

# Building Bridges: Understanding Student-Athletes' Perspectives on College Experiences and Formulating Strategic Plans in NACC Division II Institutions

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## Abstract

“Over 120,000 student-athletes currently participate in NCAA Division II. Within many Division II institutions, the substantial presence of student-athletes in the total enrollment is a characteristic feature of the NCAA Division II landscape. Well-established programs collaborate with the combined efforts of student-athletes, professors, coaches, and families, all dedicated to providing the best experience for student-athletes during their time in the program. According to a pilot study, there have been instances of student-athletes quitting or transferring from one Division II institution to another. This means schools need to identify issues affecting student-athletes from their perspectives and establish plans to enhance experiences, both academically and athletically, inside and outside the classroom.

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction may be closely linked to one's well-being. Well-being is frequently encompassed within the broader scope of mental health, serving as a significant gauge of societal concern for individual life satisfaction. It can be scrutinized broadly or within specific domains (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). According to Seligman's theory (2011), well-being constitutes a blend of cognitive happiness (i.e., satisfaction), hedonic happiness (i.e., emotional well-being), and eudaimonia (i.e., finding meaning and purpose). The prediction of well-being is anchored in five elements known as PERMA: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Seligman, 2011).

Therefore, the objective of this project is to formulate new strategic plans to bridge the gap between academic and athletic staff and student-athletes. The ultimate implication of this study is to reduce the number of athletes departing from the programs due to dissatisfaction with their current situation.

This study is currently in the process of collecting data. Semi-structured interviews with eight participants currently competing at the NCAA Division II are being conducted, utilizing an interview protocol developed in alignment with the PERMA model. The findings and implications of this study will be presented and discussed at the conference.”