GAVILAN COLLEGE

Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

STUDENT ATHLETE SUCCESS

Question: Do student athletes succeed at higher rates than other students?

Findings: Student athletes retain at higher rates but are no more likely to pass their courses or graduate than the general student population. Additionally, Student Athletes have lower GPAs than non-athletes.

Background:

Similar to many California community colleges, Gavilan College supports a robust intercollegiate athletics program with active and dedicated faculty and staff. Overall, the program enrolls an average of about 200 students at any given time. These students receive a variety of additional supports, including coaches and programs invested in their academic success, a dedicated counselor, and a requirement for full-time enrollment, which also increases the odds of student success. In addition, athletics enjoys robust and newly modernized facilities. These targeted investments by the College are designed to provide a return in the form of academic student success, personal and professional development for students, as well as name recognition for the college.

These types of investments are common at California community colleges as student athletes typically succeed in greater numbers than their general student population counterparts.

Method:

A simple comparison of student athletes to the general population is often employed to demonstrate program effectiveness. However, this fails to account for the fact that there are many overlapping statuses that impact students and affect their likelihood of success. Thus, researchers attempt to control for these factors when evaluating outcomes. RPIE deployed three statistical models, called binary logistic regression, to evaluate student success among athletes. One model each was prepared for course success, student retention, and graduation / completion. These models controlled for a large number of various factors, including gender, race/ethnicity, age, basic skills status, course location, program participation (EOPS, AEC,

Veteran, MESA, TRiO, Puente, Foster Youth, CalWORKs), College Promise status, as well as the department of the course and participation in orientation. All three models were statistically significant, and in all three cases the estimates were greater than their associated standard errors.

Results:

Student athletes were no more likely than the general population to pass their courses or graduate. However, the odds of retention increased. Additionally, student athletes have lower GPAs than non-athletes.

- Course success: **No effect**
- Retention: ▲**38%, +/- 10%**
- Graduation (unlimited): **No effect**
- Graduation (3-year): **No effect**
- Average GPA (over 9 years):
  - Athletes: 2.49
  - Non-athletes: 2.84

Implications:

Given the new funding formula's reduction in enrollment-based funding and increased focus on student outcomes set against with the relatively high per student cost of athletics as well as the new focus on guided pathways, RPIE recommends a comprehensive reevaluation of the course structure and support services delivered to athletes, up to and including an analysis of success rates by sport to determine ongoing program viability. Additionally, RPIE recommends an in-depth analysis of athlete retention strategies to determine scalability options to the college as a whole.

Definitions:

- Course success: passing a course and earning credit
- Retention: remaining actively registered in a course, regardless of whether the course is passed
- Graduation (unlimited): earning a degree or certificate of any kind at any time from Gavilan College
- Graduation (3-year): earning a degree or certificate within three years of matriculation at Gavilan College

Questions and comments should be directed to the Peter Wruck, Dean of Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness, at pwruck@gavilan.edu.