

**MORE THAN ATHLETES: AN EVALUATION OF HOLISTIC SUPPORT FOR
BLACK STUDENT-ATHLETES AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY**

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**More Than Athletes: An Evaluation of Holistic Support for Black Student-Athletes at
Temple University**

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Executive Summary

This fieldwork project was conducted in association with the Athlete Innovation Research and Education (AIRE) Lab at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, under the supervision of Dr. Jonathan Howe. The AIRE Lab's mission is to advance the collegiate student-athlete experience through holistic development, cutting-edge academic research, and stakeholder collaboration. In connection, this project evaluated how holistic support is defined, implemented, and experienced at the Division I level with a specific focus on Black student-athletes at Temple University.

This study explored how the National Collegiate Athletic Association bylaw structures institutional priorities, and recent policy changes such as mental health attestation requirements and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) rollbacks may have impacted the practice of holistic support services at Temple University. The National Collegiate Athletic Association claims a commitment to “holistic development,” however, existing policies and recommendations mostly rely on institutional interpretation and self-attestation. This project demonstrates that self-attestation reporting and the lack of baseline screening for institutions may result in differences in the implementation of support available to student-athletes.

The population of student-athletes may be at risk due to the complex pressures of athletic performance, academic demands, the transfer portal, and recent name, image, and likeness policy changes. Within the national student-athlete population, Black student-athletes may experience an increased health risk, as prior research indicates the impact of structural inequities, socioeconomic factors, and limited access to culturally responsive support within NCAA and institutional governance.

This project specifically examined how Temple University defines holistic support for Black student-athletes, whether these supports are implemented and how student-athletes

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perceive and experience support systems. This project also aimed to identify gaps between NCAA policy, institutional practice, and lived experience. The primary deliverables of this study were a policy brief and conceptual framework given to the AIRE Lab that other institutions may adapt in the near future.

This project specifically evaluated Temple University's commitment to holistic well-being among its Black student-athlete population. The methodology consisted of qualitative methods, including 5 semi-structured staff interviews and 1 student-athlete focus group to assess if holistic support systems are implemented, and how they may be experienced. Findings from this study suggest that Temple University is committed to holistic support for its student-athletes through the implementation of resources beyond NCAA requirements and recommendations. Additionally, representation and relationships with staff were found to advance the level of commitment. Further, relationships were also found to shape comfort, trust, and engagement with services.

Findings also indicate a gap between available resources and engagement for Black student-athletes. Barriers such as limited awareness, time constraints, stigma, and lack of culturally responsive services can influence whether Black student-athletes acknowledge and participate in provided resources. Findings also suggest that holistic support is inconsistently defined within student-athletes and the athletic staff at Temple University. The holistic development of the student-athletes includes social, emotional, cultural, and identity-based factors of well-being. Student-athletes also emphasized that coaches, other athletic teams, and personal experiences outside of athletics may contribute to the willingness of seeking support services.

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Lastly, findings suggest that institutional commitment may play a more central role than NCAA policy enforcement in shaping how holistic support is prioritized among institutions. However, participants implied that additional support from the NCAA is also critical, particularly within increased financial responsibility to support the implementation of holistic programming nationally. Participants also highlighted the prioritization of non–health-related areas within the NCAA, as current policies emphasize bylaws of eligibility, compliance, and financial regulation over student-athlete holistic health and well-being.

This project examined Temple University's holistic support for Black student-athletes and whether services were implemented. Student-athletes were interviewed based on the perception of these available support systems.

Recommendations from this study may conduct future research across multiple institutions, athletic divisions, and student-athlete populations to better understand variations in holistic support implementation by conference, geographic location, and financial resources. Future research may also further explore the role of financial investment, culturally responsive practices, and institutional involvement in shaping Black student-athlete well-being. Lastly, findings suggest that Temple University Athletics should further examine the gaps in available resources for Black student-athletes and future strategies that aim to bridge the gap in available resources and student-athlete engagement with holistic support systems.

Background Literature Review

Introduction

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a nonprofit organization responsible for over half a million student-athletes in the United States and Canada. The NCAA serves as the primary governing body for collegiate athletics, representing more than 1,100 institutions across three divisions (Division I, II, and III). The NCAA's duties include

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establishing bylaw regulations, overseeing competition standards, and conducting championships. In its mission statement, to “Provide world-class athletics and academic experience for student-athletes that fosters lifelong well-being,” (NCAA 2025), the NCAA claims a commitment to the “holistic development” of student-athletes. Prior literature demonstrates the public health risk student-athletes face due to pressure, lack of resources, and lack of policy reinforcement. Although well-being has been historically claimed by the NCAA, it was not until 2023 that the NCAA board of directors established the Student-Athlete Core Guarantees, which were effective August 2024.

The NCAA states that its “core guarantees,” formerly known as the “Holistic Framework,” are intended to strengthen student-athlete benefits and expand support through scholarship protections and expectations for Division I institutions. As the NCAA is made up of three divisions, inequities are introduced early by separating enhanced support by division. This literature review examines the NCAA’s stated commitment to holistic development in relation to existing literature on policy implementation and the growing public health risks faced by student-athletes, and further examines disparities impacting Black student-athletes. While the NCAA focuses on Division I athletics as environments where student-athletes are supported holistically while competing, prior evidence demonstrates the public health risks student-athletes face in their respective intersectional identities. Further, retention rates of student-athletes compared by race, increasing rates of suicide, eating disorders, injury reports, name, image, & likeness, and varying support by institution demonstrate the inequities and lack of reinforcement of member bylaws. The NCAA generated nearly \$1.3 billion in 2023, largely from its March Madness Tournament and television rights, and \$1.4 billion in 2024 (NCAA 2024). There is a

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possible implication that Division I programs are being prioritized with a focus on revenue generation, competitiveness, and performance.

The NCAA has publicly commented on differences in health issues and outcomes by race, gender, and identity among student-athletes. However, its primary focus is on areas such as mental health and concussion protocols suggest a contradiction. The approach to “holistic well-being” is limited due to fixations on subjective determinants of health for student-athletes. The NCAA has focused most of its guarantees on mental health through the recently required 2024 Mental Health Attestation required for institutions (NCAA 2024). This annual report is designed as a self-check process, requiring institutions to self-attest that they have policies, protocols, and mental health supports in place for all student-athletes. This is done by using institutional self-reported data rather than a standardized baseline across institutions.

The NCAA has not publicly stated consequences for institutions that do not meet mental health attestation requirements as of 2025. In contrast, there are consequences and penalties for violations related to student-athlete eligibility, recruiting, amateurism, and competitiveness (NCAA Handbook 2025). Examples of NCAA member violations include sport betting, banned substances, academic fraud, and recently changed student-athletes' compensation in any way while being a member. While there has also been a prioritization of financial governance for student-athletes, such as name, image, and likeness, gaps in bylaw equality are reinforced. Further, Institutions and athletes may face member bans, suspensions, loss of scholarship, reductions, and athlete ineligibility when competitive or financial regulations are violated.

This demonstrates that the NCAA maintains enforcement regulations for eligibility and collegiate amateurism; however, policies related to student-athlete health and well-being are suggested to lack prioritization. This paper will analyze the NCAA's claims of holistic

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development, recent DEI rollbacks, and self-attestation reporting, while exploring Black student-athletes as one of the most affected populations for worsened overall health and well-being outcomes nationally. This paper will also provide context of “holistic development frameworks” and how they may influence student-athlete well-being.

Literature Review Approach

This literature review focused on academic scholarship related to student-athletes and holistic development by using a range of search terms including student-athlete, holistic development, whole-person, athlete, collegiate athlete, amateur athlete, NCAA, National Collegiate Athletic Association, Division I athletics, high-performance athletics, Black athletes, Black student-athletes, athletes of color, and African American athletes, to capture the full scope of the topic. Emphasis was placed on peer-reviewed sports medicine, sports psychology, higher education, and athletic administration journals (e.g., *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*; *Psychology in Research*), while also incorporating policy analyses and conceptual frameworks that examined athlete well-being and structural inequities from secondary sources. In addition, non-peer-reviewed yet credible sources such as NCAA publications and ESPN reporting were used to provide further context on policy shifts, financial prioritization, and policy gaps within collegiate athletics.

Epidemiology of Black Student-Athletes

Black student-athletes represented approximately 16% of all NCAA student-athletes during the 2023–2024 academic year (NCAA, 2024), yet they make up the majority of high-revenue division I sports such as men’s football and basketball. Both men’s football and basketball generate billions of dollars in revenue for institutions, primarily driven by TV deals and tournament media rights (NCAA, 2024; ESPN, 2022), yet the holistic health of Black student-athletes continues to decline.

Prior research has consistently demonstrated that Black student-athletes experience lower graduation and retention rates compared to their white peers, demonstrating racialized inequities within athletic systems (Cooper, 2024; Howe, 2020). Studies suggest that Black student-athletes are more likely to experience structural barriers such as racial climate stressors, racial bias, and limited access to consistent and culturally responsive holistic supports, even in programs that claim to prioritize student-athlete well-being (Sudano & Miles, 2017; Keshoush et al., 2023; Louis & Henert, 2025). Findings suggest that if policy protections and support remain optional, there may be inconsistencies in institutional support. Prior research also suggests that Black student-athletes may be a highly vulnerable population within the NCAA and institutional context. These struggles are linked to increased mental health strain, disparities in academic outcomes, and overall well-being (Cooper, 2024; Kluch et al., 2022).

Correlates and Determinants

Prior literature has shown that while the NCAA has acknowledged student-athlete mental health as an issue, support implementation remains inconsistent. Researchers have correlated this to institutional ability, and calls for organizational reinforcement and accountability. Louis and Henert (2025) examined Division I athletic administrators' experiences and found that while Division I athletes are required to acknowledge aspects of mental health care, departments still struggle to implement recommended best practices due to staffing shortages, budgets, lack of prioritization, and limited resources. This study also found that self-attestation and uneven implementation by institutions may increase the public health risk for student-athletes. Similarly, a national survey of head athletic trainers found that there is not currently a standard care model for student-athlete health.

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Sudano and Miles (2017) suggest that there are differences in services provided in mental and physical well-being for student-athletes across Division I programs. Further, a lack of standardized baseline and policy enforcement must be addressed to ensure health equity as this inconsistency can lead to unequal access to necessary health services and support systems across different programs.

In a study analyzing 253 NCAA D1 athletic departments for the presence of MPCs, MHPs, and/or LSPPs, Zakrajsek (2022) found disparities in staffing models, health services, and access to mental performance and counseling supports for student-athletes and how this varies by institution. This study also supports the claim that the NCAA relies on institutional implementation for mental health attestations. Although these studies use different methods, such as content analysis methodology, qualitative interpretive phenomenological analysis interviews, qualitative interviews, and mixed methods, the findings that mental health support is inconsistent within institutions is suggested.

Born (2016) provides a legal policy analysis that concludes optional policies, self-implementation, and a lack of reinforcement by the organization have failed to protect historically marginalized populations, including student-athletes. Thus, born states that equal support within the bylaws is necessary for the NCAA's claim to holistic health. Born concludes that the absence of policy regulation and penalties for these bylaws may result in a continued decline in student athlete health reports, including increased suicide rates. Regulation and the lack of penalties for these bylaws may lead to the continued decline of student athlete health reports, such as increased suicide rates.

Prevention & Treatment (The Holistic Student Athlete Framework)

Additional literature demonstrates that mental health is only one determinant of holistic development in student-athletes. Sato et al. (2023) evaluated 546 elite collegiate student-athletes in Japan to inform a comprehensive student-athlete well-being framework that conceptualizes athlete health as physical, emotional, psychological, and social. This study demonstrates that the holistic development of athletes is intersectional, and each factor must be addressed individually to support true holistic development. In a study that evaluated the experiences of female Division I athletes to also inform a holistic well-being framework, athletic program, conference (Power 5 institutions), available resources, and institution investment in well-being do influence athletes' overall well-being and perception of support.

Both studies conclude that Holistic student-athlete frameworks must be developed and implemented to equally address the needs of all student-athletes equally. Further, competition and academic expectation serve as variables that may influence the outcome of athlete health.

Racial Equity, Black Student-Athletes, & DEI Rollbacks

Black student-athletes currently represent 16% of all student-athletes in the NCAA as of 2023-24. However, in men's sports such as football and basketball, Black student-athletes (males) make up most of the population. On the Division I level, football and basketball reported \$17.5 billion in total DI revenue in 2022 alone, primarily from men's football and basketball (ESPN 2022). Prior literature has suggested that Black student-athletes' well-being is highly affected when support is inconsistent or optional across institutions.

Cooper (2024) emphasizes the intersectional burden of identity felt among Black student-athletes prior to joining the NCAA. Cooper expanded upon the NCAA's Student-Athlete Activism and Racial Justice Engagement Study, which originally focused on quantitative analysis to attempt to understand engagement in racial justice in response to the national protests

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for Black justice in the summer of 2022. Cooper concluded that the NCAA only conducted a quantitative analysis, while suggesting that an application of critical race theory would help inform the responses of over 24,974 student-athletes across all divisions. Cooper demonstrates that societal inequities, racial discrimination, and pressure of performance can lead to a burden experienced by Black student-athletes.

Culturally competent supports such as administrative support, coalitions (Black Student Athlete Associations), and acknowledgement of the public health risks for Black student-athletes may influence their well-being. Howe (2020) focuses specifically on how Black male Division I athletes experience identity struggles within athletic systems that may prioritize performance over holistic health. Howe also introduces the "Manifestations of Athletic Identity in Black Males (MAIBM) model," a conceptual framework using Black critical theory. Keshoush et al. (2023) reiterate that Black athletes need culturally sensitive interventions beyond standard athletic department practices.

Keshoush et al. provides recommendations, such as increasing staff diversity, creating better reporting for discrimination, and tailoring mental health care to inform the NCAA and institution how to potentially address this growing issue. In a study titled "Like Being on an Island": Barriers to DEI Work in Intercollegiate Athletics, Kluch et al. (2022) revealed that diversity, equity, and inclusion work within athletic departments for professionals is challenging due to factors such as lack of funding, emotional toll, and resistance from academic institutions.

As mentioned, the NCAA Division I Committee for Legislative Relief approved a waiver in 2024 affecting several DEI-related bylaws, including those related to career counseling and life skills programming, equity and inclusion reviews, and designated diversity and inclusion roles within athletic departments. These changes may contribute to differences in the

implementation of DEI initiatives. The lack of these support systems may create potential implications for student-athlete support and well-being. Research suggests, the current gaps in policy and practice for Black student-athletes' health with DEI bylaw recommendations present within institutions may enhance the public health risk for Black student-athletes and other athletes. Changes in policy identified above may also increase the dependency of institutions. Background literature illustrates how the policy gaps located within the National Collegiate Athletic Association may be correlated to the holistic health and well-being of Black student-athletes.

Critical Analysis

Although the NCAA has acknowledged the importance of student-athlete well-being, studies suggest that the implementation of holistic support remains inconsistent across institutions. Existing literature demonstrates diversity of methodology, such as mixed methods, conceptual frameworks, qualitative interviews, and policy reviews, to analyze the true holistic development of student-athletes. Further, by including voices from student-athletes, athletic trainers, administrators, and DEI professionals, the intersection and complexities may be further understood in future studies. A key strength of existing literature is the indication that Black student-athletes can be one of the populations most at risk for the lack of holistic development in collegiate athletics. This suggests that gaps in bylaw enforcement, institutional bias, preexisting challenges, and how systematic factors may influence student-athlete well-being. Literature on the intersectional identity indicates that the absence of policy reinforcement and NCAA legislation relief, may decline student-athlete health.

Existing literature states that a call to action to regulate how these policies are governed and the growing risks of these gaps for student-athletes' health is needed. Limitations in studies

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include a primary focus on Division I and Power 5 institutions. As Power 5 institutions and Division I generate more revenue compared to others, this limits the understanding of how experiences can differ across Division II, Division III, and smaller programs with fewer resources. However, prior research indicates that major gaps still exist within Power 5 institutions. Future studies can compare by division and athletic conference to locate gaps in smaller programs.

The recent NCAA DEI legislation relief also comes with limited evidence in understanding how these policy changes will affect athletic departments and student-athletes over time. Further literature may find that intervention strategies, reports, and prioritization continue to be inconsistent across institutions. The variation across institutions also makes it difficult to establish a consistent baseline for understanding and assessing the effects of these policies.

Previous studies suggest that longitudinal studies are needed to determine the impact of policy structures on health outcomes over time. Longitudinal research has been conducted on the lasting effects on mental health of student-athletes, retention rates, and graduation but is limited on intersectional identities such as Black female student-athletes, LGBTQ+ athletes, and differences among sport types. Additionally, research has focused on the most generated revenue for collegiate athletics, such as men's football and basketball. Future research may find that gaps are increased or decreased by sport, race, and gender.

Existing literature also lacks a focus on the resources and support that were available for the holistic development of student-athletes before attestation requirements or bylaw recommendations. Future studies may analyze the comparison of divisions and Power 5 versus

non-Power 5 institutions. Additionally, future studies may evaluate institutional commitment to the holistic health of student-athletes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all literature suggests that despite the NCAA's acknowledgment of mental health and "holistic development" of student-athletes, student-athlete well-being may be influenced by reinforcement and governance. A contradiction was found in the implementation of holistic development, as it is also subjectively prioritized across institutions. With a focus on mental health alone, the holistic acknowledgement of student-athletes is not addressed. In addition, the prioritization of eligibility requirements, legislative relief, policy, and bylaws may directly shape the health of the student-athlete.

The lack of consistent implementation of the holistic development framework and legislative relief for DEI support is not fully aligned with the NCAA's public acknowledgment of worsened risks for minority student-athletes. As literature has demonstrated, identity-based support, institutional climate, and culturally responsive care can decline when treated as optional. Existing research suggests that these inequities are not experienced equally, with Black student-athletes and athletes of color facing higher health well-being risks.

The NCAA's current governance may present a public health concern for the holistic development of student-athletes. Recommendations made thus far have stressed the need for stronger policy alignment, less bias in bylaws and more consistency established across institutions. Future research may study differences across divisions, complexities of intersectional identity, Power 5 vs. non-Power 5 institutions, and long-term health outcomes. A clear holistic framework may also be needed to support the overall health and well-being of student-athletes.

The Conceptual Model

This conceptual model is based on the literature demonstrating that the NCAA governance is related to student-athlete well-being and holistic development. Within this model, the National Collegiate Athletic Association's policy serves as the starting point (input) due to bylaws and recommendations, but institutional priority determines if those policies are acted upon. Therefore, Temple University Athletics serves as a case study to examine if holistic support services are established and if they are made available in resources and programming.

At Temple University Athletics, holistic support of student-athletes is prioritized despite the lack of NCAA enforcement. This prioritization leads to the implementation of full holistic support services, such as mental health, academic, identity-based, nutrition, and career-related resources. This model positions Temple University's interpretation and implementation of holistic support functions as the mediator, as it shapes support made available to student-athletes. However, if an institution practices holistic support resources, this does not guarantee that support is utilized by student-athletes.

This model also demonstrates that there is an access and engagement layer per institution, which accounts for the gap between available support and usage among student-athletes. Factors such as awareness, trust, stigma, time constraints, and cultural component care may influence whether student-athletes engage with these resources. This process may contribute to inequities in holistic development within institutions but also among student-athletes. Therefore, race is positioned as a moderator for institutional interpretation/implementation, access/engagement, and the outcomes of student-athletes. Race is seen as a moderator for all three of these, as Black student-athletes may experience differences in access, engagement, and outcomes due to socioeconomic factors, health inequities, and lack of identity acknowledgement, leading to the outcome of their health.

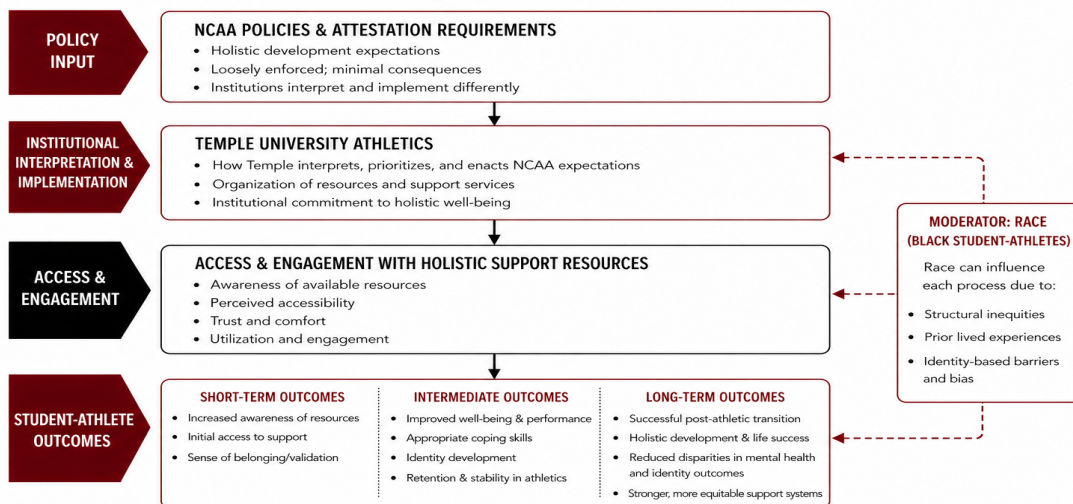
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If an institution is not committed to these resources, the structural inequity will persist, possibly leading to the continued decline of the holistic well-being of Black student-athletes. This will cause the cycle to stop at institutional interpretation by other institutions that may not practice what Temple University does. In contrast, Temple University has implemented holistic support services, which may lead to projected outcomes such as improved well-being, positive postgraduate transition, stronger engagement, and an increase of equitable experiences specifically for Black student-athletes. However, although Temple University demonstrates the ability to achieve these short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes, findings highlight the importance of strengthening the access and engagement layer, particularly in how Black student-athletes perceive and interpret Temple's available resources. Therefore, holistic service establishment does not guarantee positive health outcomes.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL: HOLISTIC SUPPORT

The evaluation of holistic support for Black student-athletes at Temple University.



Note: Solid arrows show the main pathway from policy to outcomes. Dashed arrows show where race (as a moderator) can influence each process.

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Note: Arrows represent the pathway from policy to outcomes. Dashed arrows indicate where race operates as a moderator influencing each stage of the process.

The Logic Model

This logic model demonstrates the conceptual framework by providing various inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Inputs include NCAA governance requirements and attestation policies, the Temple University athletic environment, the AIRE Lab framework, access to student-athletes and athletic staff, and existing holistic support services such as mental health, academic, identity-based, nutrition, and career resources.

These inputs informed key activities, including conducting a background literature review on the holistic development of athletes, reviewing NCAA policies and attestation requirements, and comparing NCAA policy expectations with Temple University's institutional practice. The project used qualitative data collection through interviews with five Black student-athletes and five athletic staff and stakeholders, while also identifying developmental opportunities for student-athletes within AIRE Lab.

These activities produced outputs such as qualitative interview data, a thematic analysis, identifying strengths and gaps of holistic support at Temple University, and findings on the policy gap between NCAA expectations and institutional implementation. Additional outputs include formal reports and a final policy brief provided to the AIRE Lab and athletic stakeholders. The project also generated insight into staff and stakeholder perspectives on holistic commitment and increased AIRE Lab awareness of areas for future strategies and implementation to address these gaps.

These outputs contribute to short-term outcomes, including a better understanding of the policy gap between NCAA requirements and institutional practice and further insight into how student-athletes and staff view holistic support. Intermediate outcomes include greater access and

engagement in holistic support services, more identity-based and culturally responsive resources, and greater institutional awareness of student-athlete needs. These changes may result in greater student-athlete engagement, improved coping and stress management, and more consistent support experiences.

Potential long-term outcomes are improved student-athlete holistic development and well-being, better post-athletic transitions, stronger institutional structures for holistic support, and less well-being disparities for Black student-athletes. The following logic model illustrates potential outcomes of resource availability at an institution, Temple University specifically.

LOGIC MODEL: HOLISTIC SUPPORT FOR BLACK STUDENT-ATHLETES

Goal: To evaluate Temple University's implementation of holistic support services to inform how to add to the holistic development of Black student-athletes.

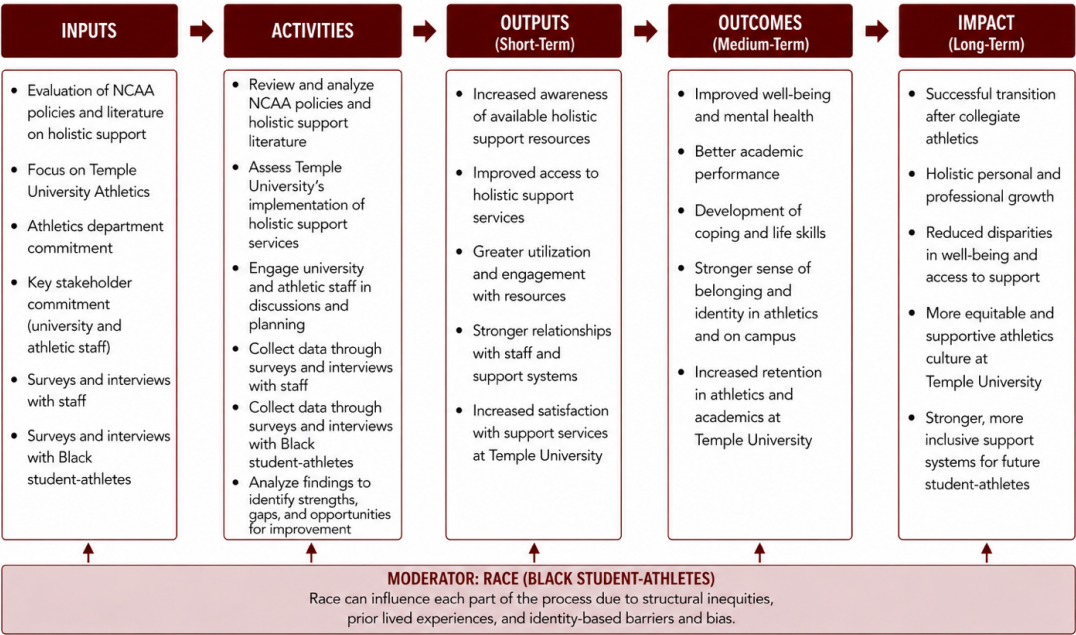


Figure 2

This logic model shows the evaluation of Temple University's implementation of holistic support services for Black student-athletes.

Note: Race is a moderator influencing each stage of the process.

Model Constructs

The conceptual model outlines how the presence or lack thereof may influence institutional interpretation of holistic development. Institutional implementation of holistic support functions as a mediator, as its commitment to holistic well-being may be based on the institutional response to the NCAA's policies. Therefore, the way Temple University interprets, prioritizes, and enacts these policies and recommendations shapes whether resources and supports are designed. Race is positioned as a moderator, as it supports that Black student-athletes may experience resource allocation and support differently due to structural inequities, prior lived experiences, and identity-based barriers. These constructs may determine whether the results are positive, as demonstrated above, or whether they lead to a lack of support and limited holistic development. If this finding is confirmed, the absence of NCAA policy will be reinforced, potentially leading to a continued decline in the health of student-athletes.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that NCAA governance alone does not determine student-athlete well-being. Additionally, this study found that how institutions interpret and implement these policies may contribute directly to the holistic well-being of student-athletes. Findings highlight that institutional implementation and access to resources play an essential role in whether holistic support is implemented. However, the implementation of holistic services may not lead to positive outcomes, particularly for Black student-athletes at Temple University. While Temple University Athletics has a plethora of support services for its student-athletes, a gap in accessible support is

found within the Black student-athlete population. Further research may aim to directly address the access and engagement barriers between the athletic department and student-athletes.

Evaluation Plan

Goals and Purpose

This evaluation plan aims to examine how differences between NCAA policy and institutional implementation shape holistic support for Black student-athletes at Temple University. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) claims to support student-athlete well-being and identity in its mission, purpose, and philosophy. However, NCAA policy has allowed flexibility in support and waivers pertaining to holistic student-athlete development. Recent NCAA policy changes, including the introduction of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL), that allow student-athletes to receive compensation have created a shift on required amateurism to remain eligible. In comparison, holistic development and well-being are loosely enforced. Further, eligibility, financial regulation, and competitiveness bylaws are instead prioritized.

In this evaluation, Temple University served as a case study to further explore how institutional priorities, resource capacity, and stakeholder decision-making influence the perspective and accessibility of holistic support when it is not formally mandated. Black student-athletes, who may experience socioeconomic barriers, lack of identity-based care, and health inequities, were interviewed to assess engagement with support services at Temple University. In addition, key athletic staff were interviewed to explore the commitment to holistic support services among stakeholders. The findings of this study will be used to inform the development of a holistic conceptual framework within the AIRE Lab for further support systems of Black student-athletes. This evaluation plan aimed to identify gaps between policy, practice, and identity-based support to inform Temple University Athletics and future institutions.

Data Sources & Methodology

This evaluation used a qualitative thematic analysis method to examine institutional implementation of holistic support and student-athlete experiences at Temple University. Data were collected through five semi-structured interviews with Temple University Athletics staff and AIRE lab collaborators (n = 5). Interview questions consisted of student-athlete development, support services, and program implementation. This study was IRB-approved. IRB amendments were also submitted for supplemental study questions.

To explore institutional support perspectives, focus groups were conducted with Black Division I student-athletes at Temple University (n = 5). Discussions explored student-athletes' understanding of holistic support, such as awareness, access, and engagement with provided resources.

Interview and focus group questions were developed based on the project's evaluation objectives and conceptual framework. Partial questions for participants were adapted from the IRB-approved protocol. Additional questions for both student-athletes and staff were designed to examine experiences within support services and were tailored based on the demographics of participants. Questions primarily aimed to assess if Temple University is committed to support services and, if so, what is the level of effectiveness based on student-athlete feedback.

Participant Characteristics & Demographics

Participant demographics included five female Black student-athletes, primarily sophomores and one junior, representing a Division I track and field team at Temple University. Athletic staff participants (n = 5) included three Black men, one Black woman, and one white woman, with professional experience ranging from 10 to 30 years in student-athlete development and support roles. All participant identities were kept anonymous. Data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis to identify emerging themes within responses. Themes were

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compared between athletic staff and student-athlete groups to examine similarities and differences in how holistic support is understood, implemented, and experienced.

Variables

Key variables in this evaluation include the policy structure of the NCAA; institutional interpretation of NCAA policy, particularly within Temple University Athletics; student-athlete outcomes; the understanding of holistic support; and accessibility and engagement. Variables explored the implementation of mandated and recommended support at Temple University. The institutional implementation of holistic support was examined first through the perspective of student-athlete accessibility and consistency of services. Secondly, implementation of holistic support was examined through staff perspectives on commitment to student-athlete development. Variables aimed to assess if support is prioritized, resourced, and delivered within the athletics department.

Access and engagement with support services were explored in addition to perceptions of available support. This included student-athlete awareness, accessibility, frequency of use, and the ability to trust stakeholders and staff. Lastly, the understanding of holistic support pertaining to collegiate athletics was assessed within both student-athletes and staff members to understand if this influenced the implementation and access of support services.

Evaluation Tools/Statistical Analysis

Qualitative data from staff interviews (n = 5) and student-athlete focus groups (n = 5) were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns related to institutional commitment to holistic support, NCAA policy interpretation, and student-athlete perspective on provided services. This analysis was conducted independently and coded manually by the researcher using an inductive approach. The inductive approach allowed the researcher to

identify themes that emerged from participant responses through reoccurring ideas. Lastly, these themes were then grouped into separate categories for student-athletes and staff members to assess similarities and differences in identified variables.

Results

Thematic analysis of staff interviews (n = 5) and student-athlete focus groups (n = 5) found four emerging themes related to the implementation and experience of holistic support within Temple University athletics. These themes reflect both consistencies and differences across Temple University's institutional perspectives and student-athlete experiences, such as differences in how holistic support is defined, implemented, and accessed.

Theme 1: Policy Does Not Drive Implementation of Holistic Support

Most staff participants (4/5) reported that holistic support within Temple Athletics is not driven by NCAA policy mandates but rather by institutional priorities and leadership. Implementation was described by participants as being driven by institutional commitment rather than external enforcement.

One staff member emphasized that "it starts at the top... you've got to set the tone," highlighting the role of leadership in establishing holistic development as a priority. Another staff member described Temple's approach as rooted in its philosophy, explaining that programming reflects the idea of "mining diamonds... a play on the acres of diamonds...seeing the raw potential in people and cultivating that potential. That implies the commitment of Temple Athletics is embedded in the philosophy of the university.

On the contrary, staff participants also acknowledged that the NCAA plays a role in shaping the environment of collegiate athletics. Specifically, staff noted that the NCAA's influence is most impactful through financial involvement and resource allocation and that

currently, there is not enough involvement in this area. One staff member summarized this tension by stating, "If they wanted people to do it, they would," suggesting that while the NCAA has the capacity to enforce or prioritize holistic support, the organization has not done so.

Staff participants also noted that Temple University is committed to the holistic support of student-athletes despite the lack of enforcement of requirements/recommendations. One staff member stated that the institution likely "does more than 90% of other universities with less," reflecting staff perceptions of the level of support services at Temple in comparison to other institutions.

Theme 2: Understanding of Holistic Support Is Inconsistent

Both staff and student-athletes described different perspectives of how holistic support is defined and understood within Temple Athletics. All staff participants (5/5) agreed that they understood what holistic support entails but emphasized different factors, including mental health, personal development, and performance. However, findings demonstrate differences in understanding the definition and practice of holistic support across both staff and student-athletes. This reflects the lack of a universal definition of "The Holistic Student-Athlete" across institutions and the NCAA as stated in the literature review.

One staff member described holistic support as prioritizing "mental health first... wellness second and performance third," providing a specific understanding of support services. Other participants described holistic support as addressing the "whole person," including life skills, identity development, and preparation beyond sport. One staff participant emphasized the importance of identity acknowledgment and lived experiences when addressing Black student-athletes.

Student-athletes expressed a lack of clarity in how holistic support is defined. One participant stated, “I do not understand what holistic support even is.” This highlights the gaps in how these services are understood from the student-athlete perspective. Student-athletes also referenced specific services, such as mental health resources or programming, but did not connect these services to the holistic development.

Theme 3: Representation Influences Access to Support

Subtheme: Coaching Expectations & Athlete-First Culture

All student-athletes (5/5) emphasized that representation and identity influence their willingness to engage with support services at Temple University. Participants described how feeling understood and being in culturally familiar environments within their teams also impacted whether they sought available resources. One student-athlete explained, “I think we’re the only team that doesn’t code switch,” demonstrating that they find it challenging to cultivate community with other teams. All five participants emphasized how identity expression may differ in athletic spaces, such as athletic events and gatherings.

One participant described how being in environments with less representation makes it difficult to “be myself,” indicating differences in how student-athletes may present in athletic spaces. Student-athletes also emphasized the role of coaches in shaping their engagement with support services. Participants explained how coaches influence team culture, expectations, and participation beyond their sport. One student-athlete noted that when engagement is not required, “nobody wants to go,” but when coaches make participation mandatory, “everyone shows up,” suggesting the external pressures and expectations that may affect student-athletes' accessibility to services.

Student-athletes described how coaching practices and expectations also reinforced an “athlete-first” culture. One participant shared that their coach emphasized athletics by saying they should “put our education first,” but this was followed by expectations like, “y’all get straight as in the classroom, “I need that energy on the field,” demonstrating the pressure to succeed equally in both areas at once. Other participants added they feel their needs were not fully supported on their team in more serious areas, asking, “What if some of us have eating disorders? ... Why won’t anybody advocate for that for us?” Additionally, the same student-athlete shared, “I’ve never hugged Coach... he doesn’t hug me back,” possibly demonstrating how the lack of emotional connection between athletes and coaches influences willingness to seek support.

Participants also felt they were seen more as athletes than students, with one saying most institutions treat them as “athlete students” instead of “student-athletes.” This pressure was also clear in statements like, “if you’re a Division I athlete and you can’t afford to be here, then you need to look at different options,” which added financial stress to their experience, as most student-athletes are financially responsible for themselves beyond their scholarships. These responses show how coaching and institutional expectations can make it harder for student-athletes to feel fully supported beyond athletic administrators and collaborators, making it a subtheme in the findings.

Student-athletes also described differences across teams, stating that some environments felt less welcoming or inclusive. One participant shared that “some teams don’t really look inviting...we would have to talk to them first,” showing how social factors can limit engagement with support. Staff participants also acknowledged the role of representation in shaping access to support. One staff member emphasized that “the way that decisions have been made... that’s

purposeful.”. This is a reflection on how representation and inclusion are perceived to be priorities within Temple University Athletics’ stakeholders.

Theme 4: Structural Barriers Limit Engagement with Support Services

All student-athletes (5/5) stated that there are challenges with engaging in available support services. Participants identified barriers such as stigma, communication, time constraints, and prioritization of student-athlete demands.

All student-athletes (5/5) expressed a lack of awareness of available programming, with one participant stating, “I never knew about that... that would be something I would like to do,” highlighting gaps in the understanding of resources. Another participant described how information is lost sometimes, explaining that it “gets lost in the sauce... I don’t read the email,” suggesting that type of communication may affect engagement.

Participants also emphasized the role of time and competing demands, adding that schedules make it difficult to participate in programming. One student-athlete described their routine as “practice, class... I gotta go to work. I don’t got time,” suggesting that athletic, academic, and financial responsibilities can affect engagement with services. Student-athletes also described a lack of encouragement for participation. Some participants noted that engagement with programming was dependent on if it was mandatory, and suggested that optional services are not prioritized.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

Findings highlight that holistic support for Black student-athletes at Temple University is shaped more by institutional implementation and program priorities than NCAA policy. Athletic staff demonstrated commitment to supporting Black student-athlete development. However, the

experiences of student-athletes reveal a gap in institutional commitment and engagement regarding available resources. Their findings indicate that the effectiveness of support may be influenced by factors such as representation, trust in relationships, and team environments. Additionally, having resources available does not necessarily ensure that student-athletes will engage with them.

Key Gaps Identified

Several key gaps were found in the policy, practice, and the student-athlete level of perception. First, a gap between NCAA policy and institutional implementation was found, as holistic support is not consistently defined or enforced across institutions. Second, a disconnection was found between services and student-athlete engagement. Findings indicate that there is a communication gap between student-athletes and stakeholders. Finally, a gap in the cultural component support was found. Student-athletes report that representation and trust factor into their comfort level accessing support services.

Limitations

This study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single institution, which may affect generalizability. Additionally, student-athlete participants were drawn from the same team. This may not account for the experiences of athletes across different sports at Temple University. Further, this evaluation was originally designed as a mixed-methods study to assess a diverse student-athlete population; time and recruitment constraints limited data collection. Athletes from top revenue-generating sports such as football and basketball were also not included. These sports may have differences in perspectives on holistic support in comparison.

Additionally, this study did not include other key stakeholders, such as coaches, nutrition staff, or athletic trainers. These athletic stakeholders' perception is key in understanding the full

implementation of holistic support. Further research can aim to address these limitations with additional time and a diverse sample size data across student-athlete populations and institutions. Lastly, my positionality as a former student-athlete may introduce potential bias in data interpretation.

Recommendations

At the institutional level, Temple University athletic stakeholders should focus on addressing the gap between available student-athlete services and how those services are perceived and experienced. This may include study findings such as gaps of communication, awareness of resources, and defining holistic support. The AIRE Lab may also continue to support the holistic development of student-athletes by continuing to develop and expand programming as it did in the 2025-2026 year.

At the NCAA level, the establishment of clearer expectations and baseline standards for holistic support may improve the overall well-being of student-athletes. As suggested by staff participants, the NCAA may also focus on financial resource allocation to support institutional implementation of services. Future research may explore why standards for athletes' holistic well-being are not enforced within the NCAA and how policy reform can potentially aim to address this.

Lastly, the Black student-athlete perspective may still be explored. Future research may use a data collection of student-athletes across different sports to evaluate a diverse understanding of support needs with factors different from this study size. Institutions may also consider implementing end-of-year surveys, regular check-ins, and annual feedback for student-athletes to continue to address gaps between practice and accessibility.

Dissemination Plan

This dissemination plan's purpose is to share findings from my fieldwork research project examining the perception and commitment to holistic support among Black student-athletes and stakeholders within Temple University Athletics. This project included a total of ten participants, consisting of five athletic staff members and five student-athletes. The primary objective of this study is to first understand if Temple has committed to holistic student-athlete support when it is not mandated; secondly, how this support is perceived by the Black student-athlete population through sample size; and lastly, to inform additional institutions on a conceptual framework to inform the holistic support at their respective institutions.

Findings will be disseminated to key stakeholders within the Athlete Innovation Research Education Lab, athletic administration, and affiliated faculty through a structured and targeted communication strategy, including a policy brief and formal presentations at the conclusion of this project.

Key Findings

Findings from interviews and focus group discussions revealed a gap between the institutional commitment to holistic support and the lived Black student-athlete experience. Further, Temple University and athletics demonstrate an institutional commitment to the holistic development of its athletes, Black student-athletes reported that current programming does not fully address their needs, and they do not feel supported holistically. The key themes are identified below.

Athletic Staff: Key Emerging Themes

- Holistic development is not clearly defined.
- Institutional commitment depends on leadership and intention.

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- Collaboration across stakeholders is key to program implementation.
- Representation and identity awareness influence the effectiveness of support

Student-Athletes: Key Emerging Themes

- Holistic support is not understood by the athlete.
- Student-athlete structural barriers (time, practice schedules) limit engagement.
- Communication gaps reduce awareness and understanding of resources.
- Need for culturally relevant, athlete-centered representation & spaces

Relationships such as coaches, teammates, and other sports teams affect perception of support.

Synthesis of Findings

The findings demonstrate a disconnect between institutional support and the experiences of Black student-athletes, particularly regarding overall understanding, representation, communication, and the comprehension of holistic support services.

Strengths and Limitations

A key strength of this project is the inclusion of both athletic staff and student-athlete perspectives, as it provides an analysis of holistic support across both stakeholder groups. A limitation of this study is the sample size of only ten participants, including five student-athletes who were identified as Black women from a single sport and are of younger classes such as four sophomore and one junior, which may have limited generalizability.

As stated, my positionality as a former student-athlete may have also introduced bias in data findings. The sample size consisted of former teammates. Lastly, important key stakeholders such as athletics trainers, academic advisors, and nutritionists were unable to be interviewed due to lack of flexibility in the project timeline in this study.

Communication Strategy

Findings will be disseminated to key stakeholders within the AIRE Lab and Temple University Athletics through a structured, multi-level communication approach. The primary dissemination product will include a policy brief summarizing key findings and recommendations, which will be presented to AIRE Lab leadership and co-founders at the conclusion of the project. Findings will also be shared through in-person academic presentations with athletic administrators, student-athletes, and other key stakeholders in attendance.

Efforts will also be made to engage student-athletes through continued small-group, discussion-based sessions to share results and encourage continued dialogue. This communication aims to improve programming, accessibility, and communication practices regarding holistic support available to Black student-athletes and athletic staff commitment.

Conclusion

This study evaluated if Temple University implements holistic support for Black student-athletes regarding the bylaws of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, its recommendations, and the lack thereof. This project's goal was to first assess if Temple University was committed to the holistic development of its Black student-athlete through its programming, support resources, and policy. This study also aimed to identify gaps between policy, institutional practice, and the Black student-athlete experience at Temple University. Through the methodology of a thematic qualitative analysis, interviews for five key stakeholders and a 75-minute focus group for 5 student-athletes were conducted. This study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of Temple's institutional commitment and the perspectives of Black student-athletes at Temple University by receiving insights from both student-athletes and athletic staff.

This project primarily identified gaps within available support and the Black student perception of support. The primary deliverable for this study included a final policy brief for the Athletic Innovation Education Lab (AIRE LAB) at Temple University to inform stakeholders on gaps and future areas of improvement. This project's final analysis will be used in the AIRE lab to assist in developing a conceptual framework model for the holistic development of collegiate student-athletes. This conceptual framework on the holistic development of student-athletes may also be used by future institutions after completion.

Findings from this study suggest that Temple University is committed to holistic support for its student-athletes beyond NCAA expectations, requirements, and recommendations. Temple University's "Acre of Diamonds" philosophy plays a key role in how the institution approaches resource implementation. Temple University's unique relationships with stakeholders were found to advance the holistic commitment to its Black student-athletes, which may not be the case for other institutions.

However, the results also show that there is a gap between the resources that are available and the access and engagement of Black student-athletes. Although support exists, barriers such as limited awareness, time constraints, stigma, and lack of culturally responsive services were found to influence whether student-athletes participate in provided resources. Findings also suggest that holistic support is inconsistently defined within student-athletes and athletic staff. In addition, student-athletes discussed the significant impact that coaches, teammates, and other sports teams had on their identities, willingness to participate, and faced pressures of being a student-athlete.

Findings also support that stakeholders believe holistic support is shaped more by institutional commitment than by NCAA policy enforcement. Staff perspectives at Temple

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University suggest that the most effective way the NCAA can support holistic development is through increased financial resource allocation for institutions. Future research may aim to address the gap between provided resources and accessibility and engagement within Temple Athletics.

This study advances the public health field by first acknowledging the intersectional identity of the Black student-athlete and how the lack of acknowledgment of these factors may contribute to the decline of overall health outcomes. This project alone demonstrated the policy and baseline gap between NCAA involvement and institutional practice. Regarding policy, this study suggests that the availability of services is not sufficient to address public health risks among Black student-athletes. Further, this study suggests that the holistic development of Black student-athletes depends on the accessibility of support systems for them.

As this project identified gaps in policy implementation and engagement, it may provide a foundation for strengthening holistic support frameworks within institutions by using Temple as a case study. Future research may inform institutional and NCAA-level approaches to student-athlete well-being with increased study sizes, exploring different support per conference, and using a different methodology, such as surveys or mixed-method study approaches.

Professional Development & Career Plan

In conclusion, this fieldwork experience was successful in meeting the selected CEPH and HPM competencies. Regarding my first competency, I used data collection methods, qualitative interviews, and focus groups to center the perspectives of Black student-athletes, as well as including culturally competent methodology.

In my second competency, I examined how structural bias, social inequities, and racism can affect the health of Black student-athletes through a thematic analysis and background

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literature review of how institutional and policy-level factors impact the health outcomes of Black student-athletes.

Pertaining to my third competency, I was able to apply these findings to inform a holistic student-athlete framework, policy recommendations, and a final policy for the AIRE Lab. My project deliverables were given to key stakeholders in student-athlete holistic development. My project also supported my ability to build connections and develop culturally competent recommendations to further improve student-athlete well-being.

Lastly, this project emphasizes the importance of culturally competent communication between all parties through both data collection and interpretation and the perspective of the lived experiences of student-athletes. In conclusion, this fieldwork project met the selected competencies but resulted in a public health deliverable for equitable policy recommendations and future research.

Resume

SIANI BROWN-CARR

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EDUCATION

Temple University – Philadelphia, PA **Expected Graduation:** May 2026
Master of Public Health | Health Policy & Management **GPA: 3.9/4.0**
• NCAA DI Student-Athlete – Track & Field, American Athletic Conference All Academic, Graduate Honors List

Marquette University – Milwaukee, WI **GPA: 3.7/4.0**
B.A. in Psychology & English Literature | Minor in Sociology | May 2024
• NCAA DI Student-Athlete – Track & Field; BIG EAST All-Academic; Dean's list; Wisconsin Psychological Association Research 1st place

EXPERIENCE

Girard Behavioral Wellness – *Addiction Recovery Assistant* | Philadelphia, PA **1/2026 – Present**
• Provide daily direct care and recovery-oriented support to clients in a residential treatment setting.
• Monitor client behavior, complete clinical tasks, and document care using paper and electronic records.
• Support unit safety and stability through group engagement, de-escalation, and structured supervision.

Athletic Innovation, Research, and Education Lab – *Intern* | Temple University **08/2025 – Present**
• Conducted mixed-methods research (surveys, focus groups, data analysis) in the AIRE Lab at Temple University to assess holistic development and well-being of collegiate athletes, with a focus on racial and socioeconomic inequities.
• Collaborated with faculty experts to develop evidence-based frameworks and recommendations for athletic departments to enhance student-athlete mental health, academic, and professional growth.

The Black Sheep – *Content Creator* | Remote **08/2024 – 05/2025**
• Produced and published creative, brand-aligned content across social media platforms to drive engagement, promote client campaigns, and connect with college audiences.

The Triple Intersectionality of Black Queer Women – *Research Assistant* | Marquette University **05/2023 – 05/2024**
• Utilized established measurements and scales to quantitatively assess key aspects of Black queer women's narrative stories, and decipher patterns, themes, and nuances that yielded valuable insights into the intersectionality of their lived experiences.

Milwaukee Youth Arts Center (MYAC) – *Concierge* | Milwaukee, Wisconsin **12/2022 – 05/2024**
• Served as the primary point of contact, delivering MYAC's Culture of Hospitality to all youth, guests, staff, donors, and partners, ensuring a warm, inclusive, and safe experience.

DICK'S Sporting Goods (DSG) – *Marketing Student Consultant* | Remote **01/2023 – 03/2023**
• Created a buyer persona for DSG's targeted marketing campaign by researching and analyzing personal demographics, challenges, values, and objections of female customers.
• Customized and executed a marketing campaign for DSG's Women's History Month, reaching 100,000 new female customers and utilizing the "IDIC" framework to enhance customer engagement.
• Streamlined project management on Monday.com to ensure the successful completion of sprint goals within a 5-week timeline.

Promly Inc. – *Intern* | Hybrid (Summit, NJ) **06/2022 – 09/2022**
• Oversaw PR, social media, marketing, and outreach subdivisions, while advocating for teen mental health and suicide prevention through impactful social media campaigns.
• Organized the "Promly Changemakers Festival" by coordinating talent outreach, researching artists, communicating with managers and PR teams, and negotiating costs and terms.

YOU MATTER: Self Identity and Compassion of Youth Student Athletes – *Research Creator* | Philadelphia, PA **06/2022 – 08/2022**
• Developed, completed, and evaluated an interactive research project to address the historically neglected mental health needs of young student-athletes through fostering learning and sharing experiences on self-care.
• Designed, implemented, and analyzed the results of a four-session comprehensive curriculum focused on development, wellbeing, & identity.

Catch Inc. – *Intern Clerk* | Philadelphia, PA **06-2021 – 08/2021**
• Provided direct communication and daily task support to clients with mental health challenges.

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- Performed administrative tasks, including filing, and coordinating with health insurance companies, to support efficient operation of mental health care services.

LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

NAACP– *Health Committee & Member* | Remote 11/2025 – Present

- Provide strategic input on health equity initiatives and community wellness priorities.
- Support advocacy efforts addressing structural and systemic health disparities.

Promly Inc– *Board Member* | Remote 10/2024 – Present

- Selected as a Board Member for Promly Inc., contributing to strategic decision-making and organizational growth by providing insights and guidance on key initiatives.

Powering Possibilities — UN Side Event during United Nations General Assembly (UNGA80) | NYC 9/2025-9/2025

- Delivered remarks on leadership, equity, youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, and inclusive growth; supported panel facilitation and discussion flow

Temple University & NCAA– *Vice President* | Philadelphia, PA 08/2024 – 05/2025

- Served as the Vice President of Temple's Black Student Athlete Association focusing on the planning and execution of community service initiatives, strengthening partnerships with local organizations and enhancing the association's campus presence.
- Advocated for increased funding and resources while providing leadership, mentorship, and strategic direction to empower Black student-athletes while competing as a Division 1 Athlete.

The Black Student-Athlete Summit Fellowship – *Student-Athlete* | Los Angeles, CA 04/2024 – -5/2025

- Selected as 1 of 4 fellows to conduct and present research on the representation of Black collegiate student-athletes. Collaborated with researchers and leaders to educate summit participants on mixed-method research findings.

White House Initiative on Opportunity for Black Americans– *Panelist* | Washington, DC 07/2024 – 07/2024

- Selected to represent the youth voice and the intersectional experience of Black female student-athletes on a national panel hosted by the White House.
- Shared insights on educational equity, standardized testing disparities, and solutions for marginalized communities alongside leading advocates and policymakers.

Marquette University & NCAA – *Student Athlete Alliance Committee Member* | Milwaukee, WI 04/2022 – 05/2024

- Led a subcommittee within the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) dedicated to DEI, actively incorporating strategies to advance the mission of DEI within the athletic community.
- Facilitated events and provided a platform for peers to share their experiences and amplify their voices through DEI projects.

BIG EAST Health & Safety Wellness Representative Student-Athlete | Remote 09/2024 – 05/2024

- Selected as the sole BIG East representative to improve student-athlete well-being; acted as spokesperson for the student body and collaborated with top administrators, commissioners, doctors, and athletic directors on wellness initiatives.

Make A Play Foundation (MAP) – *Women's Playmaker '23 (Team Dawn Staley)* | Remote 01/2023 – 03/2023

- Selected as 1 of 120 college women athletes to receive industry training on Agile Project Management, Scrum Methodology, and Tuckman's 5 Stages of Group Development.
- Worked with a team to develop DSG's multi-year Women's History Month strategy.

CERTIFICATIONS

- CITI, FERPA, HIPAA, IRB SUBMISSION(S)APPROVAL, MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID, CPR ADULT FIRST AID

NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS & INTERESTS

- Interests: art, health innovation, immersive health, marketing, wellness, health, film, social media, art, music, podcasts, YouTube, media, fashion, entertainment, mental health, & literature

Informational Interview

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Siani & Dr. Howe Informational Interview

As part of my professional development, I completed an informational interview with Dr. Jonathan Howe, Associate Professor in Temple University's School of Sport, Tourism, and Hospitality Management, a program who is currently ranked as one of the tops in the world, as Dr. Howe works. Although Dr. Howe serves as my fieldwork preceptor, he is someone whose work and commitment to the holistic development of Black student-athletes deeply resonates with me. As I am someone who has studied and cared about Black student athletes, I found Dr. Howe's publications and work on Black student athletes long before I knew that I would be a student athlete at Temple University. I chose to interview Dr. Howe, not because of his academic accolades, but because of the commitment and care research to an indemnity that I belong to, and is deeply personal to me. Dr. Howe is committed to community work that center's identity, equity, and experience within the world of Black student athletes.

At the beginning of our interview, Dr. Howe reflected on the origin of his research journey, sharing how a class he took at the University of Texas at Austin with Dr. Leonard Moore titled *Race and the Age of Obama*. Dr. Howe reflects on how this class shifted his perspective on the socialization of Black student-athletes. Dr. Howe walked me through his story of being at University of Texas at Austin with Dr. Leonard Moore, pursuing a PhD at The Ohio State University, and what led him to be an admiring professor and researcher at Temple University. As someone who is also a product of The National Black Student Athlete Summit, it is fascinating to hear the amount of impact Dr. Leonard Moore has had on his community. I find that mostly everyone I have met who is committed to the study of Black student athletes has had a tie to the Black Student Athlete Summit, and has been taught by Dr. Moore. This has led to him pushing for his former students to pursue PhD's and providing them with opportunity. I would hope to have the same level of impact and influence on my community one day.

Throughout the beginning of his researcher career, he continued to examine how race, identity, and institutional environments influence the Black athlete experiences. Dr. Howe emphasizes the importance of the holistic development of all student athletes, and what is often misunderstood about the Black student athlete experience. As a former Black student athlete myself, it felt beyond validating to hear an administrator's perspective on what he's seen, noticed, and has studied; I could have not agreed more with his insights. Dr. Howe was also able to provide me with a perspective that resulted in me reflecting on my independent study within his lab. He believes that the holistic development relies majority on the institution itself, as it understands its direct needs. However, it is still up to the NCAA to monitor and provide financial opportunity to institutions. He believes the best way for the NCAA to get involved may be financially. This reflection is different than what I am currently theorizing about the NCAA.

Reflecting on this interview felt affirming on both a personal and professional level. As someone who hopes to follow a similar path, I found myself inspired not only by his accomplishments but by the legacy he hopes to leave being with mentorship and continued dedication in his work. I concluded the interview asking Dr. Howe what piece of advice he would have for someone such as myself, who is planning to follow in his footsteps. This interview helped me to further admire Dr. Howe's commitment to creating space for Black student-athletes to be seen beyond expectation and performance. After this interview, it deepened my reasoning and purpose behind my independent study, and what I plan to do in my career with my commitment to Black student athletes. I am beyond appreciative I get to do this work, and

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have a preceptor like Dr. Howe. As I said before, nothing happens by accident, and everything
has led me to this moment.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval



Research Integrity & Compliance
Student Faculty Center
3340 N. Broad Street, Suite 427
Philadelphia PA 19140

Institutional Review Board
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 204-4609
e-mail: irb@temple.edu



Amendment Approval

Date: 08-Sep-2025

Protocol Number: 32489

PI: JONATHAN E HOWE

Review Date: 08-Sep-2025

Committee: A2

Risk: Minimal risk

Sponsor: OVPR/HARP

Project Title: Understanding and Building Capacity to Equitably Enact Successful Holistic Development and Well-Being Programming for College Athletes

On 08-Sep-2025, the IRB approved the amendments requested in Submission # **32489-0004**. A summary of the approved Amendments is below:

1. Adding Siani Brown-Carr to the study.

*If you amended the consent form for a non-Exempt study, you can access your IRB-approved, stamped consent document or consent script through ERA. Open the "Attachments" tab within the approved submission (# **32489-0004**) and open the stamped documents by clicking the View link next to each document. The stamped documents are labeled as such. Copies of the IRB approved stamped consent document or consent script must be used in obtaining consent.*

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.

If you would like to tell us how we are doing, please complete this 5-minute Satisfaction Survey:
<https://forms.gle/9Ec9YGDEEAnvMw37>

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BLACK STUDENT-ATHLETES AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY**

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Research Compliance
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Amendment Approval

Date: 25-Feb-2026

Protocol Number: 32489

PI: JONATHAN E HOWE

Review Date: 25-Feb-2026

Committee: A2

Risk: Minimal risk

Sponsor: OVPR/HARP

Project Title: Understanding and Building Capacity to Equitably Enact Successful Holistic Development and Well-Being Programming for College Athletes

On 25-Feb-2026, the IRB approved the amendments requested in Submission # **32489-0005**. A summary of the approved Amendments is below:

1. Adding a new survey/measure of college athlete development.

*If you amended the consent form for a non-Exempt study, you can access your IRB-approved, stamped consent document or consent script through ERA. Open the "Attachments" tab within the approved submission (# **32489-0005**) and open the stamped documents by clicking the View link next to each document. The stamped documents are labeled as such. Copies of the IRB approved stamped consent document or consent script must be used in obtaining consent.*

If your protocol requires Continuing Review, the approval of this Amendment does not extend your expiration date.

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 or irb@temple.edu if you have any questions.

If you would like to tell us how we are doing, please complete [this 7-minute Satisfaction Survey](#).

Appendix B

Background Literature Table

1

Final Literature Review/Background Table

Paper Citation	Study Rationale	Population	Design / Methods	Main Findings	Relevance to My Project
Louis, G., & Henert, S. (2025). <i>Assessing College Athletic Departments' Ability to Implement the NCAA Mental Health Best Practices</i> . Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics.	Examines whether athletic institution (members of NCAA) can truly implement NCAA Mental Health Best Practices.	eight D1 athletic administrators	Qualitative Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis interviews	Programs value mental health but face resource constraints, staffing gaps, and difficulty independently implementing mental health best practices.	Self-attestation and uneven implementation by institution is a public health risk
Sudano, L., & Miles, C. (2017). <i>Mental health services in NCAA Division I athletics:</i>	Identifies what mental health resources existed before	One hundred twenty-seven (36% response rate) head athletic trainers at	Web-based survey (mixed methods with quant focus)	variation in services, provided inconsistent access. inconsistencies in	Standard baseline and policy enforcement matters for health equity

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<i>A survey of head ATCs. Sports Health.</i>	current mandates.	Division I NCAA member colleges		the use of standardized screening tools for mental health evaluation. no standard integrated care delivery model for student-athletes.	
Jones, M., & Zakrajsek, R. (2022). <i>Mental performance and mental health services in NCAA DI departments.</i> Psychology in Research.	Explores extent and quality of mental health + performance services.	analyzing 253 NCAA DI athletic departments for the presence of MPCs, MHPs, and/or LSPPs	Content analysis methodology	Disparities in service quality, staffing levels, resource allocation.	Supports claim that NCAA leaves mental health protection to institutional discretion, and how services vary by institution's ability for mental health professionals

3

Born, J. (2016). <i>National protection of student-athlete mental health: The case for federal regulation.</i> HeinOnline.	Legal review and policy that NCAA cannot rely on voluntary compliance.	Review of NCAA Mental Health attestation on a federal and state level	Legal / policy analysis	Argues optional policies have historically failed with large populations recommends federal oversight of NCAA	NCAA self-attestation + lack of penalties leads to increase of student athlete suicides
Cooper, J. (2024). <i>The Black College Athletes' Burden.</i> Sociology of Sport Journal.	Examines structural inequities shaping Black athlete experiences	24,974 student athletes from all three divisions.	Descriptive statistics and critical race theory	Continues NCAA Student-Athlete Activism and Racial Justice Engagement Study analysis and found how inequities in support systems impact psychological well-being.	Explores the "burden" Black athletes carry of intersectional identity, athletic demands, and societal experiences related to race

Howe, J. (2020). <i>Manifestations of Athletic Identity in Black Male D1 Student-Athletes</i> . Journal of Amateur Sport.	Analyzes how societal expectations, early socialization, and institutional neglect affect student athletes perception of self	16 participants from various Division I colleges	Qualitative analysis (Interviews, audio diaries, and tweets)	How athletic environments affect Black athletes' experiences and identity strain impacting well-being and belonging.	Introduces Manifestations of Athletic Identity in Black Males (MAIBM) model, a conceptual framework using Black Critical Theory
Keshoush et al. (2023). <i>Mental health needs of NCAA student-athletes of color</i> . British Journal of Sports Medicine	summarized key recommendations for supporting NCAA student-athletes of color	45 participants athletes of color	mixed methods	Racial minority athletes face heightened risks due to systemic issues need for culturally sensitive	Systemic changes like increasing staff diversity, creating better reporting for discrimination, and tailoring mental health care are important for the intersection of

				interventions beyond standard athletic department practices. .	student athletes of color need to be established in NCAA practice
Sato et al. (2023). <i>Student-athlete well-being framework</i> . Frontiers in Psychology.	Develops evidence-based model of athlete well-being.	546 elite collegiate student-athletes in Japan	Quantitative analysis	Well-being is intersectional including physical, mental, and social factors	Student Athlete Well-Being Framework (SAWBF) developed multidimensional model assessing physical, emotional, psychological, and social well-being
Neely, B. (2021). <i>Holistic Wellness of Female Division I Athletes</i> . Journal of Intercollegiate Inclusion & Access.	Demonstrates how Power 5 environment shapes wellness.	Twenty female collegiate athletes	Qualitative interviews	Strong programs + supportive environments improve well-being.	Demonstrates why institutional prioritization matters and possibly explains gap between power 5 institutions and non-power 5 in terms of fundings and resources available

Kluch, Y., et al. (2022). <i>“Like Being on an Island”: Barriers to DEI Work in Intercollegiate Athletics</i> . Journal of Sport Management.	23 participants (DEI administrators) in athletic institutions	Athletic department DEI staff	Semi structured interviews	Systemic resistance, cultural backlash, and emotional struggle while trying to establish more inclusive athletic departments	Reinforces how DEI waiver deepens risk, especially for athletes who identity with intersectional identities
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Appendix C

Focus Group Protocol (IRB Approved Questions)

IRB STUDENT ATHLETE QUESTIONS

Demographics

Gender identity (with prefer not to say)

Year in school (fresh/soph/junior/senior/grad)

Sport (drop-down)

Scholarship status (full/partial/walk-on/prefer not)

Transfer status (yes/no)

Race/ethnicity ("Do you identify as Black/African American or part of the Black diaspora?" yes/no/prefer not)

Awareness of Support

1. *I know what wellness and support resources are available to me as a student-athlete at Temple.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

2. *I know who to contact within Temple Athletics if I need support beyond athletic performance.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

Access & Barriers

3. *It is easy for me to access support services when I need them.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

4. *My academic or athletic schedule makes it difficult to use support services.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

5. *I feel comfortable seeking support without worrying about how it may affect my role on the team or relationship with coaches.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

6. *I trust that support services within Temple Athletics are confidential. (****)*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

8. *I feel supported academically within Temple Athletics.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

¶

9. *I feel supported emotionally or mentally within Temple Athletics.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

¶

10. *I feel supported in my career or professional development as a student-athlete.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

¶

11. *I feel a sense of belonging within Temple Athletics.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

¶

12. *Support within Temple Athletics feels culturally responsive to Black student-athletes.*

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

¶

Needs and Gaps

13. *Which areas do you feel need more support within Temple Athletics?*

(Select all that apply)

☐ Mental health

☐ Academic support

☐ Career or professional development

☐ Identity, belonging, or cultural support

☐ Financial literacy or life skills

☐ Injury recovery or physical wellness

☐ Stress management

☐ Support for discrimination or bias concerns

☐ Other: _____

¶

13. *What is one thing Temple Athletics could do to better support your overall well-being?*

(Open-ended)

¶

14. *If you have ever avoided using support services, what factors influenced that decision?*

(Open-ended, optional)

¶

15. *Write in, anything else*

Appendix D

Study Questions (Athletic Staff)

***Note:** These questions were used to guide semi-structured interviews with anonymous athletic department staff. Questions were structured to reflect participant roles and expertise.*

Interview 1: Athletic Staff Member (Mental Health Services)

1. Can you describe your role and how it supports student-athlete mental health, wellness, and performance?
2. How does your program manage the demand for mental health services, and do you feel there is sufficient support and staffing?
3. Can you explain how your services operate, including individual sessions and any additional programming offered to student-athletes?
4. How do you define holistic support for student-athletes, and what gaps did you identify that led to the development of your program?
5. Where do you think the current system succeeds and falls short in supporting student-athlete well-being, particularly in relation to institutional and NCAA responsibilities?

Interview 2: Athletic Staff Member (Student-Athlete Development)

1. How would you define holistic support for student-athletes at Temple University?
2. Can you describe how collaboration and partnerships across departments contribute to student-athlete development at Temple?
3. How have your experiences at other institutions influenced your approach to student-athlete development and holistic programming here?
4. What do you think are the biggest strengths and challenges in engaging student-athletes, particularly in programs like the Black Student-Athlete Association?
5. Where do you believe the responsibility for holistic student-athlete development should lie within the NCAA or individual institutions?

Interview 3: Athletic Staff Member (Academic/Research)

1. How do you define holistic development for student-athletes, and what key components should be included in that support?
2. How does representation within athletic departments influence the experiences of student-athletes, particularly Black student-athletes?
3. From your perspective, what unique challenges shape the experiences of Black student-athletes within athletic and academic environments?
4. What factors influence whether student-athletes engage with holistic development programming, and how can institutions improve that engagement?
5. What should athletic departments prioritize to better support the holistic development of Black student-athletes?

Interview 4: Athletic Staff Member (Program Development)

1. How do you define holistic development for student-athletes, and why is it important to consider multiple aspects of their identity?
2. How do you see the development of Black student-athletes evolving throughout their college experience, and what role do institutions play in supporting that process?
3. How effective has the AIRE Lab model been in supporting student-athlete development, and what factors contribute to its success or limitations?

Appendix E

Supplemental Questions (Student-Athletes)

Supplemental Focus Group Questions

Note: The following questions were used as additional guiding prompts during the focus group to expand upon the IRB-approved questions for the purpose of deeper discussion.

1. How would you describe your day-to-day experience balancing academics, athletics, and personal life?
2. In what ways do coaching expectations impact your experience as a student-athlete?
3. Do you feel that coaches support you beyond your athletic performance? Why or why not?
4. How do team dynamics and representation influence your ability to be yourself as a student-athlete?
5. How would you describe your interactions with student-athletes from other teams?
6. Do you feel there is a sense of community across different athletic teams? Why or why not?
7. What role do coaches or administrators play in encouraging (or discouraging) engagement with support programs?
8. How do you typically receive information about programming or resources, and what makes communication effective or ineffective?
9. What makes it difficult for you to participate in support programs or events offered by athletics?
10. How does your schedule (practice, class, work) affect your ability to engage in these opportunities?
11. Do you feel that support services go beyond mental health and address other aspects of your development? Why or why not?
12. What types of support do you feel are most relevant to your needs as a student-athlete?
13. Do you feel comfortable seeking support from athletic staff? Why or why not?
14. How does representation among staff influence your willingness to seek support?
15. What changes would you like to see in how Temple Athletics supports student-athletes?

Appendix F

Poster Presentation

MORE THAN ATHLETES: AN EVALUATION OF HOLISTIC SUPPORT FOR
BLACK STUDENT-ATHLETES AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Siani Brown MPH (c)
Jonathan Howe, PhD, MS
Sherief Ibrahim, JD, MPH

Temple University Barnett College of Public Health
Temple University School of Sport, Tourism, & Hospitality Management

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- NCAA promotes "holistic development," but implementation is institution-dependent
- Holistic support includes physical, psychological, emotional, and social well-being
- Most supports are recommended, not required
- DEI rollbacks reduce expectations for identity-based support
- Black student-athletes face greater public health risk when support is inconsistent or nonexistent
- Intersectional Identity of the Black Student Athlete

OBJECTIVES

- Examine how Temple University implements holistic support for Black student-athletes
- Explore perceptions through student-athlete and staff interviews
- Assess how policy gaps shape support and development
- Inform the AIRE Lab model for future institutional application

METHODOLOGY

- 1 Athletic and University Staff Interviews:
 - 5 semi-structured interviews with AIRE Lab leaders & athletics collaborators
- 2 Student-Athlete Focus Groups:
 - 5 Black student-athletes
 - 75 minute session on perceptions of holistic support
- 3 Data were transcribed and coded by using thematic analysis
- 4 Athletic Staff Themes: Institutional Commitment, Collaboration, Holistic Development, and Representation
- 5 Student-Athlete Themes: Policy-Practice Gaps, Institutional Understanding, Structural and Communication Barriers, and Representation
- 6 Outcome:
 - Findings informed a policy brief and dissemination strategy for the Athlete Innovation Research and Education (AIRE) Lab
 - IRB approval was obtained prior to data collection

FINDINGS: KEY EMERGING THEMES

Policy ≠ Practice: Gaps in Holistic Support Implementation

"I didn't even know some of those resources existed." – Student-Athlete

"If they wanted people to do it, they would." – Staff Member
"If you actually package all of that together, we probably do more than 90% of other universities—with less." – Staff Member

Institutional Understanding Shapes Engagement

"There's not enough encouragement from coaches... not just email us like a spam email." – Student Athlete
"If their coach tells them that's a trusted adult—they're going to go." – Student Athlete

"The developmental journey is not understood properly... which makes institutions fail to support them." – Staff

Representation Shapes Access to Support

"If we were on a team with less representation, I wouldn't be able to be myself." – Student Athlete
"I think we're the only team that doesn't code switch." – Student Athlete

"If there's nobody that looks like them... it's even harder." – Staff

RESULTS

- Student-athletes reported that existing resources do not fully support their holistic development
- NCAA policies lack consistent enforcement (non-requirements)
- Representation and relationships influence access to support
- Structural barriers (e.g., time, stigma, perceived value) limit engagement
- Temple's "Acres of Diamonds" philosophy emphasizes cultivating potential, shaping its commitment to holistic student-athlete development

CONCLUSION & ANALYSIS

- Staff emphasized the importance of collaboration & partnerships
- Findings highlight a disconnect between NCAA, institutional intent, and student-athlete lived experiences, even at Temple
- Effective support is shaped by institutional commitment, representation, and culturally responsive practices
- Structural and cultural barriers limit student-athlete engagement & lack of funding
- Public health policy can advance equitable, culturally responsive, and holistic support for Black student-athletes

LIMITATIONS

- Non-top revenue-generating sports (Football, Basketball)
- Findings may vary by sport, year, and experience
- Single-institution study (Temple University) limits perspective across NCAA programs
- Differences in conference resources and institutional capacity (Power 5 vs. Non-Power 5)
- Not all athletic staff perspectives were captured
- Potential researcher positionality bias as a former student-athlete
- Focus group sample size limitation
- Time duration of study

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my preceptor, Dr. Jonathan Howe, the AIRE Lab for supporting this project, and my program director, Sherief Ibrahim, for his guidance, and all participants and interviewees for their contributions.

Appendix G

Policy Brief

AIRE Lab Policy Brief

Enhancing Holistic Support for Black Student-Athletes

Delivered by: Siani Brown

Overview

This evaluation examined how holistic support is experienced by Black student-athletes at Temple University. While resources are available, findings highlight gaps between services offered and how student-athletes experience, access, and engage with those supports.

Key Findings

- Holistic support lacks a clear definition across staff and programs
- Student-athletes are not always aware of available resources
- Engagement is limited by time, scheduling, and communication barriers
- Representation and trust influence whether student-athletes seek support
- Coaching dynamics and expectations impact well-being and access to support
-

Recommendations

- Improve Communication of Resources
 - Use multiple platforms (e.g., coaches, group messaging, in-person reminders)
 - Reduce reliance on email-only communication
 - Highlight opportunities clearly and consistently
2. Integrate Programming into Athlete Schedules
 - Offer programming at times that align with student-athlete availability
 - Consider embedding sessions into existing team or training schedules
 3. Expand Culturally Responsive Support
 - Increase representation among staff and advisors
 - Create spaces where Black student-athletes feel seen and understood
 4. Strengthen Coach Engagement
 - Encourage coaches to promote and support participation in programming
 - Recognize the influence coaches have on student-athlete priorities
 5. Continue Student-Athlete Feedback Collection
 - Implement regular check-ins or feedback opportunities
 - Use student input to guide programming and improvements

Conclusion

Findings suggest that improving communication, accessibility, and representation can strengthen the impact of holistic support initiatives. Continued collaboration between the AIRE