
Increasing Retention of Black Male Student Athletes in Higher Education

— The Role of the Post- Secondary —
Counselor

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Are universities adequately providing Black male student athletes with the support needed to graduate?

Black male student-athletes' graduation rates are consistently and substantially lower than those of their White male student-athlete counterparts (Sellers, 2000).

In a study conducted by UPenn, between 2007 and 2010 across four cohorts only 50% of Black male student athletes graduated within six years, compared to a rate of 66.9% for all student athletes.

In that same study, over 97% of the institutions had lower graduation rates for Black male student athletes than undergraduates overall.

Harper, S. R., Williams, C. D., Blackman, H. W. (2013) *Black male student-athletes and racial inequities in NCAA division I college sports*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Education.

Barriers to Overcome

Stereotype Threat

Lack of Academic Preparedness (Retention Rates)

Overidentification as Athletes

Lack of Community

Types of Interventions: An Overview

Academic Tutoring (Intensive Learning Program)

Constellation Mentoring

Summer Bridge Program

College Advising

Individual Counseling (CRISP)

Group Counseling and Identity Development

An Integrative Approach

Intensive Learning Program (ILP)

Overview: ILP provides “structured assistance” to academically at-risk student- athletes through: **content tutoring, academic skills development, and counseling.**

Steps for Implementation:

Assess program participation through: Nelson-Denny Reading Test, the Wide Range Achievement Test III, a writing sample, and a personal history questionnaire.

Develop staff: Tutors, ILP coordinator, academic advisor, learning specialist

Arrange content tutoring 8.5 - 11 hours/ week, independent study hall

Require course that teaches strategic tutoring and discusses stereotype threat

Discuss class attendance, professors relationships, time management, and adapting to and coping in a university environment with student athletes

Timeline: Over the course of the academic year, as needed by student.

Goals: Improve academic achievement and retention of black male athletes

Results: ILP participants’ GPAs were more than one tenth of one point higher when measured after the spring semester (posttest).

Constellation Mentoring

Overview: Mentoring is typically a resource used to help students transition to college. But, we need something more for black male student athletes who are transitioning into college and have the weight of being a student athlete.

Why Constellation Mentoring is a positive approach for black male student athletes: Provides a challenging environment where athletes can transition appropriately into the college setting while learning how to deal with unfair criticism correctly.

Regular Mentoring: one mentor to one athlete ratio

Constellation Mentoring: diverse group of mentors to assist athletes at various developmental levels

Steps for Implementation: Provide student athletes with multiple mentors to help them achieve within their sport, academics, and social agendas

Kelly, D. D., & Dixon, M. A. (2014). Successfully navigating life transitions among African American male student-athletes: a review and examination of constellation mentoring as a promising strategy. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(5), 498-514.

Summer Bridge Programs

Overview: Provide an opportunity to remediate courses and get a head start on building academic skills through a pre-freshman summer school, establish structure and support network to ensure students can achieve at the University.

Steps For Implementation:

- Determine the highest-risk students in the incoming class and a specific timeline
- Identify Volunteer and Professional Tutoring Resources
- Provide remedial courses in classes students previously achieved low
- Develop a curriculum for academic and social support
- Provide adequate housing and a positive housing environment and require on-campus housing

Timeline: Summer program for several weeks before students' first year of college

Goals: To support at-risk students to achieve academically and socially, to raise GPA and retention.

Results: Prefreshman summer programs increased student's GPA and retention even after three years.

Maggio, J. C., White Jr, W. G., Molstad, S., & Kher, N. (2005). Prefreshman summer programs' impact on student achievement and retention. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 29(2), 2.

Academic Advising

Overview: CAST works with all student-athletes at the University of Virginia to provide tutoring and other resources from the summer before college throughout their four years. Student-athletes are provided with academic coordinators and also have access to tutors, learning specialists, and computer labs.

Steps for Implementation: Academic coordinator provides student-athletes with support for transitioning from high school to college. Program provides students with individualized academic support through tutors and study halls. Learning specialists are available for students with learning or attention disabilities. Student-athletes participate in a nightly study hall.

Timeline: Students have access to these resources for all four years of college. Tutoring and study hall sessions usually take place in the evenings Sunday-Thursday.

Goals: To help student athletes transition from high school to college. To provide student athletes with the tools they need to be academically successful at UVA and graduate.

Results: 56% percent of Black male student athletes graduated from the University of Virginia (2007-2010)

Harper, S. R., Williams, C. D., & Blackman, H. W. (2013). *Black male student-athletes and racial inequities in NCAA Division I college sports*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.

<http://www.virginiasports.com/academics/academic-affairs-cast.html>

Counselors providing Resources, Integration, Skill Development and Psychosocial support (CRISP)

Overview: The use of individual counseling to improve academic retention in first generation college students.

Steps for Implementation:

Assign a graduate counseling student and faculty advisor to high-risk graduate students

Develop strong relationships between faculty advisors, counselor, and student

During sessions: discuss (a) institution resources; (b) academic and executive skill development; (c) tutoring and academic preparation

Timeline: Once weekly during students' first year of college.

Goals: Provide student with emotional and academic support to enhance academic success and retention.

Results: Program was shown to increase retention and GPA after one year, growth maintained over the course of three years.

Group Counseling and Character Development

Overview: Men Passionately Pursuing Purpose was founded by University of Virginia professor Dr. Paul Harris in 2013. Harris works with local high school students

Steps for Implementation: Group counseling experience, college and career readiness workshops, college tours. Topics discussed include: role identity (male and student-athlete), self-advocacy, self-management, self-awareness, integrity, financial literacy, cyber-safety, and networking/communication skills.

Timeline: 8 week group counseling sessions during the school day

Goals: Promote the college and career readiness, as well as identity development of high school male student athletes

Results*: Post-intervention tests revealed two main themes identified through analysis of the data: 1) Sense of self; and 2) Connections with others/Brotherhood

**Study currently under review*

An Integrative Approach

Overview: An intensive year-long program that includes: Summer Bridge Program, Individual and Group Counseling, and Academic support. A graduated program that phases students out of the program as they develop academic, coping, and social skills.

Steps for Implementation:

1. Utilize the university's Summer Bridge Program for all students determined to be high risk based on academic performance or first generation status.
2. Create a group for all black male athletes to develop academic skills, as well as a sense of personal and community identity.
3. Utilize the Office of Academic Affairs to provide strategic and content tutoring for high academic performance.
4. Utilize graduate counseling students to provide individual counseling.

Timeline: Students will be in the program intensively over the course of the year and be phased out gradually.

Goals: Increase graduation and retention rates, Increase academic performance and confidence, support students in identity development (and reduce over-identification as an athlete), help students cope with stressors, create a supportive community. As students gain confidence and proficiency, they will be graduated out of the program.

The Role of the Higher Ed. Counselor

- Need for a comprehensive student athlete counseling program

Ex. Ohio State University: Full-Time Psychologist, Life Skills Coordinator

- Working knowledge of student athlete barriers

Connecting mental health and physical health

- Gain knowledge of collegiate athletic structure

Clinical/Counseling Hours

- Build rapport through stressing “Sense of Team”

- Open engagement/Confidentiality

Broughton, E. & Neyer, M. (2001). Advising and counseling student athletes. *New Directions for Student Services*. 91. 47-53.

Watson, J. (2003). Overcoming the challenges of counseling college student athletes. Greensboro, NC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services

UVA/Community Resources (QR codes)

Summer Transitions Program: see handout description

Black Student Groups

- Black Student Alliance: <http://www.bsatuva.com/>
- Office of African American Affairs (Luther P. Jackson Cultural Center, Peer Adviser Program, etc.): <http://oaaa.virginia.edu/>

STAR Tutoring: <http://www.virginiasports.com/academics/academic-affairs-cast.html>

Men Passionately Pursuing Purpose: <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/projects/Men-Passionately-Pursuing-Purpose>

City of Promise: <http://cityofpromise.com/about-us/#>

School Counselors: How can we help?

- Explain academic requirements established by athletic associations in order to play intercollegiate sports
- Keep up to date with with the major athletic associations' academic requirements and eligibility rules for college athletics by visiting their websites for current information.
- Develop a strong working relationship with your school's athletic director and the individual coaches; maintain open lines of communication
- Be sure that students know that admissions decisions are ultimately made by the admissions committee, not by the college coach
 - A student's eligibility to play a sport doesn't guarantee acceptance to college
- Remind students to explore their options; they should look for colleges where they will fit in even if they cease their involvement in sports