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Implications for Counseling High School Student Athletes in a School Setting

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Implications for Counseling High School Senior Student-Athletes in a School Setting

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A Capstone Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Master of Science Degree in
Counselor Education at
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COUNSELING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETES

Winona State University
College of Education
Counselor Education Department

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Implications for Counseling High School Senior Student-Athletes in a School Setting

This is to certify that the Capstone Project of

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Has been approved by the faculty advisor and the CE 695 – Capstone Project

Course Instructor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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Abstract

Career counseling is a vital part of the high school counselor's job. There are unique considerations for every student that transitions from high school to college but the transition process for the prospective student-athlete is especially complicated. The role of the counselor is discussed to begin the literature review, followed by a review of the academic eligibility information that counselors need to be aware of. Academic implications for the student-athlete such as choosing a school and a major are then discussed before transitioning to issues student-athletes may face upon arriving at college. These issues include time management skills, mental health concerns, and risky behavior concerns. A discussion of the results leads the writer to identify gaps in the literature that include the role of the high school counselor during the recruiting process as well as a current picture of what practicing counselors are doing in terms of guiding their prospective student-athletes through their transition and the perception of this guidance by the student-athlete.

Keywords: student-athlete, school counseling, recruiting, academic eligibility

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Implications for Counseling High School Senior Student-Athletes in a School Setting

When weighing postsecondary options, there are a number of different considerations that students need to think about: what type of college to go to, where the different colleges are located, the cost of tuition, and the demographics of the student body at the college. If that student is a prospective student-athlete, the list of considerations only grows: what the coaches are like, what type of scholarship they can offer, how successful the team is, and what the athletic facilities are like. As recruiting websites and rankings continue to pop up, there are more and more opportunities for high school student-athletes to be noticed by college coaches meaning there are more and more students needing these questions answered. With so much information needed, high school counselors need to be prepared for when the prospective student-athlete steps into their office.

The role of the counselor will be the first topic discussed in this paper as the role of the counselor determines whether or not a high school counselor may be involved in the transitioning of the high school student-athlete to college. Then, the different issues that prospective student-athletes face will be examined, followed by issues that they may face as they enter college. These issues involve several different areas of the student-athletes life, all of which may be influenced by the guidance of the high school counselor. Although some issues that student-athletes face only occur once the student is no longer in high school, preventative education can be taught by the high school counselor to assist the student in continuing to be healthy and make smart decisions. Finally, a discussion of the results will take place as well as the identification of gaps within the literature and ideas for future research.

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Review of Literature

The journey to become a college student-athlete begins well before the student actually enrolls in college. This literature review will look at the different problems that student-athletes face as they are preparing for college as well as when they get to college and will seek ways that high school counselors can address those problems in a preventative manner. Some of the issues discussed will include behavioral health implications for students such as mental health and risk-taking behaviors, balancing sport, school and the social life, and the academic eligibility process for both school and sport. The importance of the high school counselor during the college search process will also be discussed. What needs to be discussed first though, is the role of the counselor, as this determines if any of the following is relevant to the duties of the high school counselor.

Role of the High School Counselor

The role of the school counselor is frequently discussed but rarely finds clarity. Blake (2020) found this ambiguity to be commonplace. The researcher interviewed and observed eleven high school counselors from a diverse urban school district as well as interviewed four other counselors from around the country. Interviews with eleven different school administrators and observations at national and state counseling conferences were also done. Through these interviews and observations, the researcher found that others in the school such as principals, superintendents, and teachers, typically did not completely understand what school counselors do. Even worse though, the school counselors themselves were often confused with their own role and found themselves being asked to fulfill duties that they were not expecting.

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While there tends to be confusion in schools about what school counselors are supposed to do and what their role is, there is a source that is often mentioned in counselor education programs that can help counselors identify what it is they can be doing. The ASCA National Model (2019) is a guide for prospective and current school counselors that outlines the expectations and standards of all school counselors. This guide specifically addresses the issue of career counseling and includes appraisal and advisement of students as key behaviors for successful counselors. Within this section of the model, more specific activities are outlined for counselors, and included in the duties is “help students and families navigate postsecondary awareness, exploration, admissions, and financial aid processes” (American School Counselor Association, 2019, p.11). While its application to student-athletes is not explicitly mentioned, it is inferred that school counselors are responsible for assisting students in these ways regardless of their post-secondary plans which means that it is well within the role of the school counselor to assist in the aspects of these processes specific to the student-athlete.

Academic Eligibility

The first duty that school counselors may find themselves participating in to assist the prospective student-athlete is to ensure that the student graduates high school with full academic eligibility to participate in college athletics. Although graduation is one of the last events that a school counselor helps their student through, the academic eligibility process can start much earlier on. According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the largest and most well-known organization governing college athletics, the high school counselor can help students maintain academic eligibility before they even enter high school by maintaining a school account on their high school portal that lists all the classes students at their school can enroll in and which ones are approved by the NCAA (NCAA Guide for Counselors, 2021). One

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aspect to note is that the class requirements for NCAA academic eligibility vary by division, with Division 1 having strict academic requirements, Division 2 having slightly more relaxed academic requirements, and Division 3 having no academic requirements at all for initial eligibility (Initial Eligibility Flyer, 2023). This means that, if a student has aspirations of playing in college but is not sure at which level they will be able to play, it may be in the best interest of the student to prepare the student as though they will be playing Division 1 since it has the high initial eligibility requirements that will allow the student to be eligible for all divisions if the requirements are met.

As students enter high school, the NCAA recommends that students enter themselves into the student portal as early as the ninth grade (NCAA Guide for Counselors, 2021). This is a process that counselors should be aware of as students may not think about the requirements for playing in college until their junior or senior years. Although scheduling is not a duty outlined in the ASCA National Model, it is a duty that many counselors find themselves doing (Blake, 2020). This duty can be a benefit to prospective student-athletes, as counselors are in the position to make sure the students' schedules are conducive to their future athletic goals and maintaining eligibility. Another policy the NCAA has that counselors should be aware of while scheduling students for classes is that not all classes the high school deems as 'core classes' are considered 'core classes' by the NCAA (Core Courses for Counselors, 2023). One particular example of this is courses taught in a core subject but cover less content than a typical core subject of that grade level such as remedial math or English.

Most of the relevant literature surrounding student-athlete academic eligibility and how counselors can assist in the process comes straight from the NCAA. While this is extremely helpful to counselors working with students looking to participate in sports sanctioned by the

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NCAA, some students may be looking to participate in sports at colleges that are not a part of the NCAA. Because several other organizations run collegiate athletic leagues, it is important for counselors to be open to researching the eligibility requirements for those different organizations as well.

Choosing a School and Major

Deciding what to do after high school is a very exciting, yet very difficult time in a student's life. There are a number of different factors that come into play with choosing what school to go to and students can be influenced by a number of different people. One group that is particularly influential in the college decision process is a student's parents. Workman (2015) conducted in-depth interviews with twelve first-year college students. Through these interviews the researcher discovered that family influence was a major factor for nearly all students, suggesting that parental influence may be one of the most important factors in what a student decides. Though this study provides insight into what may be factors for the choice of a school, one issue with this study was the sample size. With only twelve participants, no true conclusions can be drawn about students in general.

When looking at a study with a larger sample size, some different results have been shown. A study that looked at data from 23,000 high school juniors also sought what the students rated as most important when deciding where to go to college (LaFave et al., 2018). The highest rated factors in order were the school's academic reputation, whether or not the school had the student's desired program of study/major, job placement rate after graduation, the cost of attendance, graduate school placement rates, and the quality of social life. These factors were listed as either "very important" or "somewhat important" in at least ten percent more of the responses than the next highest factor (family/friend recommendation). The family/friend

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recommendation factor showed interesting results because, although the results of the previous study listed it as a key factor, it was a factor that fell in the middle of the rankings in this study. This factor also was unique in that, it was the third to last when factors were ranked in responses labeling it as “very important” and yet was placed in the middle overall because it had the most participants of any factor list it as “somewhat important.” This makes sense, combined with the previous study, as it suggests that input from family and friends may not be the most important factor when choosing a college, but it is a factor that a majority of students consider.

There are also factors that can have an effect on whether or not a student chooses to pursue further education at all. One study analyzed data from over 8000 students to find out what some predictive factors are in determining whether a student will pursue higher education (Lee et al., 2013). The study found significant factors to include socioeconomic status and math aptitude. Students coming from a lower socioeconomic status family were less likely to pursue higher education while students with a higher aptitude for math were more likely to pursue higher education. These findings are especially interesting when considering another study that focused on the socioeconomic status of student-athletes across different NCAA divisions (Shah et al., 2022). Just under 18,000 student-athletes from 30 different schools were asked to self-report household family income. When all of the assessments were returned, the incomes reported were split into \$60,000 increments to group students. What they found upon analyzing the data was that over half of the division 1 student-athletes reported household incomes of over \$120,000 compared to over 30% of division 2 student-athletes. These studies (Shah et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2013) suggest that, not only are students from high-income families more likely to attend college, but student-athletes from higher-income families are also more likely to participate in the highest level of college athletics than student-athletes from lower-income families.

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While the study above showed how socioeconomic status impacts student-athletes' college choices, it is important to consider other factors that may make the college choice different for student-athletes. An article from the *College Student Journal* (Letawsky et al., 2003) sought these differences when they analyzed surveys from 126 student-athletes at a large university. What they found was that, similar to studies with the general student population, student-athletes rated degree program/major options very highly, but student-athlete-specific factors like their head coach, the school's sports tradition, the athletic facilities, and the student-athlete's official on-campus visit were considered important as well. This suggests that, while student-athletes and non-athletes may consider some of the same factors to be important, several other factors influence a student-athlete's decision to attend a college. There are several limitations to this study that should be considered though. Firstly, this study was conducted solely at one university meaning that students at other universities may feel differently. Also, this study was done across 25 different sports offered by the university. Student-athletes in different sports may have different influences impacting their decision to attend the university. The study was also conducted in 2003 so a more current study should be considered before conclusions are drawn.

A more recent study also looked at student-athletes' considerations when choosing a college (Popp et al., 2011). This study surveyed 355 student-athletes from 15 NCAA division 1 institutions. While this study primarily focused on identifying how international students differed from domestic students when choosing a college, the data for the 163 domestic students should provide an idea of what factors high school counselors in the United States of America will see as being important for their student-athletes. Looking only at responses by domestic student-athletes, the highest-rated influence was that the degree they would receive upon

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graduation was perceived to lead to a good job. Following this factor were a mix of academic and athletic factors that seemed consistent with the findings from the previous study. A limitation that was also consistent in this study though was that the participants were spread out across 27 different sports.

Narrowing it down by sport may be helpful in identifying what unique influences student-athletes of varying sports are affected by. A study looking specifically at lacrosse players across the NCAA divisions sought to identify what factors were most influential in their college decision (Pauline, 2010). 792 lacrosse players were surveyed and “future career opportunities” was the highest-rated factor. Of the top four factors, none were factors that are unique to the participants’ athlete status. These results are interesting, especially compared to a study that looked specifically at college football players (Klenosky et al., 2001). Interviews were conducted with 27 college football players at an NCAA division 1 school. All 27 students stated that they had been recruited by 20 or more schools. When asked for factors influencing their decision to attend the university over the other schools recruiting them, only a third of the participants mentioned an academic factor. On the other hand, 25 of the 27 participants stated the coaching staff as being the primary influence contributing to their decision. This suggests that student-athletes in some sports may weigh athletic factors more than student-athletes in other sports. Generalizing these results should be done with caution though as there are several limitations. First, the sample size was only 27 participants, significantly lower than the study of lacrosse players mentioned previously. The sample also only consisted of students from a single division 1 school, so the results may differ from football players at other universities or that play in different divisions. The attitudes of student-athletes could have changed as well, since this study was conducted back in 2001.

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One other college decision that all college-going students end up making is the choice of a major or program of study. Several of the previous studies listed a major or program of study as an important factor in deciding which college to attend, meaning that it will inevitably come up as high school counselors work with students on finding the right college, but how do students decide on a major? A study by Wiswall and Zafar (2015) looked at this when they surveyed 488 participants at New York University. The researchers found that expectations surrounding future earnings as well as each student's perception of their ability in an area of study were important in determining what major they would pursue. The authors of the study also mentioned the importance of unique individual interests in the choice of a major. While there was an adequate sample size in this study, the generalizability of the findings is hindered by the fact that the data is from students attending a single school.

There are several factors that seem to influence the choice of a college major but it is important to consider how those factors may differ when the student is a student-athlete. A study done by researchers from Kent State University and the University of Akron looked to identify factors in major choice in student-athletes and how they might differ when organized by sport or gender (Kulics et al., 2015). Over 1,000 student-athletes were surveyed and the researchers found that most students chose a major primarily on individual interests which is consistent with findings from the previous study. However, 16% of the student-athletes surveyed did indicate that academic eligibility was a factor in the decision of their major. This is a factor that is unique to student-athletes since there are academic eligibility requirements for student-athletes to remain eligible to play. Male student-athletes were found to be more likely to do this than female student-athletes. These findings suggest that some student-athletes may seek out majors they find easier rather than ones they are actually interested in which could have ramifications for their

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future careers after they complete college. This study surveyed only students from one university though so the results should be viewed with caution.

The choice of a school and consequently a major are two of the most important decisions that college students make. Coming to those decisions can be a long process and students are often faced with external influences when making those decisions. Friends and family are an influence in choosing a school to attend that has been found to be common but with different magnitude depending on the study. Whether an intended major was available at an institution or not was also a common influence but some influences differed for those planning to continue their athletic careers in college. Coaching staff, athletic facilities, and the on-campus athletic visit experience were all factors unique to student-athletes that were shown to be important in choosing a school. While common factors in choosing a major of study were interest and ability in a topic as well as the expected pay after graduation, there was data to suggest that some factors differed for student-athletes. A portion of student-athletes were shown to consider their eligibility for sports when considering choosing a major, opting for a major they considered easier so that it may be easier for them to remain eligible to participate in athletics.

Time Management

Time management is the ability to organize and allocate one's time effectively so that one can complete all of what is required of them. Those with good time management skills tend to handle busy schedules well while those who do not can see themselves falling behind on what needs to be done and may feel like they do not have enough time to do it all. As our world becomes increasingly more fast-paced, time management is an important skill for anyone to learn, regardless of one's plans for the future. This is especially true for college students as academic difficulty is typically seen as increasing from high school to college.

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A Canadian study followed 3849 first-year college students to see how they performed academically by the end of the year and sought commonalities among students who struggled (Beattie et al., 2019). The researchers found two common issues among students who struggled: lower amounts of time studying and struggles managing one's time. This suggests that a lack of time management skills may have a negative effect on a student's grade. The study did take place in Canada though so its ability to describe the behavior of American college students is worth questioning.

Considering that the average college student may struggle to manage their time and allocate enough towards academics, there is a possibility that student-athletes struggle more than the average student due to the addition of athletics into their schedule. In addition to the fact that student-athletes need to be ready for the extra time in their schedule added by the sport they play, there also is the potential that the academic and athletic schedules interfere with one another. A study from Australia where researchers interviewed 20 student-athletes found that 80% of them had run into scheduling issues between school and sports (Cosh & Tully, 2015). Several athletes even indicated feeling as though they needed to pick school or sports over the other because of the lack of time they had for both. While there are generalizability issues because of the small sample size and the location of the study, the study still provides a glimpse into athletes' possible feelings when confronted with the task of balancing their school and sports schedules.

Another study looked again at the topic of student-athlete's time management but also looked to identify a possible intervention (López de Subijana et al., 2015). A questionnaire was sent out to over 2000 of Spain's elite athletes to ask them about their experiences as a student-athlete. Around half of the participants were enrolled in Spain's PROAD program which is a program to provide educational, employment, and social support to elite athletes in Spain.

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The results showed that most of the athletes questioned found managing their dual careers as athletes and students to be difficult and more than half of the athletes reported reaching out for help in coping with their schooling. The questionnaire also asked for barriers to study and the most common responses were that the athletes did not have time, with no differences being seen between the PROAD athletes and the non-PROAD athletes. What was different between the two groups was the frequency of athletes asking for help from various stakeholders. 67% of athletes in the PROAD group reported asking for help with their studies at some point while only 45% of non-PROAD athletes did the same. While this study showed that time management is a prevalent concern among Spanish athletes and that the PROAD program seemed to increase the likelihood of self-advocacy among athletes enrolled, it cannot be said with certainty that the same results would be seen in the United States of America.

Being able to manage one's time is a vital skill to have when going to postsecondary schooling. This appears to be especially true for those looking to continue their education and athletic careers at the same time. While research on programs that assist student-athletes did not show that the program completely took away time-management concerns, it did show how the programs could be useful in promoting self-advocacy which could lead the student-athletes to the help they need. One gap in the research regarding student-athletes' time management skills was that there was little research on intervention programs for student-athletes preparing them for college. This may be the next step forward as preparing student-athletes may allow them to manage their time more effectively from the minute they step on campus.

Behavioral Health

According to the American Medical Association, behavioral health typically has to do with mental health, substance use, life events and crises, and even physical symptoms that are

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related to or caused by stress (Botts, 2022). With mental health receiving more attention today as well as the fact that college can be perceived as a stressful environment, it is important to examine whether or not mental health has an effect on the experiences of student-athletes. Due to the perception of college being a time when students experiment with drugs and alcohol, it may also be worthwhile to explore the rate at which student-athletes are using substances or displaying other risky behaviors.

Mental Health

College can be one of the most stressful times in a person's life. With it being the first time one typically leaves the family unit, homesickness is a topic commonly discussed as being common in college students. A study of first-year students at a midwestern university found just that and discussed the effects homesickness had (Sun et al., 2016). Only 8% of students in the study reported not being homesick, with female students being more likely to report homesickness than males. Higher levels of homesickness were also found to be related to lower a lower grade point average and a higher possibility that the student does not continue their education at the school they are currently attending.

Homesickness is not the only source of stress in college though. One study looked at perceived stress in college students in six different areas: financial situation, one's own health, love life, relationship with family, relationships at school/work, and problems with loved ones (Karyotaki et al., 2020). The results showed that only around 6% of students reported no stress in any of the listed areas. Around 74% of students reported stress in at least three of the listed areas. This suggests that it is extremely common for college students to be facing stressors in several different areas at the same time.

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With the added commitment of athletics, it would not be unreasonable to think that student-athletes may be more likely to be stressed than non-athletes. There are mixed results among studies researching this topic though. A study by Watson and Kissinger (2007) agreed with that assumption when they studied the difference in wellness among student-athletes and non-athlete students. They used a Five Factor Wellness Inventory to find out which factors of wellness the two groups would differ in. The results showed that non-athlete students reported higher levels of wellness in 22 out of the 23 factors. The only factor that student-athletes rated higher in was the factor involving physical activity and exercise. There was a significant difference in three factors: social self, essential self, and love. The authors of the study discussed the possibility of social isolation due to the unique schedule of student-athletes as well as a possible over-identification with their athletic identity.

In direct contradiction to this study though was a study on student-athletes from Canada (Parker et al., 2021). This study specifically looked at the effect of an athlete's unique athletic identity. Demographic, psychosocial, and achievement data was analyzed from 331 student-athletes. The researchers found that students who indicated a student-athlete social identity were more likely to indicate a higher perceived sense of control and a lower perceived amount of stress. This could suggest that, while there are still other stressors student-athletes must face, the student-athlete social identity could be a positive influence on students' stress rather than a negative one.

High school counselors are often perceived as the people who help students during mental health crises. Still, an increasingly important aspect of the counselor's role is preventive care through measures outside of one-on-one counseling. One study with elementary school children looked at the impact of wider measures such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and

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Supports (PBIS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) on fourth and fifth-grade students' mental health (Cook et al., 2015). The study looked at the mental health of students within the typical school environment, a class that is implementing PBIS, a class that is implementing SEL curriculum, and a class implementing both PBIS and SEL. After pre and post-tests were done using both behavioral and mental health screeners, the results showed that positive change was achieved by all groups except the control. These results show that not only does the intervention work in addressing mental health concerns, but education in the form of SEL does as well. Applying this same concept to high school student-athletes could help prepare them for the mental health struggles they are to face as they transition to being a collegiate student-athlete.

Risk-Taking Behaviors

College is a time commonly associated with partying and risky decision-making. Movies centered on a college show frequent partying, drug use, and sexual intercourse but these seemingly exaggerated depictions may not be too far off. According to the Center for Behavioral Statistics and Quality (SAMHSA, 2019), over half of the full-time college students aged 18-22 drank alcohol within the one month prior to the study being done. With the higher prevalence of risky behaviors in college students, the question should be asked if student-athletes are more or less likely as they seemingly have more to lose.

One study looked to see if these risk-taking behaviors were more or less common among student-athletes (Wetherill & Fromme, 2007). Over 2,000 recent high school graduates were surveyed semi-annually after graduation for four years. The questions in the survey asked about alcohol use, sexual activity, perceived risk, and their status as an athlete. Student-athletes reported that they drank more often and in larger quantities than their non-athlete peers. They also reported to be more sexually active with more partners than their peers while also using

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protection less often. There was a lesser amount of perceived risk from these activities reported by student-athletes as well. There are several limitations to this study, particularly with the way that athletic identity was determined. Because the system used for determining who was a student-athlete was a self-report by participants of the number of hours spent participating in competitive sports, there is a possibility that the question was misinterpreted by participants. Nonetheless, the findings are still worthy of a high school counselor's consideration as they are in the position to educate students on this topic before the student leaves for college.

Risky behavior is common in college but that does not mean it should happen. Drug use can lead to Substance Use disorders which can have lifelong consequences. Frequent sexual encounters can cause the spreading of sexually transmitted diseases and infections which can also have serious and dangerous consequences. These behaviors have been shown to be more common in college student-athletes which leaves them vulnerable to more risk than the average student. Because of the high school counselor's role in the transitioning of student-athletes to college, it is essential that they play a part in the prevention of these behaviors.

Name, Image, and Likeness

There has been a recent change in the world of college athletics that has the potential to greatly impact the way that student-athletes are recruited and come to a decision on where they will attend college. Laws regarding an athlete's ability to profit off of their own name, image, and likeness (NIL) have recently begun to pop up meaning that more popular athletes now have the potential to make money in addition to the scholarships they might receive. The NCAA's official stance delegates decision-making on the topic of NIL to the states (*Name, Image and Likeness*, 2023). This means that laws regarding NIL may differ from state to state. Because

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athletes may be recruited by schools in several different states, it has become important that student-athletes are familiar with the NIL laws in the states of the schools recruiting them.

While information regarding NIL is important for student-athletes to learn, it may be difficult for school counselors to teach their students about it, at least as of right now. Because laws have only just been put into effect, it remains to be seen what consequences student-athletes will face if they violate these laws. The laws themselves are also ever-changing so what a student-athlete can do or cannot do may change quickly. Although NIL seems to be challenging for counselors to educate their student-athletes on, it is essential that counselors try to stay aware of the laws and do the best they can to help student-athletes avoid possible NIL infractions that could lead to serious eligibility or even financial consequences.

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Application to School Counseling

Because a primary role of the high school counselor is to provide career counseling services to the students of their school, it is important that the counselors understand the various unique implications for providing this counseling to student-athletes. Some of the things that counselors can assist student-athletes with will be done before college. Helping students weigh their opportunities at different institutions or guiding students through the process of picking a major of study are common career counseling objectives that will be affected by athletic influences. The financial aid process is another process that takes place for nearly all students entering college but this can also look different for student-athletes because athletic scholarships can be offered which will impact the amount of aid needed by students as well as how much they qualify for.

While much of the counseling time can be spent working with student-athletes on what they can do now, time addressing potential issues in college through preventative education and intervention may be a worthwhile use of time as well. Time management education is something that all college students may benefit from but would be especially beneficial for student-athletes looking to continue their athletics in college. As a mental health expert within schools, it is also important that high school counselors understand the possible elevated risk student-athletes are at for issues such as struggles with stress, mental health, and risk-taking behaviors and take the time to educate student-athletes on these risks as well as other special implications for student-athletes like NIL.

Discussion

Helping prospective student-athletes transition from high school to college can be one of the most challenging duties the high school counselor has due to the plethora of factors at play. Beyond applying for college and the other typical aspects of college admissions that all students have to consider as they prepare, student-athletes are also in need of preparation for the specific ways that make life as a college student-athlete unique. Before the recruiting process even begins, counselors need to work with student-athletes to make sure that the classes they are taking in high school will allow them to play sports in college and the grade point averages of student-athletes need to be monitored to ensure that they are high enough for eligibility in the division the student desires to play in. Research has found that even things that other entering college students are doing such as choosing a school or major can be affected by the fact that a student will be a student-athlete.

Beyond things that need to be done by the student and their counselor for the student to be able to participate in college athletics, research showed that there are risks the student-athlete is at that should be considered by the counselor such as behavioral health risks and the potential of NIL infractions without proper education. This is where the counselor can take preventative measures to provide education on these risks to reduce the chances that the student does something that jeopardizes their athletic or academic careers as well as their health, although these next steps have been plagued by a lack of research.

There are significant gaps in the research regarding the transition from high school to college athletics. Research regarding the recruiting process is sparse and outdated, especially considering the advancement of NIL within the past few years. Whether or not students seek out

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help from their high school counselors during the recruiting process, if this guidance is helpful when they do, or if their counselor gave them preventative education on the implications for being a college student-athlete are all directions future research may go to further the understanding of how student-athletes can best be guided through their difficult transition to college.

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