

STUDENT-ATHLETE TIME DEMANDS

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Key Findings



METHODOLOGY

Penn Schoen Berland conducted a study among 409 Pac-12 student-athletes from 9 different universities (excluding Utah, Arizona and USC) to assess the time demands placed on student-athletes and evaluate areas for potential reform. Respondents from each Pac-12 sport were included, and the study was weighed to be 50% Male/50% Female.

- ▶ **Student-athletes are generally satisfied with their collegiate experience.** The significant majority of student-athletes say they are very or somewhat satisfied with their athletic (85%), academic (93%) and general college experiences (93%). They see being a student-athlete as a challenging, yet rewarding experience. These Pac-12 athletes understand they are competing at the highest level; they are aware of the demands placed on student-athletes and are willing to go above and beyond to succeed athletically. In fact, athletics are the one area they do not want to sacrifice their time. However, student-athletes are stressed; the time demands placed on student-athletes create anxiety and a loss of sleep that hinders academic and athletic performance, and they also feel a little removed from the rest of the student body.
- ▶ **On average, Pac-12 athletes are spending 50 hours a week on athletics during season.** Student-athletes report spending an average of 21 hours per week on required athletic activities, only one hour more than the 20 hour limit. However, they spend an additional 29 hours on other activities including voluntary athletics (4 hours), receiving treatment (4 hours) and traveling for competitions (22 hours). Qualitatively, Pac-12 athletes say traveling for competitions is extremely stressful, as it forces student-athletes to miss class and takes up much needed time for homework, studying and sleeping.
- ▶ **The lack of free time and the ability to succeed academically are the two biggest concerns facing student-athletes.** 2 in 3 (66%) students say an overall lack of free time is the most challenging aspect of being a student-athlete followed by their academic work (61%). Student-athletes feel they have the resources at their disposal to succeed academically, but do not have the time to do so.
 - ▶ **54%** of athletes say they do not have enough time to study for tests.
 - ▶ **80%** of Pac-12 athletes say they have missed a class for competition during the 2014-2015 academic year.
 - ▶ Qualitatively, students say that even practice prevents them from attending class, as practices often run late; students also miss crucial review sessions for practices and competition. When asked how the athletic season affects their ability to focus on academics, students say they are too exhausted to study effectively, that they are unable to devote enough time to both their academics and tests, and that athletic stress negatively impacts their academic focus.
- ▶ **Student-athletes say Sleep is the number one thing their athletic time commitments prevent them from doing, ultimately hindering their athletic and academic performance; 71%** of student-athletes say mention sleep as being the top thing their athletic commitments prevent them from doing, followed by studying abroad (70%). Additionally, 77% say they get sleep than non-student athletes. When asked what they would dedicate an additional daily hour to, over 1 in 2 (55%) say sleep. Some athletes report waking up at 5 am to get to practice on time, and then stay up late after evening practices to finish their homework and attend vital tutoring sessions. Physical exhaustion is a major issue student-athletes bring up qualitatively: many say they would use a hypothetical 2-3 week break to sleep and physically rest as their bodies and minds are exhausted from the non-stop stress during the competitive season.

Key Findings



- ▶ **Athletic demands also limit the social experience of campus life.** 66% of student-athletes say the time commitments of athletics prevent them from participating in on-campus extracurricular activities. Student-athletes also express interest in studying abroad, but 70% say their athletic commitments have prevented them from doing so. Additionally, 3 in 4 student-athletes (75%) feel that they do not have the opportunity to miss an occasional athletic obligation to attend a scholastic activity like a speakers series. Additionally, when asked what they would change about their athletic experience, many Pac-12 athletes express a desire to make new friends outside of their sports teams. Some say having friends outside of sports would provide a social outlet, help ease stress related to athletics and would have made the transition to college easier. Yet without the opportunity to join on-campus organizations, student-athletes have trouble making friends outside their sports teams.
 - ▶ Some student-athletes also say they are frustrated with the stigma surrounding student-athletes from their university peers. As a result, student-athletes do not feel like normal college students.
- ▶ **While voluntary athletics are “not required,” the general consensus is that they are actually mandatory.** Around 3 in 4 student-athletes (73%) say they felt that a voluntary activity was actually required. These athletes are more likely to feel pressured by coaches than they are fellow teammates; in fact, student-athletes say on average only about 20% of their voluntary activities are schedule by a teammate. When asked why they feel these activities are actually required, athletes feel pressured not only by coaches and teammates but also from themselves. Many do not want to let their team down by missing a practice and say that they will look uncommitted to the team; some student-athletes say they feel skipping voluntary activities ultimately hurts their chances of success in the future. Others are afraid to miss a voluntary practice because the coach may punish them for skipping: some even report that their coaches take attendance of mandatory practice, threaten to kick athletes off the team for missing voluntary activities, or create a team punishment when athletes skip voluntary practice.
- ▶ **In terms of potential reforms, student-athletes are most interested in making it easier to find part-time jobs, ensuring voluntary activities are optional, and extending non-practice hours.** Of the 8 potential reforms tested, students say making it easier to find part-time jobs would have the most beneficial impact on their experience. Students say they are currently unable to have a part-time job due to athletic time commitments. Student-athletes also want to see their voluntary activities become *truly* voluntary, leading 62% to say this would make their experience better. Student also want to see non-practice hours extended to 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM, ultimately giving them more time to study and sleep.
 - ▶ Importantly, student-athletes do not want their season to be cut shorter or to see summer training sessions removed. Additionally, those in a two-season sport do not want to reduce games during the non-championship season.
- ▶ **The overall stress of athletics and academics takes an emotional toll on student athletes.** College is stressful enough, but these driven young athletes have to deal with extra pressure that normal college athletes do not experience. It would be difficult to reduce student-athletes’ stress, as they put large amounts of pressure on themselves to win- they don’t want to let down their coaches, teammates or school. But helping to manage stress is an area that could be explored. Qualitatively, some student-athlete suggest having a sports psychologist to help them manage their stress or advisors to help student-athletes better manage their time.