grade Point Average (GPA) on community college student-athletes. Schulz (2007) calls for more qualitative future research to allow for students voices to come through. Additionally, she believes that further investigation should be had into why community college student-athletes choose to attend the institutions they select.