2018

Assessing the Academic Motivations of NCAA Division I Mid American Conference Gymnasts When In and Out of Season

Maggie Dunn
Bowling Green State University

Assessing the Academic Motivations of NCAA Division I Mid American Conference Gymnasts When In and Out of Season

Maggie Dunn
Bowling Green State University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

As National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student athlete exploitation has become a growing concern (Grasgreen, 2011), it has become increasingly more important to examine the nature of how student athletes are spending their time. The athletic time demands placed on student athletes are becoming unreasonable (He, 2016), causing them to compromise the time they spend on their academics to meet the expectations of their sport (Saffici and Pellegrino, 1998). Beyond time restrictions placed on the number athletically related hours each week, based on the high level of stress involved, student athletes should be given a period of time where they are able to be academically motivated without the overwhelming time spent on the other aspects of college.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether motivations change when Division I student athletes are in season compared to out of season. A survey was distributed to Division I women's gymnastics teams from the Mid-American Conference (MAC). Results were assessed based on the factors of academic motivation and their differences during the varying times of the academic year. In this study, 39 individuals from five MAC schools participated. It was concluded that, while academic motivations in season and out of season differed, there was not one season that was more academically demanding than the other. Academic motivations of earning a high GPA, rewards systems, coach support, decreasing stress, preparation for their future, and perfectionist tendencies were identified. Participants reported feeling busier when in season, although being busy was not found to concretely impact their academics in negative ways. Participants were found to be motivated year-round by their own high expectations and wanting to decrease stress, but were more motivated when in season to get ahead on academics to avoid having to focus on academics while traveling to away competitions.

Introduction

Pursuing an undergraduate education takes dedication, time management techniques, and communication skills to make the most of the experience. Given the toll that being a student athlete takes on the mind and body (Lane, 2010), this lifestyle is not for everyone. While not as common throughout the entire country, the number of students who participate in intercollegiate athletics is still increasing. Even with this increase, only a fraction of those who enroll in college actually are members of a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sports team. In fact, "the participation rates in NCAA sports continued to rise during the 2013-14 academic year, with the number of teams competing in NCAA championship sponsored sports reaching an all-time high of 19,086" (Johnson, 2014, par. 1), and again in 2017 the NCAA has seen "an all-time high of 491,930 student athletes participate in sports in which the NCAA conducts championships" (NCAA, 2017, par. 1). Currently, there are upwards of 490,000 student athletes participating in intercollegiate athletics (NCAA, 2017). To properly govern this large number of participants, the NCAA was created. The intersection of sport and academics in this large of a setting was the first of its kind. With the increasing popularity and commercialization of college sport, the NCAA, college coaches, university administration, and the athletes are scrutinized greatly. The success of the student athlete is imperative.

Through the years, the NCAA has coined the term, "student athlete" to refer to the undergraduate members who participate in both the academic and athletic side of college. This term makes a point of putting the term "student" before "athlete", which emphasizes that the individual's main priority is education, with athletics coming second (Saffici and Pellegrino, 1998). This dichotomy has been contested in the past by many, and will be discussed in further

detail in the coming paragraphs, and how this status can impact the academic career of the student athlete competing in the NCAA.

The status of being a student athlete comes with many stipulations, such as having to meet GPA benchmarks and having to meet certain percentages of a degree program at designated times in their academic career (NCAA, 2017). Most Division 1 institutions have entire academic support departments catered to solely helping student athletes not only meet the minimum academic requirements set forth by the NCAA, but to excel in the classroom and professionally while handling the busy lifestyle that the student athlete has to live. There has historically been a stigma placed on student athletes in terms of their academic abilities, educational achievements, and their capacity to effectively function in society, outside of their sport (Diersen, 2005). While the idea that athletes are only "dumb jocks" (Diersen, 2005, p.11) has been disproven by research, such as the study done by Gabrielle Longo, the student athlete lifestyle needs to be assessed to examine how to best help those in that category to be academically successful while balancing their academic career with their athletic career.

Since the student athlete is intertwined in numerous areas of the university setting, their academic achievements have several implications for more people and departments than it would appear. The success of the student athlete is a clear representation of the school to the public and is easily criticized by the masses (Poorman, 2012). If the student athlete population of an institution is not graduating at appropriate rates, or several players are academically failing out, this reflects poorly on the administration. Likewise, "universities must be intentional about the kind and amount of attention student-athletes receive" (Tucker, Morgan, Oliver, Kirk, Moore, Irving, Sizemore, Turner, and Emanuel, 2016, p. 32). As coaches, part of their job as team

leaders is reflective of the academic success of their student athletes. This includes fostering their academic successes, as well as their athletic success.

Just like coaches, faculty, while often times secluded from the athletic department, also should find meaning in the need to cultivate the student athlete in more ways than just in their sport. Their job, as educators, is to educate their students, and the student athlete population is not excluded from this reality. Faculty should place huge emphasis on the need to graduate all of their students, whether they are student athletes or not.

Student athletes, while it is not always clear at the start of their undergraduate career, will not be athletes forever. The percentage of collegiate student athletes that end up going professional in their sport is extremely low. The NCAA provides data on the sports of baseball, men's basketball, women's basketball, football, men's ice hockey, and men's soccer. 9.1% of collegiate baseball players turn professional, while only 5.6% of collegiate men's ice hockey players will go on to play professionally (NCAA, 2017). The other sports analyzed, men's basketball, women's basketball, football, and men's soccer, each have less than a 2% probability of going on to play professional sports (NCAA, 2017). These numbers show just how unlikely it is for collegiate athletes to continue their athletic career beyond their time in college. The NCAA even uses the slogan, "there are over 400,000 NCAA student-athletes, and most of us will go pro in something other than sports" (Gallo, 2011, para. 1). The NCAA did not provide any data on the percentage of professional athletes in the sport of gymnastics. The absence of statistics alone shows the minute numbers that are able to pursue this professional route. In 2016, there were only five active gymnasts, out of over 5 million athletes total (*Gymnastics: Number of Participants*, 2016) who had signed professional contracts. While gymnasts such as Shawn

Johnson, Mary Lou Retton, and Nastia Liukin still have endorsements stemming from their gymnastics participation, there were only five professional gymnasts competing in 2016.

The entire premise of college is to prepare young adults for the future of having a career after their education is completed. Ultimately, the academic motivations of the student athlete need to be examined to assess how to better serve this special population. The everyday life of a collegiate athlete is different, depending on the time of year, but mentally and physically demanding nonetheless. Determining the academic motivations and attitudes will uncover the necessary knowledge that can be used to assess specific programming that can be implemented by athletic administration staff across the country to better serve their student athletes representing their university.

In season and out of season athletic time demands are different in nature. While preseason training will imply an increase in the number of workouts per day or week, being in season requires the student athletes to be away from campus while traveling each weekend for away competitions and games. When considering all that student athletes have on their plate each day, "these factors detract from the realistic likelihood of academic success, which in turn affects their academic motivation to succeed" (Simons, Van Rheenen, & Covington, 1999, p. 151). Finding realistic time to dedicate to academics is a big problem among college athletes, since the pressure of their sport, and keeping their athletic aid, for some, takes priority. While most athletes are competitive and can use this natural characteristic to translate into the classroom, this is not a general consensus for all athletes. For some, "triggering the student-athlete identity on academic performance found that for some students it can be difficult to reconcile their athletic and student roles, causing deflated academic performance" (Provencio, 2016, p. 12).

The NCAA and their respective institutions perpetually exploit their student athletes (Grasgreen, 2011). A Drexel University professor, Ellen Staurowsky, was asked to weigh in on this exploitation and said that the rules of the NCAA "converge in a way that creates a tremendous inequality in terms of the athletes themselves" (Grasgreen, 2011, para. 16). The ultimate goal of college is to be a student and to gain a degree after four or five years. These individuals are supposed to be a student first and athlete second, yet the dynamics of college athletics do not prove to support that reality. As a collegiate student athlete, the twenty-hour per week rule is rarely followed (Saffici and Pellegrino, 1998), and these student athletes are overworked in their sport (Saffici and Pellegrino, 1998) leaving little time to devote to anything else. According to the NCAA GOALS report (2016), there was a two-hour increase in the amount of hours dedicated to sport related activities per week from 2010 to 2015. Student athletes reported that they actually spent 32 hours per week on athletics during the 2010 year and this number increased to 34 hours per week on athletically related activities during the 2015 year (NCAA GOALS, 2016). Their academic career can suffer "due to the athletic department's attitudes of having to 'win at all costs'" (Saffici and Pellegrino, 1998, p. 4). The athletic department places the revenue that athletics generates over the academic performance of their athletes.

Research needs to be done to see what factors academically motivate student athletes, and be able to apply necessary changes to help facilitate this motivation throughout the school year. Since the time demands and concerns could potentially be different based on in season and out of season, these changes will need to be catered to the specific season, off season or competitive season, that the student athlete is participating in, as well as catered to the sport specific demands that the student athlete may face.

It is important to note that academic success also encompasses more than just the student athlete's grade point average. Areas of personal development and life skill enhancement are integral components of the proficiencies that an undergraduate should be able to master as a result of their education (Gayles, 2009). While this study will focus on academic motivations, it is important to consider the broader definition of academia and learning when attempting to gauge if student athletes are being enriched through sport participation. Increased literature review and attention in this area could give insight as to the strength of existing life skills programming, and shed light on where the focus needs to be to better serve student athletes moving forward.

Motivation comes in several forms, and individuals absorb this motivation in different ways. This study will answer the ways in which sport contributes to academic success. There is already evidence that supports that "participation in intercollegiate athletics has been found to increase motivation to complete a college degree" (Gayles, 2009, p. 37). Now, the ways in which being immersed in the structured, high-pressure environment of a competitive season help to translate those focus skills into the classroom will be examined, and the impact which traveling on the weekend has on the academic stress placed on the student athlete each week during their competitive season.

The purpose of this study is to uncover what the academic motivations are among the student athlete population. More specifically, to uncover during which academic semester the student athletes have a higher level of academic motivation in terms of if they are currently in season or out of season athletically. Based on this information, suggestions for administrators will be given to help them answer the concerns of the student athlete population. To assist with this research, four major research questions will be posed.

The following are the research questions that guided this study:

1. Do academic motivations change when student athletes are in season compared to out of season? What factors impact their [the student athlete's] ability to be academically motivated?
2. If factors can be identified, why do they impact the student athlete in the way that they do?
3. How do the motivations differ in season and out of season?
4. What can administration, coaches, and faculty do to help the student athlete to be motivated?

Review of Literature

NCAA Requirements

The National Collegiate Athletic Association breaks down their eligibility standards and benchmarks into three separate categories. The two most prevalent categories are initial eligibility and continuing eligibility, with transfer eligibility being used on a case-by-case basis for transfer students. Initial eligibility is relevant to and applies to high school students looking to participate in intercollegiate athletics during their college years (NCAA, 2017). Knowledge early on that a student wishes to play sports collegiately is beneficial due to the fact that each year of high school requires certain benchmarks to be met or completed for the NCAA eligibility center, along with taking the proper core courses that the NCAA requires (NCAA, 2017).

For initial eligibility, by the tenth grade, students must be registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center, which is an online center that deems incoming college freshman academically eligible to play their sport in college from the start (NCAA, 2017). By the end of a student's eleventh grade year, they must submit their ACT or SAT scores and their official transcript to the

eligibility center (NCAA, 2017). After graduation, the prospective student should have completed all core courses, sent all standardized test scores, and sent a final official high school transcript to the Eligibility Center (NCAA, 2017). Successful completion of this series of tasks, and the meeting of all required grade benchmarks, would make the student a final qualifier to compete in the NCAA.

Continuing eligibility is the most crucial piece of the eligibility puzzle. Once admitted to the institution, the student athletes must maintain certain academic standards to stay eligible for athletic competition, such as Grade Point Average benchmarks, full time student status, be making progress towards a degree program, pass a minimum of six degree hours each term, and other nuanced NCAA benchmarks. The student must always be enrolled in enough credit hours per term that satisfy the full time student requirement, which is generally around twelve credit hours. This number will differ based on the institution. There is also one exception to this rule. If the student athlete is in their last semester, and plan to graduate, they do not need to be enrolled as a full time student. Percentage towards their degree needs to be met as well. By the end of the second year, student athletes need to have completed a minimum of forty percent of their degree program. By the end of the third year, they need to be at sixty percent of their degree program, and reach eighty percent at the end of the fourth year (NCAA, 2017). The grade point average benchmarks differ based on the year that the student athlete is in in their academic career. As a freshman, the student must earn a minimum of a 1.8 GPA (NCAA, 2017). After the student's second year, they must earn a minimum of a 1.9 GPA, and every year after that, they must maintain a 2.0 GPA (NCAA, 2017).

Along with GPA benchmarks, the current student athletes need to pass six degree hours per semester. All first year students must pass the 18-hour rule, which means that the student

must pass 18 credit hours between the fall and spring terms. First year students must also meet the 24-hour rule, which requires them to pass 24 credit hours between the summer, fall, and spring semesters. Some sports, like football, have even more strict standards that require those student athletes to pass 9 degree hours in the fall semester, in season, for the student to be eligible for competition in the first four games of the next competition season. If this 9-hour rule is not met, the football student has the opportunity to remedy this by passing a total of 27 hours between the fall, spring, and summer semesters.

History of the MAC

The Mid-American Conference started out with only a five schools in 1946. These schools were Butler University, University of Cincinnati, Marshall University, Wayne University, and Western Reserve University. With these five schools, the league made its rise in Columbus, Ohio. It now is home to twelve universities in the NCAA. While the conference started out small, today, the MAC sponsors twenty-three total sports under their conference title. Further, the MAC is one of only ten conferences that are a member of the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). Football, men's basketball, baseball, men's cross country, men's soccer, men's swimming and diving, men's indoor track and field, men's outdoor track and field, wrestling, men's golf, men's tennis, women's basketball, softball, women's volleyball, women's cross country, field hockey, women's golf, women's soccer, women's swimming and diving, women's gymnastics, women's indoor track and field, women's outdoor track and field, and women's tennis are the sports that operate and compete under the Mid-American Conference.

Aside from athletics, the MAC takes pride in their efforts towards creating a better sport culture. They have a strong standpoint on inclusion and acceptance for all individuals, which is clear through their Diversity and Inclusion Statement as follows,

> As a core value, the Mid-American Conference believes in and is committed to diversity, inclusion and gender equity among its student-athletes, coaches, staff and administrators. We seek to establish and maintain an inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds. Diversity and inclusion improve the learning environment for all student-athletes and enhance excellence within the Conference. (Mid-American Conference, 2018, para. 3)

The MAC specifically promotes and encourages the diverse backgrounds of all, "ages, races, sexes, classes, national origins, creeds, educational backgrounds, disabilities, gender expressions, gender identities, geographical locations, incomes, marital statuses, parental statuses, sexual orientations and work experiences" (Mid-American Conference, 2018, para. 4). The conference is committed to making strides towards inclusion through their actions and the creation of programs, "education and outreach which sustains foundations of a diverse and inclusive culture across dimensions of diversity" (Mid-American Conference, 2018, para. 4).

One specific initiative that the conference has started is the MAC Diversity & Inclusion Program. This initiative was created in 2016 and has made an immediate impact. Overall, the point of the program was to assist in the development of "a pool of diverse candidates for collegiate job opportunities, provide educational opportunities for a diverse group" (Mid-American Conference, 2018, para. 1) of MAC members. The diversity program offers internships, mentoring, and awards (Mid-American Conference, 2018) for deserving MAC members.

In addition to promoting diversity and inclusion as a conference, another value that the MAC is embodying is the importance of mental health awareness. The conference has a MAC

Mental Health Summit, in which representatives from each MAC school come together to discuss topics such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders among NCAA athletes, and how to combat those mental health issues (Mid-American Conference, 2018). The MAC promotes the importance of having mental health enter the conversation at the collegiate level through their MAC Mental Health week in February each year. The Mid-American Conference stretches their commitments far beyond the sport world of winning championships, but also to creating a culture of acceptance and solidarity through their many initiatives.

Academic Progress Rate (APR)

The foundation of a college experience should be rooted in the academic progression towards earning a degree. Through the commercialization and high emphasis placed on the athletic success of college athletes, this goal ends up being blurred and the student athlete can become misguided. At the turn of the century, the NCAA put plans into motion to ensure that the goal of helping student athletes to earn their college degree was being held to a standard that coaches cared about (*Academic Progress Rate Explained*, 2016). The Academic Progress Rate (APR) was introduced, and after a few years, became a widely recognized term in all of college athletics. APR assesses athletic departments and specific teams based on the academic eligibility of their student athletes and the retention of their student athletes (*Academic Progress Rate Explained*, 2016). There is a point system that the NCAA uses to track such progress that an institution and/or program is making, with corrective repercussions if the program fails to meet the overarching benchmarks of what the NCAA has deemed an acceptable APR score. This repercussion piece of the APR rule assists in keeping the NCAA coaches and administrators accountable for the academic performances of their student athletes.

To calculate an Academic Progress Rate score, several things are taken into account. Every student on athletic aid gets one point for remaining at the school (retention) and one point for being academically eligible (*Academic Progress Rate Explained*, 2016). Once every student athlete has been awarded the appropriate amount of points for that term, the institution then adds up the total points in terms of an entire athletic department number, and individual team numbers (*Academic Progress Rate Explained*, 2016). To get the final APR score, the numbers are "divided by points possible and then multiplied by 1,000 to equal the team's Academic Progress Rate" (*Academic Progress Rate Explained*, 2016, para. 3). A passing APR score starts at 930 points. Any team that scores below this will receive athletic penalties for failing to place proper emphasis on the academic eligibility, graduation rates and retention rates of their student athletes. The NCAA adding in an athletically related punishment garners the importance of coaches placing some emphasis on academics within their program. In an attempt to improve the academic component of the college experience, the NCAA chose to incentivize this reporting tool using the one thing that all athletic departments care deeply about; their athletic eligibility for bowl games and championship competition participation.

The repercussions for a team not meeting the Academic Progress Rate standards range depending on the situation of the institution. Three distinct levels of infraction can be seen. If an athletic program finds themselves at a level one infraction, they will be limited "to 16 hours of practice per week over five days (as opposed to 20 over six days), with the lost four hours to be replaced with academic activities" (*Academic Progress Rate Explained*, 2016, p. 6). This takes the student athletes away from their sport and into their studies for a significant block of their original practice time. For a level two APR infraction, the program will receive level one penalties, along with additional regular season restrictions on athletic competition (*Academic*

Progress Rate Explained, 2016). The third level of an APR infraction is the most detrimental to a program, and could hinder the program athletically in an attempt to get them back on track academically. According to the NCAA's *Academic Progress Rate Explained* (2016), programs that fall under this third umbrella could face anywhere from

> coaching suspensions, financial aid reductions and restricted NCAA membership. The Division I Committee on Academics, which oversees Division I's academic infrastructure, has the discretion to apply appropriate penalties once teams have fallen below the benchmark for three consecutive years. (para. 7)

Since the repercussions being so high at times, the academic staff members of an institution have to face the pressure of making sure the athletes are put in the best position to meet the standards. This can place them in a tough spot, and could sometimes negatively impact the student athlete after their time in athletics. Joseph P. Luckey, director of athletic academic services at the University of Memphis, has attested to the fact that the APR legislation has caused academic staff working with athletes to pigeon hole athletes into academic majors that they do not necessarily enjoy, but will help them to meet eligibility requirements to continue to play their sport and avoid losing an APR point for their program (Grasgreen, 2012). In terms of how academic advisors adapt to the growing significance placed on meeting the APR, he states that "the focus is more about those things [APR points] than worrying about, is this kid growing academically, is this kid growing as an individual, is this student ready for life after college" (Grasgreen, 2012, pp. 5)? The introduction of tracking the graduation progression of student athletes during their entire college career has impacted more than just the student athletes and their caching staff. It is changing a small portion of the culture of NCAA athletics.

With the negative implications for both the specific sport program and for the institution's athletics department for not meeting the Academic Progress Rate benchmarks, there are also positives to be highlighted. The NCAA makes a point to publically recognize those institutions and programs that have displayed great progress and achievements in the classroom in terms of the APR rates. Academic achievement awards are handed out to those teams who fall within the top ten percent each year (*Academic Progress Rate Explained*, 2016). The introduction of the APR has added an extra layer as to why college coaches need to place more emphasis on the academic status of their student athletes. Whether they feel that they should be invested in their education for the sake of the student athlete or to protect their own reputation as a coach and avoid competition bans due to academics, the Academic Progress Rate has, at minimum, kept academics at the forefront of the minds of the coaches and administration in NCAA member institutions.

Since the integration of the Academic Progress Rate, NCAA member institutions have seen a rise in graduate rates of student athletes. In an NCAA study called "Crossing the finish line: Graduation rates on the rise" graduation rates of student athletes from 2016 were assessed. This chart details the rise from a seventy four percent graduation rate, to an eighty four percent graduation rate in 2016 (Crossing the finish line: Graduation rates on the rise, 2016). While it is not clear that the APR implementation is a direct correlation to the increase in graduation rates of student athlete, it is related. An overall shift into an academic focus intertwined with an athletic focus has led to a more holistic organizational system that the NCAA has to offer to the student athletes.

Defining the Athletic "Season"

Once deemed academically eligible, the NCAA student athlete experiences their sport from two major perspectives - in season competition and out of season training. To delve into the impact that the two season differences have on the academic attitudes of student athletes, it is important to first define and uncover the differences. Each season offers advantages and disadvantages to the student athlete due to the nature of the time commitments. Based on NCAA rule 17.1.7.2 (a) from the NCAA LSDBi:

> Outside the playing season, from the institution's first day of classes of the academic year or September 15, whichever occurs earlier, to one week prior to the beginning of the institution's final examination period at the conclusion of the academic year, only a student-athlete's participation in required weight training, conditioning and skill-related instruction shall be permitted. A student-athlete's participation in such activities per Bylaw 17.02.1 shall be limited to a maximum of eight hours per week with not more than two hours per week spent on skill-related workouts. All countable related activities outside the playing season are prohibited one week prior to the beginning of the final examination period for the applicable academic term through the conclusion of each student-athlete's final exams. (2017, para. 1)

Preseason practice falls under a different category of out of season training. Once a student athlete has entered preseason training period, "an institution is not required to provide student-athletes with one day off per week during preseason practice that occurs prior to the first day of classes, or the first scheduled contest, whichever is earlier" (See NCAA bylaw 17.1.7.4.3, para. 1). These days off of training and competition are days that the student athlete can use to either get caught up on schoolwork, or to get ahead of their schoolwork to decrease stresses about

academics moving forwards. When these day offs are limited, the student athlete loses this opportunity to dedicate a day to their education.

In season training is defined differently for each sport. Depending on when the student athlete's sport season falls, their athletic season may overlap two semesters, trimesters, or quarters of their academic career. The in season time period is defined as follows. Based on NCAA rule 17.1.1:

> The playing (practice and competition) season for a particular sport is the period of time between the date of an institution's first officially recognized practice session and the date of the institution's last practice session or date of competition, whichever occurs later. An institution is permitted to conduct officially recognized practice and competition each academic year only during the playing season as regulated for each sport in accordance with the provisions of this bylaw. The institution must conduct the same playing season for varsity and subvarsity teams in the same sport. (2017, para. 1)

The student athlete is subject to traveling, late night competitions, and decreased amounts of free time and freedom to do what they wish. The coaches will create itineraries for several of the weekends that they are on the road, often times including time to work on their schoolwork. With this increased in structure, the student athlete is micromanaged and given little leeway to get off track in their athletics and academics. This is not to take away from the potential for the student athlete to become overwhelmed with the expectations, making them incapable of meeting the strict expectations set for them.

Although their time can be micromanaged by coaches during season, there are limitations placed on their amount of hours the student athletes can participate in activities related to their membership on an athletic team. NCAA bylaw 17.1.7.1 states that during an athletic season, "a

student-athlete's participation in countable athletically related activities (see Bylaw 17.02.1) shall be limited to a maximum of four hours per day and 20 hours per week" (NCAA, 2017, para. 42). The NCAA has laws in place to limit the amount of time the coaching staff can take from the student, but this is often taken advantage of through legislative loopholes and mandatory "volunteering." Realistically speaking, these student athletes are dedicating around "30-40 hours per week on their sport, which is mentally and physically exhausting, allowing them little time or energy to put toward their studies" (Saffici and Pellegrino, 1998, p. 3). At numerous universities and among countless different sports, while some activities may be considered to "be voluntary, but players' performance and completion of these conditioning drills determine the extent of their playing time and participation on the team" (Hekmat, 2002, p. 615).

A year round NCAA academic rule that applies to all sports can be applied to missed class time. According to NCAA bylaw 17.1.6.6, there should never be an instance where a student athlete is missing class time due to athletics practices. Furthermore, NCAA bylaw NCAA 17.1.6.6 states that "no class time shall be missed at any time (e.g., regular academic term, mini term, summer term) for practice activities except when a team is traveling to an away-from-home contest and the practice is in conjunction with the contest" (NCAA, 2017, p. 1). While this is difficult to track at times, the four hour per day maximum number of training hours helps to ensure that the student athlete is only required to be committing time to their sport during their four-hour practice block and getting to class on time. Instances where this may be difficult to accommodate from the coaching side would be if the student athlete has to take a class which conflicts with the previously determined practice block. This would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Gymnastics

Female sports are often trivialized in the media (Bernstein and Galily, 2008). The sport of artistic gymnastics is no different. In terms of larger society, many are only truly exposed to the sport every four years when the Olympic Games televises the five gymnasts who make the team. The misconceptions of how the sport of gymnastics works are overwhelming. Most gymnasts will choose to go the NCAA gymnastics route, due to the decreased time demands, financial burden, and overall difficulty associated with NCAA gymnastics, as opposed to shooting for making an Olympic team. Currently, there are 62 schools that offer Division I gymnastics programs (Women's Div I & II Team Sites). The structure of elite gymnastics (Olympic track) and NCAA gymnastics is very different. This research will focus solely on NCAA gymnastics.

NCAA women's gymnastics has four events, which are, the vault, the uneven bars, the balance beam, and the floor exercise. A collegiate gymnast can compete on anywhere from one to four events. It is also important to note that only six gymnasts compete in a lineup, per event, having five of those scores count towards the team total. As a result, not every member of the team will get a place in the lineup. The scoring for this sport is out of a 10.0 system. Every gymnast starts from a 9.5, then has to gain .5 tenths in "bonus" points to get them to the 10.0 start value. This can be done through combinations and/or attempting higher "D" or "E" level skills, with the easier skills being deemed "A", "B", and "C" level. During competition, the judges then deduct tenths of a point from the 10.0 starting point based on the completion of their routine. Bent legs, flexed feet, handstands that are not at exactly 180 degrees vertical, balance checks, stepping out of bounds on floor, poor rhythm, not reaching 180 degree split leaps and jumps are all examples of reasons the judges can and will take off points from a gymnasts score. This entire sport is based off of chasing perfection, in the form of the Perfect 10.0.

Generally speaking, gymnasts tend to be perfectionists (Symes, 2010). It has been stated that the premise of the sport is to be as perfect as possible. There are two aspects of gymnastics that lead to the perfectionist nature that the athletes end up assuming. First, as stated above, having to chase perfection their entire time in their sport, day in and day out leads to the perfectionism. Two dimensions of perfectionism that gymnasts experience are perfectionistic striving and perfectionistic concern. The first way gymnasts experience perfectionism is through "perfectionistic striving, which captures aspects or facets related to striving for perfection or establishing high standards of performance and excellence" (Antonio Pineda-Espejel, Alarcón, Trejo, Chávez, & Arce, 2016, p. 272). This strong desire to be perfect and meet high standards does not stop just within their sport. This attitude carried over into other parts of their lives. As student athletes, gymnasts can use this demeanor to tackle their schoolwork and academics with high standards set forth by themselves. On the flipside, perfectionistic concern deals with "a concern for errors, doubts on the execution of tasks, and negative reactions towards imperfection" (Antonio Pineda-Espejel, et.al., 2016, p. 272). The fear of making mistakes and not reaching perfection can be motivation enough to slack off in any area of life.

Gymnastics is a fairly dangerous sport. Each skill performed has the potential to seriously injure the athlete, especially if the technique is not exactly how it needs to be. To put it into perspective, gymnastics is a game of quarter seconds, centimeters, quarter and tenths of a point. In order to ensure their safety, gymnasts must strive for perfect takeoffs, perfect release points, and perfect hand and feet placement. Perfection can, quite literally, be a matter of life or death for these athletes. All of these factors lead to the general theme of gymnasts being more likely to possess a perfectionist attitude that infiltrates every aspect of their lives.

Academically speaking, gymnasts in the NCAA perform very well in the classroom year after year. The graduation success rate tracks "degree completion for student-athletes, even those who transfer" (NCAA, 2017, p.1). Of the MAC schools that sponsor gymnastics, Bowling Green State University, Central Michigan University, Eastern Michigan University, Kent State University, Northern Illinois University, and Western Michigan University all had perfect GSR scores of 100 during the 2016-2017 academic year (NCAA, 2017). This means that the MAC is successfully assisting its gymnastics student athletes to graduation each year. In the same academic year, 70 of the NCAA women's gymnastics teams recorded team GPAs of a 3.0 or higher, and twenty-four of those team had over a 3.5 team GPA (NCAA Academic Rankings, 2018). The academic success of this sport is undeniable, and made evident through the consistent and continuous academic awards and achievements recorded each year.

NCAA Academic Awards

Along with athletic awards at the institution, conference and NCAA level, there are several academically related awards that are handed out each year. Member institutions have student athlete academic award nights where they honor and recognize the high achieving student athletes. The award for highest team GPA is always granted. The NCAA and conferences have All America and All Conference academic teams each year based on academic year in school and GPA. The NCAA awards the "Elite 90" award each year, which honors the individual who truly embodies what it means to be a student athlete (*Elite 90*, 2017). To be eligible for this award, the student athlete must have reached the highest level of competition, usually the NCAA national championship, and have the highest cumulative GPA (*Elite 90*, 2017).

These honors can serve as motivating factors for student athletes to maintain academic drive and performance when the pressure of the student athlete lifestyle appears to be too much

to handle. Athletes are competitive and want to earn the title of being an honor student or scholar athlete and be recognized at the banquet. For coaches, these honors can also serve as a reason to push their student athletes in their academics. When coaches have athletes who excel in the classroom, it makes them look better. This perceived 'good look' comes from the idea that the coach is cultivating an athletic program that promotes excellences in their sport and in other areas of the student athlete's lives.

The Mid-American Conference offers several academic honors to their student athletes each year. The FAR award, or the Faculty Athletics Representative Award, is given to the team in the MAC that has the highest GPA by gender. The women's FAR award has been won by Bowling Green State University six times since the start of the award in 2008, and Central Michigan has won this award three times (MAC FAR Awards, 2018). The MAC also releases an All-Mac team for academics each year. For gymnastics, to earn this honor the athlete must compete in 50% of their competition season and have a GPA of 3.2 or higher (2017 All-MAC Team, 2017). In the 2016-2017 academic year, 57 gymnasts were awarded this honor (2017 All-MAC Team, 2017). The success that gymnastics team achieve in the classroom is reached by few other sports.

General Student Athlete Attitudes

Since the student athlete population is segregated from the rest of the student body, for scheduling and time demand reasons, they end up feeling out of place in the academic setting. The reality is that, according to Comeaux,

> whether by choice or as the result of influence from the athletic structure, student-athletes also live, eat, study, and socialize together, and are often tracked into the same majors,

> which leads, in part, to academic and social isolation from the rest of the campus community. (2011, p. 75-76)

Several of these athletes enter college academically underprepared, and are thrown into a college level classroom that they feel uncomfortable in. McEwen (2010) lead a research study to assess the academic preparedness of first year student athletes. Eleven freshman female student-athletes were interviewed at the beginning and then the middle of the season. He found that although all successfully adapted to their new social and athletic lives, only two of eleven (18.2%) were able to transition academically as well. Consistent with the idea that student athletes start their college careers academically underprepared, McEwen found that the academic transition to their new setting takes longer than other aspects of their lives.

As first year college students, they "hold more responsibilities than the non-athletic participating student, and it may be more difficult for them to transition through changes in athletic participation demands on top of the new social and academic changes" (Saffici and Pellegrino, 1998, p. 3). Their status as a star athlete has a high value when their application is lacking in the academic standards needed to be admitted to the university. While being thrown into this atmosphere, a student athlete's social identity is praised in the athletic sphere, but is degraded in the classroom setting (Simons et al, 2007). Being in this environment leads athletes to have poor attitudes about school, but positive attitudes about their athletic pursuits. While the premise of college is to earn a degree, there are student athletes that believe that they are only enrolled in college to play their sport and use it as a springboard to other professional leagues after college.

In a world where sport has been so highly commercialized, even at the college level, the idea of becoming a professional athlete is more and more glamorous. With a burning desire to

play professionally, several student athletes attend college as a way to get to the next level in their athletic careers. These particular student athletes possess a "distorted idea of what it should mean to be a student-athlete, and believe it to be more like a required minor league that allows them to get enough exposure to someday make it to the major leagues" (Saffici and Pellegrino, 1998, p. 2). The focus on the academic side of the college experience suffers when the only purpose for being at the institution is to participate in athletics, and no emphasis is placed on their academic career by the student athlete.

Perceptions of Student Athletes

Collegiate athletes are some of the most highly visible students on their respective campuses and "as a consequence, the college community, fueled by heavy media attention to student-athletes' successes and failures, have formed prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes toward college student-athletes with respect in part to their intellectual abilities" (Comeaux, 2011, p. 76). Their images can be seen on billboards, sides of buildings, mass emails, social media accounts, and on television. Based on the notion that "one-third of the athletes reported negative perceptions from faculty and nearly 60% reported similar negative perceptions from other students" (Parsons, 2013, p. 433), the stereotypes of student athletes are already well known, and there are cases when the faculty and staff at universities feed into these stereotypes.

In the classroom setting, "the most common types of comments heard by athletes ranged from 'expecting special treatment' to 'only interested in sports' to 'not academically qualified'" (Simons et al, 2007, p. 260). While the professors may not act on their prejudice, and may not actually grade the student athlete's academic work any differently than their peer's work, this does not mean that it does not have a significant impact on how they view education and their abilities in the classroom, in that "negative stereotypes are experienced by all student-athletes

regardless of their race, sport, or gender. These attitudes toward student-athletes can have profound effects on students' self-concept" (Comeaux, 2011, p. 77). Since some student athletes do not have much experience in the classroom setting, one negative interaction can deter them from communicating with their professors or peers with the fear of seeming not competent or not excelling, something that is negatively viewed in the athletic setting that they are used to.

Being both a student and an athlete, while challenging and time consuming, has several positive transferable outcomes for the student athlete. Being a college athlete "was positively associated with motivation to succeed academically, persistence, satisfaction with college, and degree completion" (Comeaux, 2011, p. 76). As mentioned above, the student athlete is faced with severe time demands, yet are expected to engage in the community. Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah (2006) found that student-athletes competing at the Division I level showed no signs of differing from the regular student body when partaking in educational practices, such as interacting with professors and participating in classroom discussions. Some student athletes are perfectionists and have people pleaser attitudes (Antonio Pineda-Espejel, et.al., 2016), therefore, will find a way to be well rounded, even when the general population does not believe that they have interests beyond their athletic pursuits.

Motivations

The will to complete certain tasks always stems from somewhere. This is often referred to as motivation. By definition, motivation is the ability to move someone to do something even when the task becomes difficult or challenging (Jang, Conradi, Mckenna, and Jones, 2015). There are several sources of motivation that individuals can pull from to help them accomplish a goal or continue to keep working hard towards an achievement. Sources of motivation can be both intrinsic and extrinsic, meaning that there is not always just one driving force that

contributes to motivation. This can stem from both tangible and intangible sources and incentives, and have a variety of degrees to which the factor motivates the individual to do something.

Internal factors contribute to the motivation that an individual has to complete certain tasks. When individuals participate in activities or chose to do things without the enticement of external, tangible rewards, they are participating for intrinsic reasons (Pedersen, 2002). Some intrinsic motivations for participation include feelings of self-worth, enjoyment, excitement, fulfillment, self-esteem, and competence (Davies, Nambiar, Hemphill, Devietti, Massengale, and McCredie, 2015). A strong support system also contributes to how intrinsically motivated an individual is (Davies, et. al., 2015). These intangible rewards create a motivational factor that leads to reasons why individuals participate or not.

There is a special dichotomy that exists between positive and negative feedback in terms of assessing internal motivation. In relation to sport, this implies that the coaching style can dictate the amount of intrinsic motivation that a certain individual will possess. In this instance, a coach with a more positive philosophy increases intrinsic motivation, while one who prefers to provide harsh feedback will decrease that intrinsic drive to complete a task.

When considering motivation, especially internal motivation, several other factors need to be considered to get the full picture. According to Jang, et, al (2015), attitude, interest, values, self-efficacy, self-concept, and goals are six other areas that should be studied. These six items build off of each other to create what we know as motivation, or the driving force to do something. A person's attitude about a particular task will determine how they feel about completing it (Jang, et, al., 2015). Specifically, it refers to "A set of acquired feelings about reading that consistently predispose an individual to engage in or avoid reading" (Jang, et. al.,

2015, p. 240). When a person's attitude is more positive, the motivation comes easier. An individual's attitude about something may be based off of how interested they are in the topic. Higher levels of interest will lead to a higher likelihood that something gets accomplished (Jang, et, al., 2015). A value is defined as "a set of acquired feelings about [topics] that consistently predispose an individual to engage in or avoid [tasks]" (Jang, et, al., 2015, p. 240), meaning that how highly an individual values something relates to how motivated they will be.

Self-efficacy, or "an individual's judgment of his or her ability to accomplish a specific task" (Jang, et, al., 2015, p. 240), refers to how confident the individual is in a certain area. Higher levels of confidence relate to higher levels of comfortability, leading to more motivation. Likewise, self- concept is defined as "an individual's overall self-perception [of the task], including his or her sense of competence and the role ascribed to [the task] as a part of his or her personal identity" (Jang, et, al., 2015, p. 240). The individual will be more motivated if they feel a connection to the task. The goal of the individual is extremely important in that it gives the individual a reason to be motivated and a thing to work for (Jang, et, al., 2015).

External factors that serve a motivational purpose are known as extrinsic factors. This motivation can be seen as the external, tangible rewards that individuals receive as a result of participation in a certain task (Pedersen, 2002). Extrinsic motivations are considered to be a type of behavioristic approach (Pedersen, 2002) taken by others. Many behaviors seen in sport are considered to be "extrinsic reinforcements, including verbal and nonverbal reinforcements, verbal and nonverbal punishments, instructions, recognition, and feedback, are given" (Pedersen, 2002, p. 459).

Examples of these types of motivating factors include monetary rewards, job promotions, medals, or starting lineup spots. While extrinsic motivations work hand in hand with intrinsic

motivations, in the sport context, “extrinsic rewards can over justify the sport behavior of children and in the process undermine their intrinsic motivations” (Pedersen, 2002, p. 460). In the NCAA college setting, external motivating factors may include earning lineup spots, earning athletic scholarships, earning All-Conference or All American Honors. Academically, All Conference Academic team honors, Dean’s list, or graduate school acceptances may extrinsically motivate student athletes to do well and stay motivated in the classroom.

Athletic motivation has been known to consist of a combination of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivating factors (Pedersen, 2002). Their motivation actors are also unique to the sport population at times. According to Pedersen, some reasons for sport participation include “having fun, skill improvement, fitness benefits, team interaction, sportsmanship, excitement, challenge, travel, trophies, media exposure, wearing a uniform” (2002, p. 461). While not every athlete experiences motivation on the same level, the act of competing on a team is a leading factor. Based on a study done by Buning and Thompson, student athletes described “primarily being motivated to play for their current team for reasons associated with: (a) value placed on relationships with teammates, (b) excitement or enjoyment of the sport itself, and (c) to win or be the best” (2015, p. 352). These answers indicate a mixture of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that athletes experience.

Vallerand and Losier (1999) proposed that “competitive sport structures that emphasize beating an opponent or ‘winning at all cost’ typically hinder athletes’ intrinsic motivation” (p. 148). These are both examples of external motivations that exist in the sport world. Thus, these external factors can serve as a challenge particularly to the way they cultivate their intrinsic motivations (Vallerand and Losier, 1999). On the contrary, the idea of winning relating to the feeling of competence can have the adverse effect on an individual’s motivation. When an

athlete experiences external wins and losses in their sport, their intrinsic motivation can be altered. Someone who feels as though they "have done well in competition display higher levels of intrinsic motivation than losers and those who feel that they have not done well" (Vallerand and Losier, 1999, p. 148-149). Essentially, external factors can have an impact on internal motivations.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study were members of a Division I Mid-American Conference gymnastics team after the 2017 season, excluding the graduating seniors and new freshmen on each of those teams. Freshmen were excluded because they have not yet experienced life as s student athlete while they are in season. Seniors were excluded because they have since graduated from their gymnastics programs and institutions. The gymnastics student athletes from Kent State University and Western Michigan University were excluded from this study due to the fact that their email addresses were not available or accessible through their institution's online, public database. Surveys were sent out to 61 potential participants via email. There were 39 individuals who completed the survey, resulting in a participant response rate of 63.90%. Sixteen participants were from Bowling Green State University, eight participants were from Ball State University, six participants were from Northern Illinois University, five participants were from Central Michigan University, and four participants were from Eastern Michigan University.

Nearly half of participants (47.37%) fell in the 18-20 years old age range. A little more than half of the participants (52.63%) reported to fall in the 21-23 age range category. There were nine second-year students, eighteen third-year students, ten fourth-year students, and one

fifth year student that participated in the study. One participant declined to provide their year in school. First years were excluded from participating in the study entirely due to the fact they have not experienced a full NCAA athletic competition season. Therefore, the participants would not be able to accurately report on their academic motivations during that time period.

Instrumentation

To gather and collect data, a survey was used (See Appendix A). This survey was generated through the BGSU Qualtrics database and had twenty-two questions. The survey began with a series of demographic questions (age, grade level, institution, academic major, GPA). These questions were added to gauge the background of each participant and what their academic level was at the time of survey competition. The next set of questions asked the participant to rate, on a scale of 1-5, their views on academics in certain settings. The purpose behind adding these rating-type questions was to help put the participant in different mindsets to assess how their motivations differ within the different settings. The survey ended with open response questions. These questions allowed participants to add any academic motivations not previously listed under the multiple choice section, expand on what they think they could benefit from the increase motivation and academic success, and assess which season they felt they performed better academically. The data was analyzed based on motivations uncovered, the settings, or season, where motivation was found to be experienced at an increased rate, and 'next steps' offered for administrators will also be taken into consideration.

Data Collection

The framework of this research is qualitative data collection that assesses the academic motivations behind student athlete success in the classroom, with regard to what season they are in (i.e.: off season or in season). This information was gathered using an online survey through

BGSU Qualtrics. After the BGSU Intercollegiate Athletics Committee Research Subcommittee approved the research study (See Appendix E) and IRB was submitted and approved (See Appendix C), emails detailing what the research entails were sent out to the members of the participating Mid-American gymnastics teams in the NCAA. Based on the feedback from the emails, qualitative survey links were distributed to willing participants, after they gave content through the participant consent form that was attached to their email (See Appendix D). On February 13th, a follow-up email was sent to the potential participants, which reminded them about the research study and included the link to the survey and the consent form. Lastly, on February 23rd, the final reminder email was sent out to potential participants with the link to the survey and the consent form.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using data report exported from the Qualtrics database. Multiple choice questions were created into data charts and tables which outlined the results in numbers, percentages, and bar graphs. The open ended questions were analyzed in a few ways. For the motivating factors of academics, the answers were broken down and separated based on factor 1, factor 2, and factor 3 groupings. The researchers counted the frequency of each repeated answer, then ordered them from the highest number of repeated answers to the lowest. This was then repeated for factors 2 and 3. Data was compiled into one master list to assess the overall factors of motivation. This type of analysis was replicated for each of the open ended questions.

Results

There were four main areas of results displayed through the data collected in this study. The season in which the student athlete felt the busiest, the academic motivations, thoughts on academics, and suggestions for their school's administration were uncovered. From this first-

hand data, it was possible to draw conclusions about what the NCAA and current member institutions can do to help increase academic motivations and academic experiences for Division I gymnasts.

Major/GPA

Twenty different areas of study were reported by the 39 participants. Exercise Science recorded the most with eleven participants, with biology coming in second, recording eight participants. There were two biomedical science majors who participated in the study, one of which also majored in Spanish. The rest of the following majors had one participant respond saying that this was their major of choice: Communication Sciences and Disorders, Communications, Dietetics, Event Management & Recreation, Graphic Design, Health Education and Promotion, Hospitality and Tourism Management, Interior Design, Journalism, Marketing, Physical therapy, Psychology, Social Work, Sociology, Sport Administration, and Sport Management. One participant did not state her major.

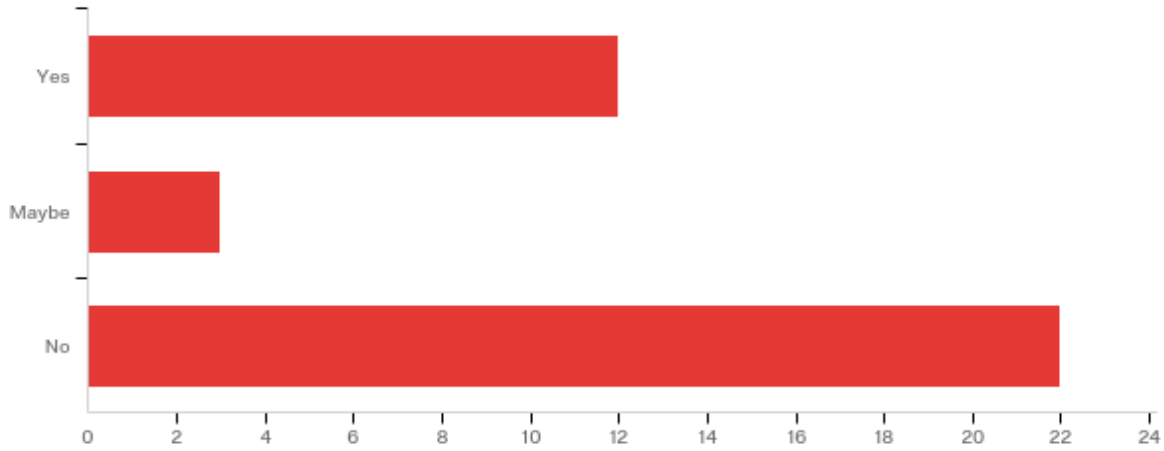
Grade point averages were asked to assess the type of student that was taking the survey. Of the 39 participants, 31.58% reported that their current cumulative grade point average was between a 3.01 and a 3.5. An overwhelming 63.16% reported that their current cumulative GPA was between a 3.51 and 4.0+. Only 5.26% of participants reported to have a GPA that fell between 2.51 and 3.0, with no one reporting to have a GPA below a 2.5.

Gymnastics Participation

A series of questions were asked to gauge the culture that the participants experience around academics in their current reality. The beginning of the survey asked if the participant felt that their participation in gymnastics made an impact on the major that they choose. As shown in figure 1, when asked if their gymnastics participation impacted their choice of major, 32.43% of

participants reported that it did, in fact, impact the decision making process on picking a college major, while 59.46% claimed that it did not. Only 8.11% reported that their gymnastics participation may have had an impact on their choice of major. This question did not allow the participant the opportunity to elaborate on if their gymnastics participation positively or negatively impacted their major decision. In regards to which season, in their competitive season or during their off season, the participants preferred to take a more challenging course load, only 5.41% reported they preferred to have more challenging classes during their competitive season. 94.59% of participants reported that they prefer to take a more challenging course load out of their competitive season while they are in their off season.

Figure 1: Did your gymnastics participation impact your choice of major?



The last question in the study asked the participants to reflect on how they felt their gymnastics participation impacted their academics. It was found that gymnastics participation has had both positive and negative impacts on the participants, but the results of this study were overwhelmingly in favor of the positive impacts. Twenty-five of the participants felt that their gymnastics participation had a positive impact on their academics for a variety of reasons. Many cited the use of time management skills, discipline learned at a young age, and prioritization skills as main reasons for their success. Several noted wanting to succeed for the sake of their

teammates and coaches, as well as representing their program in a positive light beyond their athletic role. Two participants felt that lack of time and emphasis placed on academics, and too much time spent on their sport, was negatively impacting their academic performance. Two more participants reported mixed feelings about their sport participation in that they do their best to stay on track, but that the schedule required of them as a student athlete makes them fall behind on academics at times.

Getting Ahead

When analyzing if participants prefer to get ahead on schoolwork when they are in season to when they are out of season, it was found that three people rarely like to get ahead on their schoolwork during season. Seven people reported that they sometimes prefer to get ahead on their schoolwork when they are in season. Fifteen people reported that they often get ahead, while thirteen people reported that they always prefer to get ahead on their schoolwork during season.

While running data analysis, a chi-squared goodness of fit test was performed, therefore the data for column 1 (answer "never") was excluded. According to Vincent and Weir, "the total number of frequencies (N) should be at least 20, and the value of each cell in the expected frequencies row should not be less than 1" (2012, p. 277). Based on this information, given that column 1 has a cell value of 0, the data was excluded. After performing a goodness of fit test, the calculated value as found to be 9.577. Using the values of Chi Squared distribution table with an alpha value of 0.05, the critical value was calculated to be 7.815. Since the calculated value was found to be greater than the critical value, the results are considered to be significant, and in line with the predicted values. It is significant that twenty eight student athletes preferred to get ahead on their schoolwork compared to the ten who did not make it a priority.

Academic Honors

When examining if the idea of receiving academic honors (ex: Academic All American, All Conference etc.) helps push them to be academically motivated, it was found that five gymnasts rarely feel motivated by the idea of receiving academic honors, while thirteen people reported that they are sometimes academically motivated by these honors. Eight and twelve participants reported to be often or always motivated by the idea of being able to earn academic honors respectively. While running data analysis, a chi-squared goodness of fit test was performed, therefore the data for column 1 (answer "never") was excluded based on findings from Vincent and Weir (21012). After performing a chi squared goodness of fit test, the calculated value as found to be 4.313. Using the values of chi squared distribution table with an alpha value of 0.05, the critical value was calculated to be 7.815. Since the calculated value was found to be less than the critical value, the results are not considered to be significant, meaning that there was no significant statistical difference found between academic motivations and receiving academic honors.

Time Demands

Time demands were also investigated through the assessment of how busy the participating gymnasts feel. In terms of feeling busy, gymnasts in the study reported feeling the busiest when they are in season, as opposed to when they are out of season. Refer to Figures 2 and 3 below. It was found that 71.05% of participants reported that they always feel busy during their competitive season, while 23% reported that they often feel busy during their season. When considering the off season, 23.68% of participants reported that they sometimes feel busy in the off season. 42.11 % and 31.58% of the participant pool reported that they often and always feel busy when they are out of season.

While running data analysis, a chi-squared test of independence was performed, therefore the data for column 1 (answer "never") was excluded based on findings from Vincent and Weir (21012). After performing a goodness of fit test, the calculated value as found to be 14.16. Using the values of Chi Squared distribution table with an alpha value of 0.05, the critical value was calculated to be 7.815. Since the calculated value was found to be greater than the critical value, the results are considered to be significant. In can be concluded that gymnasts in this study feel the busiest when they are in season.

Figure 2: On a scale of 1 – 5, when I am in season I feel busy. (1- never 2- rarely 3- sometimes 4- often 5- always)

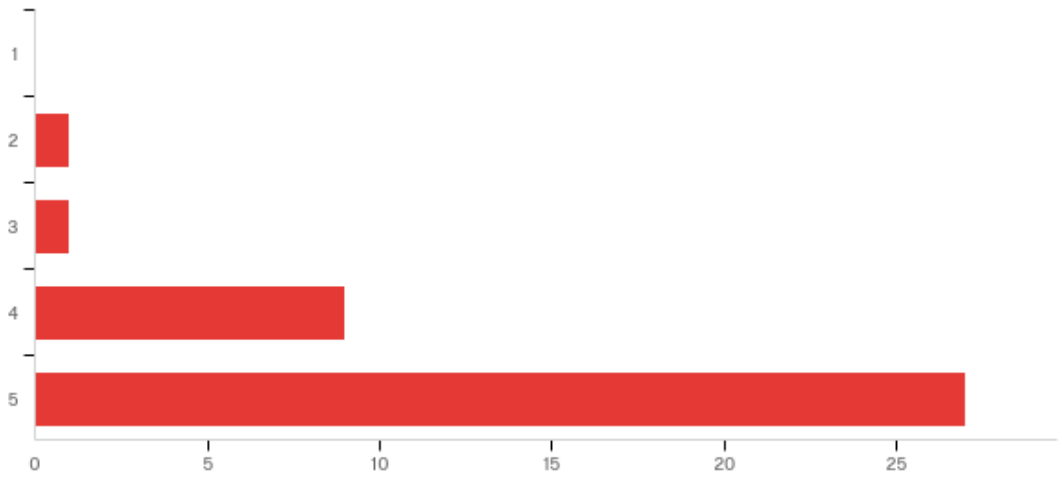
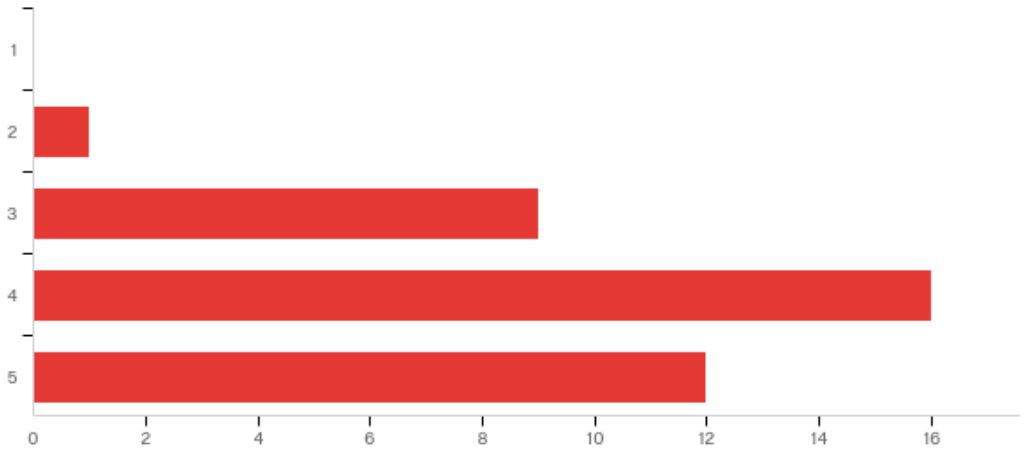
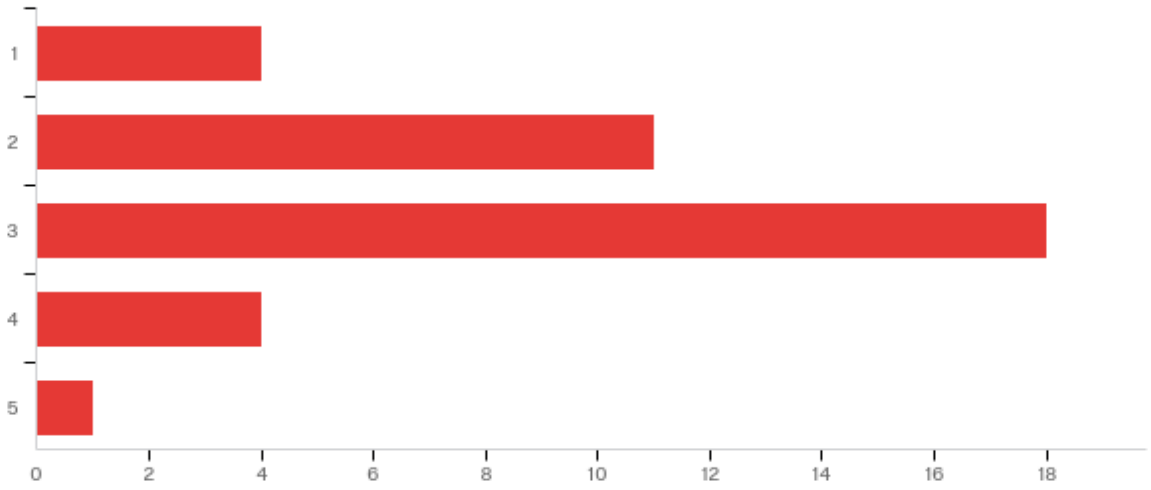


Figure 3: On a scale of 1 – 5, when I am out of season I feel busy. (1- never 2- rarely 3- sometimes 4- often 5- always)



The study asked the participants to reflect on whether having more free time in their day makes them more likely to avoid or put off their schoolwork, which can be seen through Figure 4 below. Four participants stated that this is never a mindset that they have. Eleven participants reported that they rarely avoid completing their work when they have more free time, while 47.37% of the participants, equaling eighteen individuals, admitted that sometimes having more free time makes them avoid their academics. It was seen that 10.53% on the participants in this study felt that they often avoid their schoolwork when they have more time to complete it, and one individual stated that they always put off their academics when they have more free time. While running data analysis, a chi-squared goodness of fit test was performed. After performing a goodness of fit test, the calculated value as found to be 25.34. Using the values of Chi Squared distribution table with an alpha value of 0.05, the critical value was calculated to be 9.488. Since the calculated value was found to be greater than the critical value, the results are considered to be significant. It is important to note that based on this result, having more free time does not necessarily correlate to increased academic productivity.

Figure 4: On a scale of 1 – 5, having more free time makes me avoid completing my schoolwork. (1- never 2- rarely 3- sometimes 4- often 5- always)



Participants were also allowed to select all of the answers that they identify with when they feel busy. Based on the results, a majority of the participants reported that they use to do lists and attempt to get ahead on their schoolwork when they feel that they are experiencing a busy time in their life. 51.67% of the participants stated that when they are busy, they use "to do" lists to plan out their time. Also, 43% of the participants reported that they make sure to get ahead whenever they can when they are feeling busy. Only 3 participants, or 5%, stated that when they begin to feel busy they start to fall behind on their responsibilities.

The relationship between being busy and the ability to succeed in the classroom was also addressed. Being busy was shown to impact the participants both positively and negatively. For some, being busy led to them being more focused, more intentional in how they spend their time, and more willing to work ahead on schoolwork throughout the week. These participants found that being busy decrease procrastination, increased time management, and decreased stress on the weekends. One participant reported that they were willing to work ahead during the week, so that they could focus solely on their gymnastics responsibilities on the weekends during their competitive season. On the contrary, being busy also negatively impacted some participants.

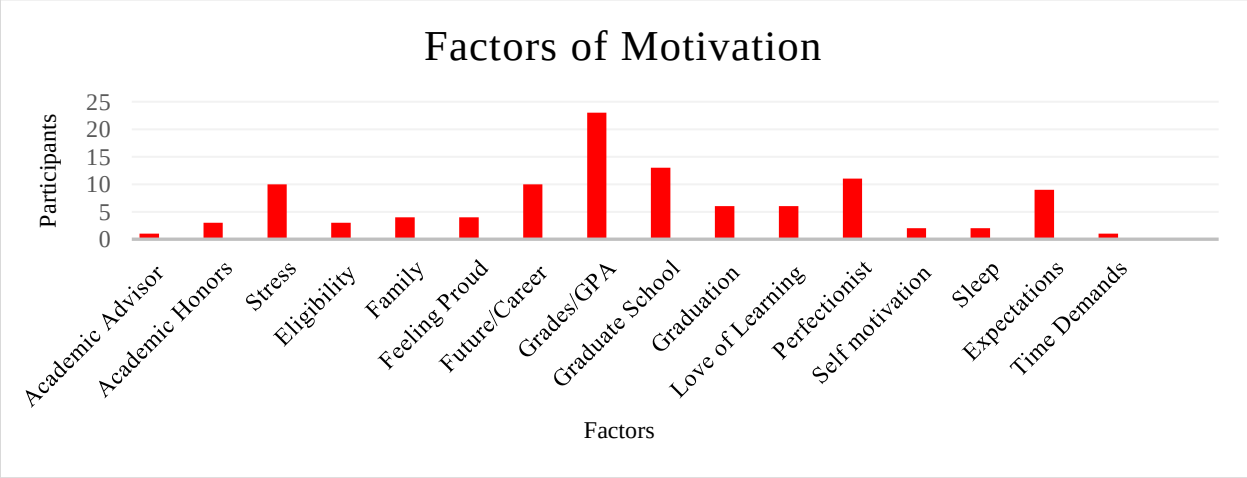
Some reported that they prioritized sleep and rest when they became busy, therefore academics became difficult to focus on. The lack of ability to complete a self-care routine was a repeated answer based on the busy schedule of the participants. It was also reported that the participants felt that they were unable to give their best effort in the classroom when they became overwhelmingly busy because athletics is seen as the priority.

Motivations

The survey then asked participants if they felt more motivated to get ahead on their academic work when they knew they had to travel to away competitions during their competitive season. It was seen that 7.89% on participants answered that they rarely as well as sometimes feel motivated to get ahead when they know they have to travel on the weekends. Fourteen participants, or 36.84%, reported that they often feel motivated to get ahead on their schoolwork while in season, and eighteen individuals, or 47.37%, reported that they always feel more motivated to get ahead on my schoolwork when they know they have to travel on the weekend to competitions. While running data analysis, a chi-squared goodness of fit test was performed, therefore, again, the data for column 1 (answer "never") was excluded based on findings from Vincent and Weir (21012). After performing a goodness of fit test, the calculated value as found to be 18.63. Using the values of Chi Squared distribution table with an alpha value of 0.05, the critical value was calculated to be 7.815. Since the calculated value was found to be greater than the critical value, there was a statistical significance found between being motivated to complete academics and having to travel on the weekends for away competitions.

As shown by Figure 5, participants were asked to list the three main factors that they feel are the driving forces behind their academic motivation. Out of a list of 108 total factors, twelve main repeated themes emerged, with four more additional factors cited throughout the data. The twelve main themes are as follows: earning a high GPA/good grades, getting into graduate or professional schools, avoiding stress/feeling busy, better future or career, academic honors, feeling proud of oneself, being a perfectionist/having high standards, sport or team expectations, love of learning, graduation, family, and being eligible or passing classes. Time management, academic advisor, sleep, and self-motivation were four other factors that were mentioned.

Figure 5: Factors of Motivation



Overall, earning a high GPA/good grades was cited the most at twenty-three times, getting into graduate or professional schools was second, being reported thirteen times, being a perfectionist/having high standards was cited eleven times, and avoiding stress/feeling busy and having the opportunity for a better future or career were both reported ten times each. Additionally, sport or team expectations was reported nine times, love of learning and graduation were each cited six times, family and feeling proud of oneself were each reported four times, and academic honors and being eligible and passing classes were cited three times each. Sleep and

self-motivation were mentioned twice each, while time management and academic advisor were factors that were mentioned one time each.

When analyzing what was reported for factor 1, maintaining a high GPA and earning acceptable grades was a very high response with fifteen participants placing importance on this. The second factor repeatedly mentioned six times in factor 1 was the idea of getting into graduate or professional school after graduation. Setting themselves up for a better future and career after their undergraduate experience was also reported four times in factor 1. Sport or team expectations were mentioned three times, while avoiding stress/feeling busy and being a perfectionist/having high standards were mentioned twice each. Being eligible/passing classes, time management, self-motivation, and sleep were each mentioned one time in factor 1. Academic honors, feeling proud of oneself, love of learning, graduation, family, and academic advisor were not mentioned in factor 1.

Factor 2 had a more even distribution of responses. At the top, maintaining a high GPA and earning acceptable grades and being a perfectionist/having high standards were both reported five times each. Getting into graduate or professional schools, setting themselves up for a better future and career, and love of learning were cited four times each in factor two, and avoiding stress/feeling busy and graduation were cited three times each. Reported two times respectively were feeling proud of oneself, family, and sport or team expectations. Self-motivation and academic honors were mentioned one time each, while being eligible or passing classes, time management, academic advisor, and sleep were not reported in factor 2.

For factor 3, avoiding stress/being busy was cited the most at five times, followed by being a perfectionist/having high standards, sport or team expectations which both recorded four responses each. Earning a high GPA/good grades, getting into graduate or professional schools,

and graduation were each mentioned three times in factor 3, while better future or career, academic honors, feeling proud of oneself, love of learning, family, and being eligible or passing classes were all mentioned twice each. Academic advisor and sleep were factors that were mentioned one time each, while time management and self-motivation were not mentioned at all in factor 3.

Coach Involvement

The survey also asked participants if they felt that their coaches placed a high emphasis on academic performance. Overwhelmingly, 58.33% of the participants reported that they felt that their coaching staff always placed a high emphasis on how they were performing academically. There were 16.67% of the individuals in the study that felt that their coaches often placed a high emphasis on academics, while 19.44% of participants felt that their coaches only sometimes placed a high emphasis on academic performance. 2.78% reported that their coaching staff rarely placed emphasis on academics, and 2.78% also said that their coaching staff never placed high emphasis on how they are performing academically. While running data analysis, a chi-squared goodness of fit test was performed. After performing a goodness of fit test, the calculated value as found to be 12.849. Using the values of Chi Squared distribution table with an alpha value of 0.05, the critical value was calculated to be 9.488. Since the calculated value was found to be greater than the critical value, the relationship between having a supportive coaching staff who place emphasis on academics and academic performance is considered to be significant.

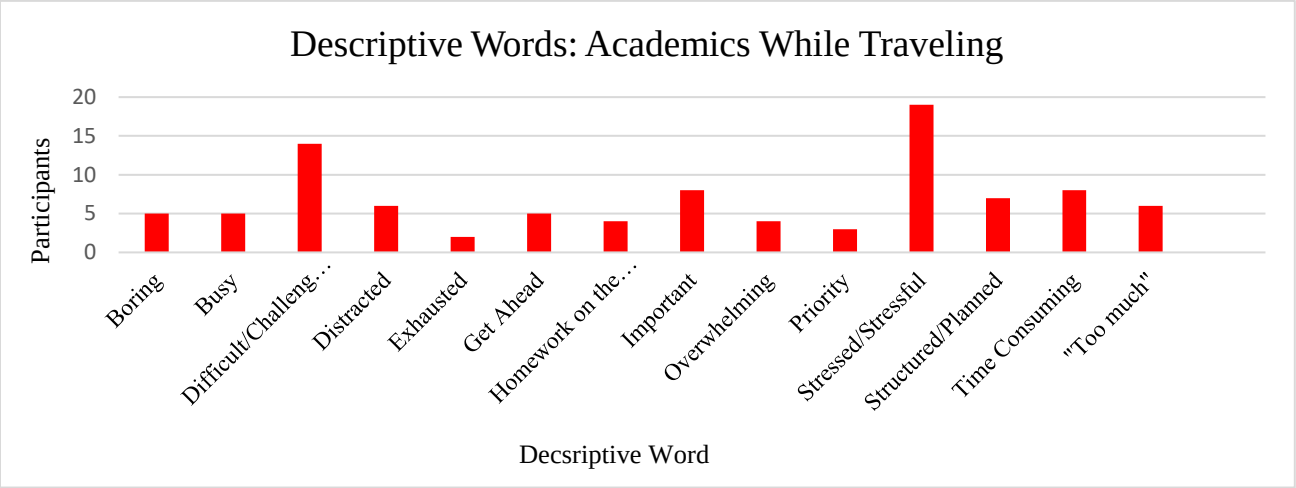
Thoughts on Academics

When participants were asked about their thoughts on academics while traveling on the road to away competitions, twelve main words or themes were mentioned only one time and they

are as follows: annoying, anxiety, dedication, pressure, emphasized, doable, try harder, stress relief, partially, little, complete, and ?. Fourteen words were repeated at least twice. The overarching words used to describe the participants' thoughts on academics when traveling on the road for away competitions were as follows: stressed/stressful, important, overwhelming, structured/planned, difficult/challenging/hard, time consuming, priority, distracted, get ahead, boring/lame, "too much", busy, homework on the road, exhausted/tiring. The distribution of descriptive words can be seen in Figure 6 below.

At the top of the list came stressed/stressful, with that being mentioned nineteen total times. Coming in second was difficult/challenging/hard with fourteen total recorded responses. Important and time consuming both recorded eight responses, while structured/planned was cited seven times. Distracted and "too much" were recorded 6 times each, and getting ahead, boring/lame, and busy were cited five times each. Overwhelming, as well as the idea that homework must be taken on the road were mentioned four times each. The word priority came up three times, and feeling exhausted or tired came up twice. It is important to note that when the four participants spoke about having to take homework on the road, one participant cited that they felt that gymnastics comes first when they are traveling for their sport. Another of those participants reported the difficulty of accessing workable Wi-Fi when trying to keep up with their studies on the road.

Figure 6: Thoughts on Academics



Suggestions for Administration

Some survey questions were directly related to how the administration can improve the academic experience of the participations. Participants were asked which programs or steps can be taken by their school's administration to improve their academic motivation. When asked about motivation, there were seven main themes that emerged in terms of what the participants felt that their administrators could do to help them improve their academic motivation. The answers that were reported were more study sessions, free tutoring and available academic advisors, less required study table hours, less emphasis placed on grades, incentives or rewards for academic achievements, motivation is intrinsic, and satisfaction with the efforts of their administration. With nine comments, the idea of having more incentives or rewards for academic success was thought to possibly increase academic motivations.

It was cited that since the student athletes come to college to be a student and get an education, they feel that their academic efforts should be highlighted and celebrated just as much as their athletic accomplishments. Five more participants stated that they felt that the administration could not do anything to help improve motivation, since motivation is an intrinsic

quality. Four participants felt that the emphasis placed on homework and getting grades hindered their motivations, and they preferred a more learning based style to help increase their academic motivations. Two participants reported that offering more study session would assist them, while two participants also stated that free tutoring services and available athletic academic advisors to help them would improve their motivations in the classroom. Two participants also reported that they felt that having less required study table hours would improve their motivation, while five participants were satisfied with the current work of their administration.

It was then asked which programs or steps can be taken by their school's administration to improve their academic performance. Six main suggestions emerged from asking the participants their opinions on academic performance. Six individuals reported that offering more tutoring, in more of a variety of subjects, would help them perform better academically. Two individuals suggested having a well-planned out class schedule during their competitive season to decrease the amount of missed class time. Likewise, it was also suggested that meeting weekly with an athletic academic advisor in a more hands on role to help plan out when to complete their work, when to study on the road, and to also help pick a better, more effective class schedule would improve academic performance.

In addition, two participants reported that better test preparation workshops to decrease test anxiety would be beneficial, as well as two more participants reporting that having more genuine coach buy-in to the importance of their academic careers would help improve classroom performance. Three participants felt that an incentive program that rewards academic performance would help to improve their own academic performance, while eight participants reported that they either did not feel that the administration could help improve their academic performance or they felt that their academic performance did not need to be improved. Other

answers given were structured study table hours, an additional day off to focus solely on academics, allowing study hall hours to count at quiet places other than the academic center, reinforcement of basic concepts, less busy work, and increasing the minimum GPA requirements to compete.

Discussion

Overall, results depended on the person, but it was found that while the level of motivation and academic commitment does not exactly vary, the stressors and threats to their motivation differs based on the season. The incredible time commitment and the reality of balancing multiple required commitments was a large contributing factor. When in season, participants found that they were ‘always busy’ in comparison to just feeling ‘often busy’ when they were out of season. This implies that this population feels very busy both while in season and in the off season, but while traveling in season they feel more overwhelmed. It is important to note that feeling less busy and having more free time did not necessarily relate to increases in motivation. It was found that having more free time lead to participants pushing their responsibilities in the classroom aside, whereas when they felt busy they reported to want to get ahead on academic tasks. They also reported to feel more motivated when they knew they had to travel on the weekend, as well as use ‘to do’ lists to help organize their responsibilities. Likewise, several also reported that their NCAA gymnastics participation actually helped their overall approach to academics. They felt that gymnastics fostered skills and values such as accountability, time management, and an inner drive to want to earn the best grades they could.

It was also sought to be uncovered why the factors of motivation impact the student athletes in the way that they do. The top rated factors were grades and GPA (accounting for more than half of the responses), graduate school, being a perfectionist, stress, future careers, and high

sport expectations. While the reason behind these factors was not directly answered, it is important to make connections to what we now know.

It is already known that gymnastics is considered to be a high achieving sport in terms of their academics. Grades and GPAs were the top rated factor contributing to their motivation levels. Since the majority of the sample was highly concerned with their future and continuing their education beyond their undergraduate career, grades will naturally be a motivating factor since that is a benchmark used to measure if they meet the criteria for certain jobs and professional programs. Being a perfectionist, as reported by eleven participants will dictate how the individual operates. Being motivated by the idea that everything has to be done to the best of their ability will have a connection to how much they are willing to get ahead on work and how much they are willing to push off to a later date. Another area that was repeatedly mentioned was the idea of being motivated by academic honors or awards, and that the implementation of more programs to recognize the academic achievements of student athletes would increase the drive to succeed. This ties into the perfectionist tendency, where when there is an award to be won and a benchmark to be met, the individual will not settle unless that goal is met.

Importance for Change

It has already been acknowledged, based on this sport being at the top of the NCAA GPA rankings year after year, that the sport of gymnastics is a very high academic achieving sport. Most of the athletes in this sport are good students, want to learn more about their field of study, and see the value of a college education and more. The fact that this population possessed academic motivation at all times of their academic career was not surprising. Since this study looked to compare the levels of motivation in each season, the result of these athletes having high level of motivation during their academic career was to be expected. It was also already

known and expected that gymnasts would have high expectations of themselves that manifest through perfectionist tendencies. These characteristics were highly evident in the results. Simons, Van Rheenen, & Covington (1999) found that there are several aspects of college life that hinder the motivation for academic success, and while the motivation for academic success was evident in this population, the resources necessary for them to achieve that success in the classroom was lacking. This population is willing to manage their time appropriately and value their education; therefore, their administration needs to match their academic needs with the proper programming.

The results of this study are important for a myriad of reasons. It uncovered the sources of both stress and academic motivation that NCAA Division I female gymnasts experience. It allowed researchers to make conclusions as to what administration can do to better serve this population, based on the feedback given by the student athletes themselves. These results displayed that even at the mid-major level, the NCAA is still not entirely serving the student athletes in its highest capacity. There are still holes to be filled in improving the academic culture on some teams. Unfortunately, the sport requirements of the NCAA do not appear to limit their number of hours spent on athletics, based on the NCAA GOALS study (2016), and this has been seen to have negative impacts on academic success (Saffici and Pellegrino, 1998), citing an even greater importance for enhanced academic support in terms of advising and tutoring services offered. That being said, there are still academic services to be enhanced within programs who do value the academic side of college sport, not just for the programs deemed an APR risk for the institutions athletic department. Mental well-being and stress still need to be examined to implement changes to these athletic programs. Such high emphasis is placed on the revenue generating sports, yet this study uncovered the need to also find time, resources, and value in

helping those who may not generate the most money, but still dedicate their young adult life to representing the university at the national level.

Overall, the results showed that, even amongst this high achieving population of student athletes, there are still high concerns about academics. These athletes still claimed to not have enough time to devote to their academics. This population still reported feeling overwhelmed to the point that they feel they could not handle the stress. This population, who values learning more than most things in their college career, still felt that their coaching staffs did not always support their academic pursuits. It is important to note that, as previously stated gymnasts tend to be perfectionist, and perfectionists are individuals who have a "concern for errors, doubts on the execution of tasks" (Antonio Pineda-Espejel, et.al., 2016, p. 272). As a perfectionist who is feeling as though they are lacking the necessary support to properly execute a task, in this case their classwork, this lack of support could be detrimental.

In reality, there is not a lot of academic research done on the high achieving student. Much of the focus for this type of research is focused on the students who struggle in the classroom, and how to implement learning strategies and programs to help that population. The needs of the achieving students are overlooked since they are not technically at risk for failing. Student athletes who excel in the classroom still have to dedicate more than 20 hours each week to their athletics, they still travel on the weekends for away games, and they still have to meet high expectations just like any other student athlete. Even though this group values school, it does not always mean that they are equipped with the necessary tools to actually be successful.

Implications for Administrators and Coaches

Based on this research, it has become evident that even these academically high achieving student athletes are feeling too stressed, overwhelmed, and several even mentioned

that they feel their current academic/athletic life is “too much” to handle at times. There are several steps, both big and small, that administrators at the NCAA level can take to decrease the stress these student athletes face to make balancing their lives socially, academically, and seem more manageable.

First, the tutoring services offered to student athletes need to remain being offered, as well as improved. While this will be dependent on budgets, it was suggested that more subjects be offered beyond the typical subjects that students normally take. In addition to subject tutoring, another service that could be helpful would be test preparation workshops to decrease test anxiety. Not everyone is as confident in the classroom as they are on the field. In order to combat that lack of confidence, test preparation workshops, ran by the athletic academic services office would be beneficial.

Academic advisors, while their jobs look very different depending on the university structure, should be more hands on in the student athlete’s academic career. Weekly, or monthly, meetings with students to assess their progress help them plan out their classes, and to help them prepare for any upcoming tests or clarify any assignment expectations would be helpful in decreasing any stress related to uncertainty. In terms of class-scheduling, academic advisors can be more intentional when planning the academic schedules of their assigned student athletes to avoid missed class time for competition travel. The less missed class time, the less stress the athlete will face in the classroom.

Since travel is inevitable, and coursework does not stop just because the student athlete needs to travel, more reliable academic resources need to be provided for those student athletes by the university, which they are representing. It was cited that the WiFi when traveling is not always reliable, which negatively impact the student athlete’s ability to complete their classwork

when on the road. Since working ahead is not always the solution or even an option for the student, administrators could do one of two things to combat this issue. One proposed solution would be to ensure that the internet on the university bus used for travel is equipped with reliable service that the student athletes can count on to use. Second, administrators could adopt a portable Internet device program in which the athletic department provides head coaches with one portable Internet router that teams can use while traveling for away competitions only. This would ensure that the coaching staff had control over the device, yet the student athlete's academic performance was not suffering due to poor Internet access while not on their university's campus.

Another way that the coaching staff can help to improve academic motivations among their student athletes would be to truly buy in to the academic culture of the university. While the student athlete is definitely at their school to participate in athletics, the coaches need to find time and ways to place emphasis on the importance of academics. Based on the results of this study, having days off dedicated solely to academics, and allowing for student athlete to earn "study hours" at places other than their academic center, while will be allowed at their discretion, are two ways in which the coaches can show to their team that academics are important and should be taken seriously. Academics should not be negatively impacted by athletic participation, and action steps as such could lead to creating a better academic culture on their gymnastics teams.

While no participants mentioned this directly in their responses, several individuals did place high emphasis on their academic future and careers from a coursework perspective. Having workshops on resume building, professional attire, and mock interviews may be helpful in identifying strengths to capitalize on and weaknesses to work on as the student athletes are

entering the workforce or graduate programs after they finish their undergraduate careers. Since perfectionist tendencies were identified as sources of motivation, helping these athletes to "perfect" their professionalism may lead to increased confidence in their next steps after graduation.

On top of the programs that the university could offer, one change that could help to increase academic motivation among the student athlete population would be awards and recognition based off of outstanding academic achievements. These recognitions do not need to be at large events. It could be something as small as the coaching staff doing a "student athlete of the week" based off of the report created by the academic advisor. The academic advisor could also have a "student athlete of the month," to highlight academic achievements and hard work put in by their students. Since the student athlete population feels so highly identified by their athletic achievements, being recognized for their efforts in their academics would be a creative way to maintain and increase academic motivations for this population.

Implications for the NCAA

The NCAA has taken a strong stance on two areas of student athlete development and welfare. As mentioned previously, the organization stresses the idea that most of the NCAA athletes will not go on to play professionally after their college sport career is over. They stress the importance of developing the athlete beyond their sport and making sure the 'student' aspect of the term 'student-athlete' is heard. This notion of supporting student athletes academically should be true for all sports, not just the ones deemed to be underperforming in the classroom. Even high achieving students need academic support, such as tutoring services and advising appointments. Based on this research study, which considered the actual opinions and experiences of current student athletes, the NCAA should reconsider their stance on how they

serve their student athlete population as a whole. This organization must provide academic support for all sports, allocating resources more equitably to be able to provide adequate care for the student athletes. While there are some student athletes and sports that struggle more than others, this research study uncovered that the high achieving sports are being neglected at the expense of the more 'at-risk' sports. This current state of NCAA academics is not reflective of the mission of the NCAA as a whole.

Another large mission that the NCAA operates with is working towards creating a better mental health climate for student athletes, as well as creating programming to both help recognize poor mental health signs and ways to assist those who are struggling. This research uncovered the need to look at the role that academics plays on mental health issues among student athletes. There were participants who, when asked to describe academics in one word used 'stressed', 'overwhelming', and 'too much' as their views on academics. The participants are considered to be some of the highest achieving in the NCAA, yet they are feeling like they do not have enough support regarding their academics to the point where they feel that they cannot handle it. Like the allocating of resources suggested above, attention needs to be allocated equitably too. Just because sports like gymnastics are not an eligibility or an APR concern for universities, the NCAA must still find a way to provide financial support for their member institutions to be able to support all student athletes. When the support is lacking in the academic area, the stress levels rise, leading to increases in anxiety and decreases in mental stability among this special population on college campuses.

This research has proved to be relevant and necessary through the correlation it has with the NCAA GOALS Study findings from 2016. The NCAA found that student athletes wanted certain programming that pertained to "academic success and especially preparing to get a job

after college" (NCAA Goals, 2016, p. 5), as well as help with "balancing academics/athletics while keeping sports in perspective" (NCAA Goals, 2016, p. 5). This research study found that similar things were desired by this population of MAC gymnasts. They valued preparing for their future career as well as preparing for graduate school. MAC gymnasts also expressed difficulty balancing school and their sport. The results of both studies portray a clear picture of the need to focus NCAA resources and attention to providing academic support for all student athletes.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study that were identified. First, the study excluded every male sport and their perspective on academics. Second, the only sport considered was gymnastics, which not only excludes information from every other sport, but the perspective of an athlete whose competitive season is in the fall semester, instead of the spring. Data from conferences other than the Mid-American Conference were all excluded, as well. In addition, student athletes from MAC schools of Kent State and Western Michigan were also not include in this study due to inability of accessing their contact information. On top of this, because they have no yet experienced a full competitive season with the NCAA at the time that the data was being collected, current first year students were also excluded from this study to help ensure accuracy in answers, and to avoid guesses being added since this population would not know how it feels to experience balancing academics on top of an NCAA competitive season. The survey itself was also a source of limitation. There were several opportunities for short answers to be expanded upon, but the participant feedback was limited to the space provided in the answer box. Another limitation would be the timing of the survey. This research was conducted during the participant's competitive season, which may have contributed to their ability or inability to complete it.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study on academic motivations of MAC gymnasts, and if they differ in season compared to out of season, several conclusions can be made. Overall, it was concluded that while academic motivations in season and out of season differed, there was not one season that was more academically demanding than the other in terms of the academic expectations of both the student athletes and the coaching staffs. Academic motivations of earning a high GPA, academic rewards systems, coaching staff support, decreasing stress, preparation for their future, and perfectionist tendencies were identified by the participating MAC gymnasts as being important to their academic careers.

It is important to note that while they reported feeling busier when they are in season, being busy was not found to concretely impact their academics in a negative way, but many identified feeling busy as actually increasing their focus and time management skills. Participants were also found to be motivated both in season and out of season by their own high expectations, coach's expectations, and need to decrease their stress levels, but were more motivated when in season to get ahead on their schoolwork to avoid having to focus on academics while traveling to away competitions. In order to improve their academic motivations and performance, administrators were given several suggestions, which if implemented into their programs, could assist in making a positive academic climate among their athletic teams at their respective university.

References

Academic Progress Rate Explained. (2016, October 03). Retrieved April 15, 2017, from http://www.ncaa.org/aboutresources/research/academic-progress-rate-explained

Antonio Pineda-Espejel, H., Alarcón, E., Trejo, M., Chávez,, C., & Arce, R. (2016). Personal factors associated with pre-competitive anxiety in elite gymnasts. *Science of Gymnastics Journal, 8*(3), 271-281.

Bernstein, A., & Galily, Y. (2008). Games and sets: Women, media and sport in Israel. *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues, 15*(15), 175-196.

Buning, M. M., & Thompson, M. A. (2015). Coaching behaviors and athlete motivation: Female softball athletes' perspectives. *Sport Science Review, 24*(5), 345-370.

Comeaux, E. (2011). A study of attitudes toward college student-athletes: Implications for faculty-athletics engagement. *The Journal of Negro Education, 80*(4), 521-532.

Crossing the finish line: Graduation rates on the rise [Digital image]. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/graduation-rates

Davies, B., Nambiar, N., Hemphill, C., Devietti, E., Massengale, A., & McCredie, P. (2015) Intrinsic motivation in physical education, *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance, 86*(8), 8-13.

Diersen, B. A. (2005). *Student-athlete or athlete-student* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Elite 90 Academic Recognition Award Program. Retrieved April 15, 2017, from http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/events/awards/elite-90-academicrecognition-award-program

Estimated probability of competing in professional athletics. (2017, March 13). Retrieved

January 24, 2018, from http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimatedprobability-competing professional-athletics

Gallo, D. Athletes commencement address. (2011). Retrieved January 24, 2018, from http://www.espn.com/espn/page2/story/_/page/gallo%2F110517_NCAA_commencement

Gayles, J. G. (2009). The student athlete experience. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 2009*(144), 33-41.

Grasgreen, A. (2011). *Near-rebuke of NCAA reforms*. Retrieved January 31, 2018, from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/11/02/panel-defends-athletes-says-ncaa-reforms-not-good-enough

Grasgreen, A. (2012). *Tough choices for athletes' advisers*. Retrieved April 15, 2017, from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/05/09/ncaa-academicrules-frustrateadvisers-athletes

Gymnastics: Number of participants U.S. 2016 | Statistic. (2016). Retrieved March 16, 2018, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/191908/participants-in-gymnastics-in-the-us-since-2006/

He, E. (2016). *For student-athletes, time demands present challenges*. University Wire Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1776325154?accountid=26417

Hekmat, R. (2002). Malpractice during practice: Should NCAA coaches be liable for negligence. *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Review, 22*, 613-642.

Jang, B. G., Conradi, K., Mckenna, M. C., & Jones, J. S. (2015). Motivation. *The Reading Teacher, 69*(2), 239-247.

Johnson, G. (2014, October 15). *Athletics participation rates continue to rise*. Retrieved March 30, 2017, from http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/mediacenter/news/athletics-participationrates-continue-rise

Lane, D. (2010, June 12). Success takes a toll on champion's mind and body. Retrieved April 16, 2018, from https://www.smh.com.au/sport/success-takes-a-toll-on-champions-mind-and-body-20100612-y4uq.html

Legislative Services Database. (2017). Retrieved April 15, 2017, from https://web3.ncaa.org/lsdbi/search/bylawView?id=1583

Longo, Gabrielle, "Scoring a goal against the "dumb jock" stereotype" (2015). *Academic Symposium of Undergraduate Scholarship*. Paper 29. http://scholarsarchive.jwu.edu/ac_symposium/29

LSDBi. (2018). Retrieved March 16, 2018, from https://web3.ncaa.org/lsdbi/search/proposalView?id=1765

MAC FAR Awards (Men & Women). (2018). Retrieved February 20, 2018, from http://getsomemaction.com/sports/2016/4/12/GEN_0412160327.aspx

Mid-American Conference. (2018). Retrieved January 24, 2018, from http://getsomemaction.com/sports/2017/2/12/GEN_0212175720.aspx

Mid-American Conference. (2018). Retrieved January 24, 2018, from http://getsomemaction.com/sports/2014/5/29/MACHistory.aspx?path=general

McEwen, C. (2010). *A qualitative examination of sport transitions in first year collegiate female athletes*. M. Sc. Dissertation, Wilfred Laurier University (Canada).

NCAA Academic Rankings. (2018). Retrieved February 20, 2018, from

https://www.ncaagym.com/ncaa-academic-rankings/

NCAA GOALS Study of the Student-Athlete Experience Initial Summary of Findings (2016). Retrieved from http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/GOALS_2015_summary_jan2016_final_20160627.pdf

Parsons, J. (2013). Student athlete perceptions of academic success and athlete stereotypes on campus. Journal of Sport Behavior.

Pedersen, D. M. (2002). Intrinsic-extrinsic factors in sport motivation. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 95*, 456-476.

Poorman, J. (2014, July 05). Student-athletes must follow rules or face consequences. *USA Today.* Retrieved March 20, 2018, from http://college.usatoday.com/2012/05/30/student-athletes-must-follow-rules/

Provencio, C. (2016). *Student-athlete: A study of student-athlete workload compared with traditional student workload*. (Order No. 10157496, South Dakota State University). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 65.

Saffici, C., & Pellegrino, R. (1998). Intercollegiate athletics vs. academics: The student athlete or the athlete-student. *Journal of Sports, 19*, 1-6.

Simons, H. D., Van Rheenen, D., & Covington, M. V. (1999). Academic motivation and the student athlete. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*(2), 151-161.

Symes, R. (2010, May 24). Understanding athletic identity: 'Who am I?' Retrieved March 28, 2018, from http://www.podiumsportsjournal.com/2010/05/24/understanding-athletic-identity-who-am-i/

The Official Site of the NCAA. (2017). Retrieved March 15, 2017, from http://www.ncaa.org/

Tucker, K., Morgan, B. J., Oliver, I., Kirk, O., Moore, K., Irving, D., Sizemore, D., Turner, W., & Emanuel, R. (2016). Perceptions of college student-athletes. *Journal of Undergraduate Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 27-33.

Umbach, P. D., Palmer, M. M., Kuh, G. D., & Hannah, J. S. (2006*). Intercollegiate athletes and effective educational practices*. Presented at the Association for Institutional Research Forum, Boston, MA.

Vallerand, R., & Losier, G. (1999). An integrative analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sport, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *11(*1), 142-169

Vincent, W. J. (2012). *Statistics in kinesiology* (4th ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Women's Div I & II team sites. (2017). Retrieved April 15, 2017, from https://www.collegegymfans.com/resources/links/women-s-div-i-ii-teams.html

2017 Gymnastics academic all-mac team announced. (2017). Retrieved February 20, 2018, from http://getsomemaction.com/news/2017/3/31/golf_0331171438.aspx

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey

Academic Motivations of Division I MAC Gymnasts: In Season v. Out of Season

Q1 Institution you are currently attending:

- ○ Ball State University (1)
- ○ Bowling Green State University (2)
- ○ Central Michigan University (3)
- ○ Eastern Michigan University (4)
- ○ Kent State University (5)
- ○ Northern Illinois University (6)
- ○ Western Michigan University (7)

Q2 Current Major of Study:

_____

Q3 My age range is:

- ○ 18-20 (1)
- ○ 21-23 (2)
- ○ 24-25 (3)
- ○ Over 25 (4)

Q4 My year in school is:

- ○ 1st year (1)
- ○ 2nd year (2)
- ○ 3rd year (3)
- ○ 4th year (4)
- ○ 5th year (5)
- ○ Graduate Student (6)

Q5 My current cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) is:

- ○ Below 2.0 (1)
- ○ 2.01-2.5 (2)
- ○ 2.51-3.0 (3)
- ○ 3.01-3.5 (4)
- ○ 3.51-4.0+ (5)

Q6 On a scale of 1 – 5, I prefer to get ahead on schoolwork when I am in season more than when I am out of season:(1- never 2- rarely 3- sometimes 4- often 5- always)

- ○ 1 (1)
- ○ 2 (2)
- ○ 3 (3)
- ○ 4 (4)
- ○ 5 (5)

Q7 On a scale of 1 – 5, the idea of receiving academic honors (ex: Academic All American, All Conference etc.) helps push me to be academically motivated :(1- Does Not Motivate 2- Sometimes 3- Neutral 4- Motivational 5- Very Motivational)

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)

Q8 On a scale of 1 – 5, how busy do I feel when I am in season: (1- not busy 2- sometimes busy 3- neutral 4- busy 5- very busy)

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)

Q9 On a scale of 1 – 5, how busy do I feel when I am out of season:(1- not busy 2- sometimes busy 3- neutral 4- busy 5- very busy)

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)

Q10 On a scale of 1 – 5, I feel more motivated to get ahead on my schoolwork when I know I have to travel on the weekend
(1- never 2- rarely 3- sometimes 4- often 5- always)

- ○ 1 (1)
- ○ 2 (2)
- ○ 3 (3)
- ○ 4 (4)
- ○ 5 (5)

Q11 On a scale of 1 – 5, Having more free time makes me push my schoolwork off
(1- never 2- rarely 3- sometimes 4- often 5- always)

- ○ 1 (1)
- ○ 2 (2)
- ○ 3 (3)
- ○ 4 (4)
- ○ 5 (5)

Q12 (Please select all that apply) When I am busy:

- ☐ I plan out my time using "to do" lists (1)
- ☐ I make sure to get ahead whenever I can (2)
- ☐ I fall behind on my responsibilities (3)
- ☐ None of these answers apply to me (4)

Q13 On a scale of 1 – 5, I feel that my coaches place high emphasis on academic performance: (1- Agree 2- Disagree 3- Does Not Apply)

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)

Q14 Please list three main factors that motivate you to do your schoolwork:

- Factor 1 (1) _____
- Factor 2 (2) _____
- Factor 3 (3) _____

Q17 When traveling on the road during season, list three words that describe your thoughts on academics:

- Descriptive Word 1 (1) _____
- Descriptive Word 2 (2) _____
- Descriptive Word 3 (3) _____

Q18 ***Please answer the following open response questions using 1-5 sentences:*** What are programs or steps that can be taken by your school's administration to improve your academic motivation?

_____
_____
_____

Q19 What are programs or steps that can be taken by your school's administration to improve your academic performance?

_____
_____
_____

Q20 During which season (in season/out of season) do you prefer to have a harder course load? Why?

_____
_____

_____

Q21 How does being busy impact your motivation to succeed in the classroom? Please explain.

_____
_____
_____

Q22 Did your gymnastics participation impact your choice of major? why or why not?

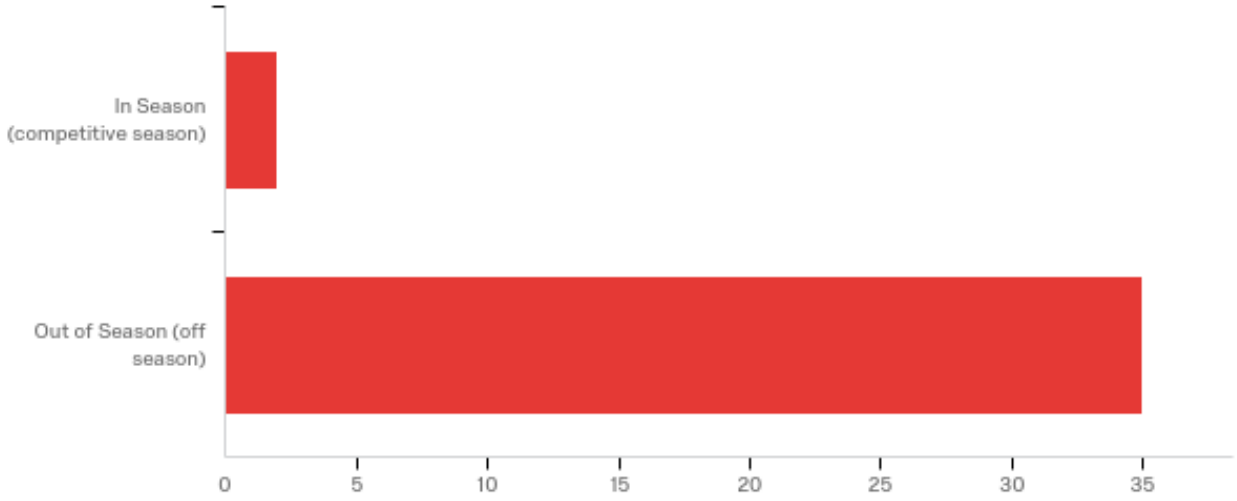
_____
_____
_____

Q23 How do you feel your gymnastics participation impacts you academics? Please explain.

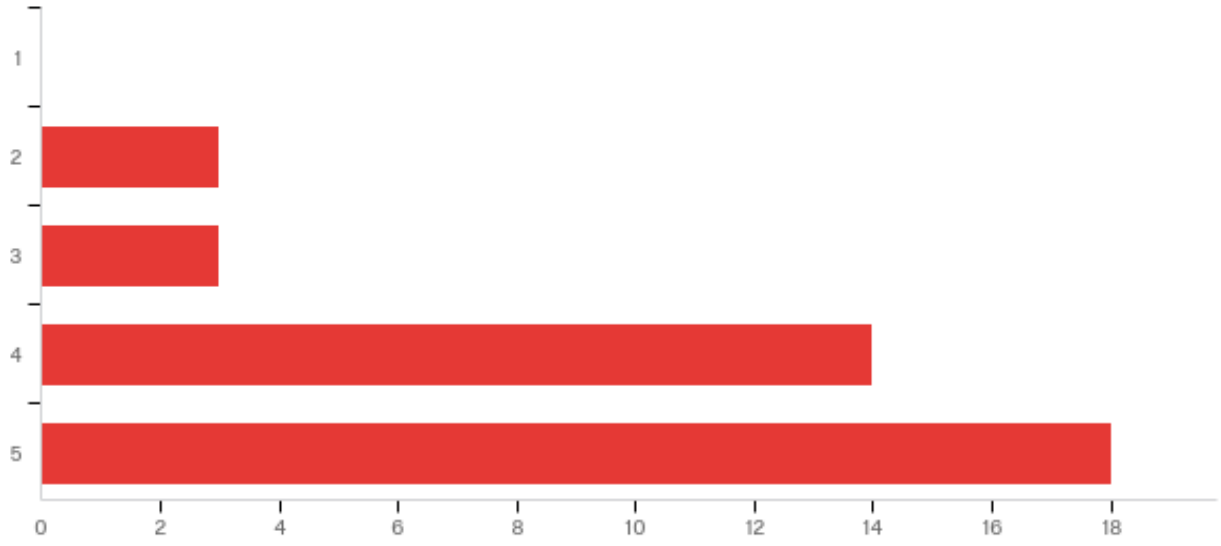
_____
_____

Appendix B: Result Charts

During which season do you prefer to have a more challenging course load?



On a scale of 1 – 5, I feel more motivated to get ahead on my schoolwork when I know I have to travel on the weekend. (1- never 2- rarely 3- sometimes 4- often 5- always)



Appendix C: Human Subjects Review Board Approval

BGSU
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY
Office of Research Compliance

DATE:	February 6, 2018
TO:	Mary Dunn
FROM:	Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board
PROJECT TITLE:	[1060063-3] Academic Motivations of NCAA Division I Mid American Conference Women's Gymnasts In Season Compared to Out of Season
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Revision
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	February 1, 2018
EXPIRATION DATE:	December 17, 2018
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the IRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on December 17, 2018. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or orc@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board's records.

Appendix D: Consent Form

BGSU
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Human Movement, Sport, & Leisure Studies

227C Eppler Complex
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0280
419-372-3165
http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/edhd/hmsls/index.html

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Academic Motivations of NCAA Division I Mid American Conference Women's Gymnasts In Season Compared to Out of Season

Researchers: Mary Margaret Dunn, Graduate Student, Sport Administration
Amanda Koba, PhD, Associate Professor, Sport Administration

Study Purpose and Procedure

You are being asked to take part in a research study about how your academic motivations vary based on being in season or out of season. I am asking you to take part in this study because you are a member of a MAC Division I Women's Gymnastics Program. Your contact information has been obtained through your institutions online, public email database.

The purpose of this study is to learn about what factors influence the academic motivations of Division I Mid American Conference Women's Gymnasts. You must have been on your school's respective roster at the time of the 2017 MAC Gymnastics Championships (last year) and at least 18 years old to qualify to take this survey.

If you agree to be in this study, please click on the link to proceed to the survey. The survey includes 22 questions and should not take more than 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey consists of multiple-choice, fill-ins, and open response questions. The nature of the questions will be about your major, what motivates you to complete your schoolwork, and assessments of how busy you feel during a given time of the year. If you chose to participate, clearing your browsing data and page history is suggested.

Protecting Confidentiality

Your answers will be confidential. This questionnaire will be confidential and your name and email address will not be included in the questionnaire. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that is made public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records.

Additional Consent Information

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not impact you in any way. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Risks of participation are not expected to be any greater than that experienced in daily life. Should any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you may choose not to respond and to move on to the next question. You may also withdraw your consent or end participation at any point during the project. If you choose to withdraw from the study, it will not negatively affect your relationships with the researcher or Bowling Green State University.

If you have questions: The researchers conducting this study are Mary Margaret (Maggie) Dunn and Dr. Amanda Paule-Koba. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Mary Margaret (Maggie) Dunn at marymd@bgsu.edu or at 508-406-8175. You can contact Dr. Amanda Paule-Koba at apaule@bgsu.edu or at 419-372-7229. If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Bowling Green State University (419-372-7716 orc@bgsu.edu).

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and I consent to take part in the study.

Proceed to the Study: After consenting to this study, please click the following link to proceed to the study. The questionnaire will begin when you click the link below.

Link to Study: https://bgsu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9zWMCedmJrw2t9z

Appendix E: Intercollegiate Athletics Committee Research Subcommittee Approval

Dear Maggie:

Thank you for submitting your application to study undergraduate student athletes. The Research Sub-committee of the ICA committee has reviewed the documents you submitted.

We unanimously agree to approve the study using student athletes with the following changes. These include:

Q6-Q9 response options do not seem to match the question. Q13 too...some seem to be "agree/disagree" questions not measures of frequency...

Regarding Section IV, question m. of the IRB application, aren't you actually excluding a group based on gender?

The following statement should be removed from the IRB application as it isn't appropriate for the research question being asked. *"If athletes are being guided into less rigorous majors for the purpose of keeping them eligible"*

If you have not already done so, please submit the IRB application to the Office of Research Compliance. Hillary Snyder is copied on this email communicating our approval with the changes noted above.

On behalf of Dr. Cripps and Dr. Jackson, we wish you the best with your study! Donna