THE PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION, ACADEMIC SUCCESS, AND ATHLETIC ABILITY IN AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE ATHLETES

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Abstract: This study focused on college student-athletes perceptions focused on academic success or building athletic ability. While identifying the academic support methods and other key contributions college provide to student-athletes, this study displayed the perceptions of African-American male student-athletes in a predominantly white institution (PWI) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). The main question for this research focuses on the differences between academic success and athletic ability. By using the approach of snowball sampling, this study examining African American male football athletes from Florida State University (FSU) a Division I and Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University (FAMU) a Division IAA. The researchers conducted surveys with the student-athletes to understand and capture their perception. The finding shows that 55% of FSU student-athletes disagreed or strongly disagreed that academic performance was more important than athletic performance. 65% of FAMU student-athletes disagreed or strongly disagreed academic performance was more important than athletic performance.

Keywords: Academic Success, Student-Athletes, Perception, Athletic Ability, Balance, Role Theory, and Time Management.

I.   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to understand the perception of education and academic success in African-American male collegiate athletes. This study focused on whether these college student-athletes perceptions are focused on academics success or building athletic ability. While identifying the academic support methods and other key contributions that post-secondary institutions provide to student-athletes, this study showcased the perceptions of African American male student-athletes in a predominantly white institution (PWI) and historically black colleges and universities (HBCU). African-American male athletes usually are rushed over the stigma that they lack the necessary skills needed to be academically successful due to their commitment and focus on an athletic sport (Bailey & Bhattacharyya, 2017). This stigma along with many others that support the 'dumb jock' stereotype can promote negative perceptions of how student athletes have viewed academically (Bailey & Bhattacharyya, 2017; Simons et al., 2007). This study seeks to find if such portrayed stigmas are the perception of education in African American student-athletes and how it affects their academic performance. Understanding the African-American male student-athletes personal viewpoints and perceptions for academic success will allow institutions of higher education to serve their student-athletes and their academic needs better. CarterFrancique, Hart, and Cheeks (2015) acknowledge a fact that for African-American student-athletes, "social support is essential to assist Black student-athletes in navigating the landscape of higher education and college athletics so they are in turn able to be academically successful" (p. 162). Comprehending this study's perception of the student--athlete can help institutions identify many other direct and indirect problems that African-American male student-athletes face. Are these problems caused due to high stressors on the athletic side or is it caused by family and other social

pressures? The unique characteristics of this study have allowed the researchers to bring insight from two different groups of African-American male student-athletes, which are perspectives from a Division I PWI and a Division IAA HBCU athlete. The findings of this study have aided institutions of higher education in understanding how to assist African-American student-athletes and their academic needs better. To better comprehend African-American male student-athletes perception of academic success, it is important to know the challenges they face. The life of a student-athlete almost based on balance. Academic success can sometimes determine by a student-athletes personal ability to balance the responsibilities of that athletic lifestyle (CarterFrancique et al., 2013). CarterFrancique, Hart, and Steward (2013) also stated that athletics on Division I teams have high demanding schedules which can lead to restrictions on the amount of time needed to focus on academics. Cooper and Cooper (2015) described academically disengaged black male college student-athletes and the different factors they face, like the feeling of isolation, poor or nonexistent relationship with professors, and encounters with racial discrimination on campus and surrounding communities. The student-athlete lifestyle coupled with these factors can cause the perception of academic success to be acknowledged by the African-American male collegiate athlete (CarterFrancique et al., 2013; Cooper & Cooper, 2015). According to Charleston, Jackson, Adserias, and Lang (as cited in Graham et al., 2015), African-American male are objectified for their athleticism and physicality which can lead to the omission of positive coverage on their academic accomplishments of the field. The objectification of African-American athletes, in addition to their demanding schedules, leads the researchers of this study to assume that African-American perceptions will be more focused on athletic ability rather than their academic success (CarterFrancique et al., 2013; Graham et al., 2015). With extremely limited funding, this study faces certain limitations and obstacles that can cause data collection from the subjects to be difficult. The human subjects within this study have received no compensation or credit for their participation which can cause the subjects to lack the motivation to participate.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Success to completely recognize a student-athletes perception of academic success, it is imperative to find a standing definition of academic success. According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), academic success in a postsecondary institution required from the student's athletes to maintain eligibility and certain grade point average. The main measurable elements of eligibility based on the NCAA eligibility guidelines is the progression towards earning a degree (NCAA, 2017a). Student-athletes must advance towards graduation annually. With this basic understanding of NCAA guidelines, academic success can be identified by three parts. Student-athletes must meet certain grade requirements to pass the courses they are taking to show progression towards earning a degree. Athletes must also maintain a certain grade point average, which is required to obtain a degree from a postsecondary institution. Finally, graduating from a postsecondary institution (NCAA, 2017b). Essentially, the student-athlete eligibility guidelines are the NCAA definitions of academic success. The idea of academic success can differ from each student-athlete. According to Cooper (2015), sports can serve as a haven for many athletes and can sometimes create an image of a positive self-concept. This current study can persuade students-athletes to dive into the demanding lifestyle of the athletic sport (CarterFrancique et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Lance (2004), over 55% of the students agreed that it was difficult to meet both athletic and academic expectations. Another 51% of students disagreed with the statement that it was easy to find enough time to study during an athletic season. The demanding schedules of the athletic program can cause student--athletes to choose and prioritize their athletic schedule. The athletic schedule can also prevent certain student-athletes from pursuing a major of their choice (Cooper & Cooper, 2015). These restriction and many others Cooper (2015) describes can then cause the student-athletes to become academically disengaged with their academics. The demanding lifestyle can cause the student-athletes relationship with professors and other classmates, who can be an avenue of support, to be poor and nonexistent (CarterFrancique et al., 2013; Cooper & Cooper, 2015). All of these elements can create the idea of role conflict between academics and athletics within a student-athlete. Role Theory Traditionally, students attend institutions of higher education to advance their understanding and skills set in a particular area (Liang et al., 2017). Students become consumers expecting a certain level of service as they try to obtain a product, which is a degree from the particular institution (Williams, 2013). Student-athlete on the other hand, attend institutions of higher for the collegiate sports available which can be caused by the "dumb jock stereotype" (Paesons, 2013). According to Paesons (2013), student-athletes are led into dual roles positions due to their academic and athletic responsibilities, despite all the time constraints and external pressures they receive from both roles. This collegiate institutional trend can leave student--athletes in a bind as they face these new found academic and athletic pressures (Kissinger & Miller, 2009). Learning how to balance collegiate and noncollegiate responsibilities becomes part of the student-athletes role (Bjornsen & Dinkel,

2017). Edwards (2014) explains how these responsibilities and pressures can sometimes create role strain within the individual student-athlete due to its difficulty and their lack of motivation which can lead to role conflict.Role Conflict Role conflict occurs when an athlete may encounter structural constraints between two different roles and fulfilling the role responsibilities (Cooper & Cooper, 2015). Student-athletes have to accomplish and attempt to excel at their academic and athletic duties. Similar to role strain, where individuals can have difficulties meeting certain obligations, student-athletes are left to prioritize certain commitments (Henning & Weidner, 2008). With the student-athletes schedule and the demanding academic load of the institution, many students -athletes prioritize one specific identity. According to Joseph and Jewell Cooper (2015), this is known as role engulfment, which is when a student-athletes consider themselves as athletes and not as students. Athletes become engulfed in their athletic role and forget about their academic obligations as a student of the institution. Joseph and Jewell Cooper (2015) concluded during a study that sports sometimes play an important role in college-athletes because it served as their primary avenue to getting accepted into an institution of higher education. Student-athletes who are first-generation college students are more likely to engulf themselves in the athletic sport rather than their academics because of those circumstances. Many colleges-athletes acknowledge the importance of academic achievement but would choose to rather involve and engulf themselves with athletics because of the haven it provides (Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Cooper & Hawkins, 2012). First Generation a higher level of education can create an improved way of living in the current society for young adults. In a research conducted by Kena el al. (2016), we have come to an understanding that individuals who graduate with a bachelor's degree earn more income and have lower rates of unemployment then individuals with simply have their high school diploma. This statistic shows why it is important for young adults raised in low socioeconomic communities to pursue postsecondary education. For many students, the challenge of getting into an institution of higher education is more intense due to their first generational status (Irlbeck et al., 2014). A first generation student is defined as neither of the student parents or guardian have obtained or received a four year degree (Davis, 2010). The first generation student would essentially be the first individual in a family to attend and graduate from a four year institution of higher education with a degree. First Generation students, including student-athletes, are four times more likely to drop out of college after their first year (Mayol et al., 2017). First generation students surrounded by many factors they face including personal, social, and financial obstacle during and even before entering an institution of higher education (Wilkins, 2014). In fact, student-athletes who are first generation students make friends with other first generation students who are not athletics but face an issue when it comes to social support in their field of experience, such as playing football (Traynowicz et al., 2016). Student-athletes also receive motivational upkeep from extremely supportive parents but due to their first generational status the parental collegiate experience is non-existent, which can sometimes means the durable academic support may be nonexistent as well (Malvaso & Navarro, 2016; Wilkins, 2014). Many student-athletes are first generation students, so they much become self-dependent and proactive about their education (Wilkins, 2014). Time Management and Balance Time management is a necessary skill for student-athletes when it comes to balancing athletic participation and academic success. CarterFrancique et al. (2013) explained the demanding lifestyle of a student-tathlete while Cooper & Cooper (2015) explained how that demanding lifestyle creates role conflict within the student-tathlete. Due to such high demands of student-athlete time management and balance seems to be an important skill that student-athletes learn to be successful. Burcak et al. (2015) explain that the better the time management of an athlete, the more the status increases. The basic definition of time management can control and manage the events we experience in our daily lives by directing yourself as effectively and actively as possible (Kurtipek et al., 2016). Student-athlete must have this ability to be successful in their collegiate performance both academically and athletically. The balance of both academics and athletic performance can be difficult and according to studies conducted by Kurtipek et al. (2016), it is difficult for student-athletes to balance both. Between academic classes, athletic practice, homework, employment, and leisure many student-athletes have difficulties staying afloat (Barua & Vidal, 2014). Institution support student-athletes by creating incentive programs that compel students to work on their time management. To increase studying times but due to high demanding schedules from both athletics and academics, students would just prioritize one role over the others (CarterFrancique et al., 2013; Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Juhnke et al., 2013). Creating a balanced schedule that appeals to both academics and athletics can increase time management skills and increases the status of the student-athlete (Burcak et al., 2015).
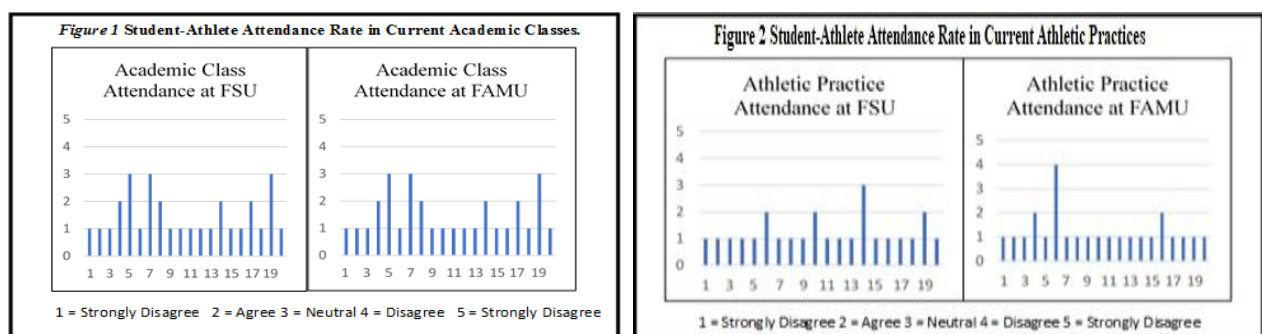
III. METHODOLOGY

60 individual subjects had obtained the data collected in this research examination. 40 of the total subjects are African-American male college football athletes from Florida State University& Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. 20 Administrative full-time coaches from Florida State and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. The target

population from the student-athlete was senior level who have participated in football for three or more years. All football athletes range from the age of 18-25. Subjects were eligible athlete according to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athlete eligibility guidelines. During the process of the site selection, the first site that was selected to conduct the research was Florida State University. Florida State is a Division I (D1) institution and is considered a PWI based on the student demographic. According to the NCAA, Division Institution is the high level of intercollegiate athletics sanctioned. Division, I athletic programs generate a lot of revenue from television broadcasting rights, merchandise and licensing sales to personal donor donations (Cooper and Cooper, 2015). The revenue gained leads to larger budgets, excessive facilities, and provide more athletic scholarships than other NCAA Divisions like II and III. The second site that was selected is Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) which is a part of the NCAA Division IAA and Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCU). According to the NCAA, Division IAA is a list of schools in Division I of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) that play football in the United States as a varsity sport and are members of the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS), known as Division I-AA from 1978 through 2005. Researchers used snowball sampling method. According to Hutchinson (2004), this method will be the most effective and beneficial when the targeted population is restricted or inaccessible. Student-athletes are packed with a range of tasks to complete based on their busy schedule. Snowball sampling allowed the researchers to create a chain referral system where athletes who participate would refer other athletes to complete the same process. Based on research from Hutchinson (2004). Surveys are widely used in sport management research and allow flexibility when creating a questionnaire to gather the appropriate information (Li et al., 2009). This approach allowed the researchers to attempt and received more in-depth responses from the subjects. In a one-on-one or group setting, the researchers administer the subjects' record their response to the survey process to ensure that accurate information was collected. The researchers completed a pilot study to measure the validity and reliability of the survey before the final implementation of the survey. None of the survey questions are open-ended or require a statement from the subject. The survey was originally designed by the researchers (Appendix A). The researchers used frequency, percentages, and descriptive stats through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program to analyze the data and approach the final findings.

IV.   RESULT AND DISCUSSION

 (85%) Of Florida State University FSU student-athletes agreed that they attend all academic classes while (90%) of student-athletes at and FAM Agreed that they attended all academic classes currently scheduled (figure 1). According to Thompson & Gilchrist (2011), class attendance is fundamental to the success of student-athletes and skipping class can lead to intellectual incompetents. Thompson & Gilchrist (2011) explained the importance of attending class and the detriment produced if the student-athletes skip class. Contrary to academic data, athletic data collected reveals that (95%) of FSU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed that they attend all athletic practices. (95%) of FAMU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed that they attend all athletic practices (figure 2).

Figure 1 Student-Athlete Attendance Rate in Current Academic Classes.

Academic Class Attendance at FSU

Academic Class Attendance at FAMU

1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree   5 = Strongly Disagree

Figure 2 Student-Athlete Attendance Rate in Current Athletic Practices

Athletic Practice Attendance at FSU

Athletic Practice Attendance at FAMU

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree

Attendance from academics to athletics improved by 10% for FSU student-athletics and by 8% for FAMU students. Lack of athletic attendance can lead to student-athletes potentially losing scholarship dollars which is important for their education (Schaeperkoetter et al., 2017). Maintaining compliance with the athletic program policy is mandatory if the student-athletes want to remain at the institution under their athletic scholarship. (40%) Of FSU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed they had enough time to complete all homework assignments while (45%) of FAMU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed they had enough time to complete all homework assignments (figure 3). Students-athletes struggle with the balance between academics and athletics. (Hendricks & Johnson, 2016). Explains that the mindset of academics first and athlete second falsified statement. (60%) Of the population at FSU and (55%) of the population at

FAMU believe they do not have enough time to complete homework assignments because football is very important and satisfying the athletics over their academics is the moral decision (Hendricks & Johnson, 2016). This recent study shows that (50%) of FSU students and the (35%) of FAMU students disagreed with the statement that it was easy to balance academics and athletics (figure 4).

Figure 3 Time to Complete Assigned Homework Assignments.

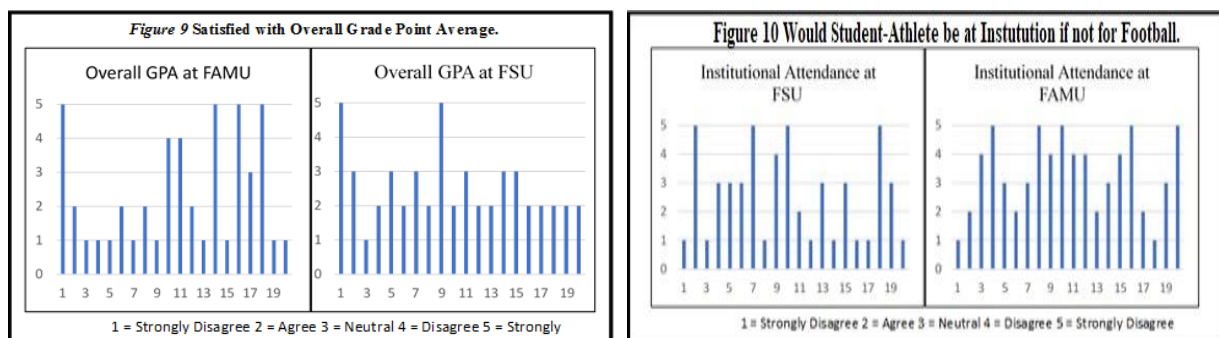Figure 4 Student-Athlete Academic and Athletic Balance.
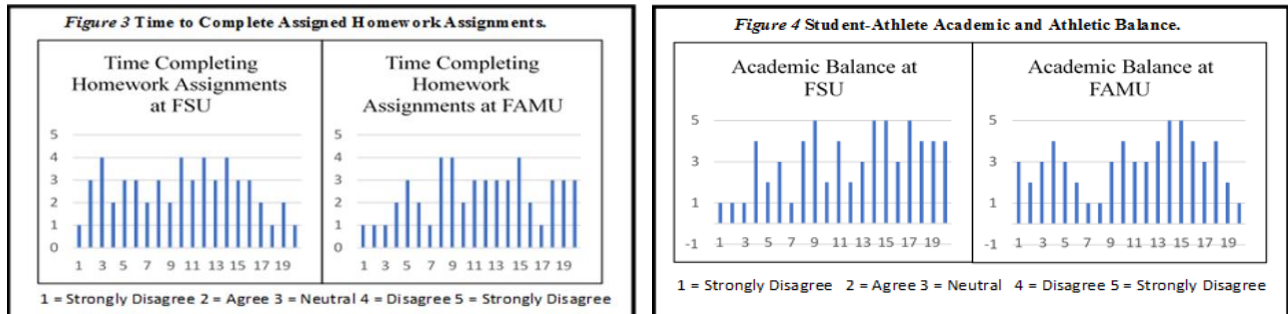
(Hendricks & Johnson, 2016) Research results support the claim that it is a true dilemma for a student-athletes to balance their academics and athletics. (80%) Of FSU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed that they were there to play football and advance athletic career while an (80%) of FAMU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed that they were there to play football and advance an athletic career (figure 5). According to (Hendricks & Johnson, 2016), the mindset of many of the students was not focused on academics but athletic performance. College-athletes acknowledge the importance of academic achievement but would choose rather involve and to overwhelm themselves with athletics because due to the safety net it provides (Cooper & Hawkins, 2012; Cooper & Cooper, 2015). Also this can conclude to the reason of why (45%) of FSU student-athletes agreed that academic performance was more important than athletic performance and (40 %) of FAMU student-athletes agreed academic performance was more important than athletic performance (figure 6).

Figure 5 Student-Athlete Purpose at the Institution Advancing Athletic Performance.

Figure 6 Athletetic Performance More Important than Academic Performance
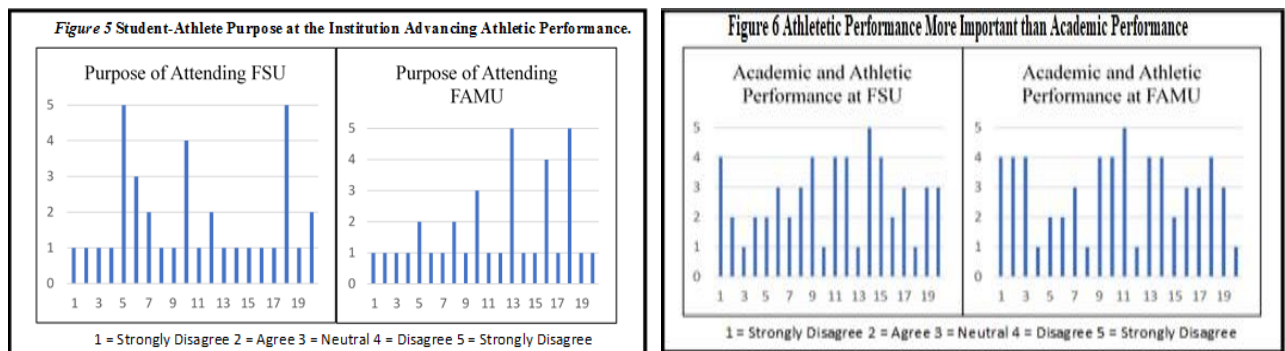
FSU - FAMU data analyses show that (80%) of student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed the institution provided the necessary tools for academic success (figure 7). (Evans et al., 2017) Explained why the Academic Centers for student athletics were vital to their success in college. The Academic Centers would help improve institution graduation and retention rates. Which mean that more student-athletes were receiving degrees (Evans et al., 2017). (30%) of FSU student-athletes agreed that awards for positive academic growth were given from the team's coach staff while only 15% student-athletes at FAMU agreed that the team's coach staff gave awards for positive academic to student-athletes (figure 8).

Figure 7 Student-Athlete Provided the Tools Necessary for Academic

Figure 8 Student-Athlete Receiving Awards from Coaches.
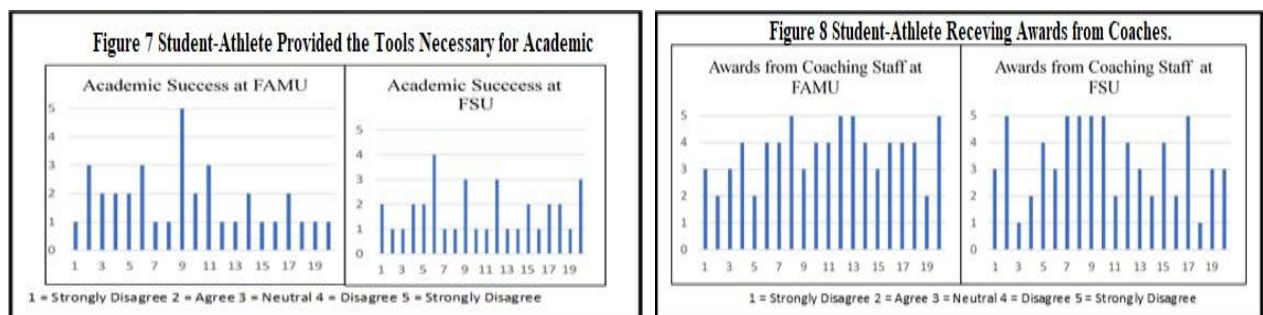
Team cohesiveness and team building are essential according to (Waldron, 2015). Awarding student-athletes would motivate that ideal. Coaches who do not support their team productive can negatively affect the team morale or lead the time to create their award system (Waldron, 2015). Other researchers do not support the data collected from this current research. Institutions of Higher Education should motivate student-athletes to improve on both athletic and academic performance (CarterFrancique et al., 2013). This recent study shows that (60%) of the student-athletes at FSU agreed that they were pleased with their overall grade point average while (65%) of FAMU student-athletes agreed that they were pleased with their overall grade point average (figure 9). The stigma following student-athletes have been that their sole purpose at a university was to play a specific sport (Scott, 2017). According to (NCAA, 2017a). Elements of eligibility, the student-athlete must maintain a constant progression towards earning a degree. Motivated student-athletes have achieved extremely high levels of academic success while balancing both the athletic and academic role (Bailey & Bhattacharyya, 2017). Minority student-athletes can face additional barriers due to their educational background (Reynolds et al., 2012). Under (45%) of student-athletes at FSU agreed that football was not the only reason why they attend the institution. Under (30%) of FAMU student-athletes agreed that football was not the only reason why they attended the institution (figure 10).

Figure 9 Satisfied with Overall Grade Point Average.

Figure 10 Would Student-Athlete be at Instutution if not for Football.

Degree program option, head coach, academic support and the community is some of the reason why student-athletes choose the institution they want to attend and play athletic sports (Andrew et al., 2016).

V. CONCLUSION

This study focused on whether these college student-athletes perceptions are focused on academics success or building athletic ability. While identifying the academic support methods and other key contributions that postsecondary institutions provide to student-athletes, this study showcased the perceptions of African American male student-athletes in a predominantly white institution (PWI) and historically black colleges and universities (HBCU). African-American male

And found there is an important relationship between the academic success and the athletic ability. By examining the data collected from African-American student-athletes with both collegiate institutions, many observations were formed. Data analyses have shown that 85% of FSU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed that they attend all academic classes currently on their schedule. 90% of FAMU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed that they attend all academic classes currently on their schedule. 95% of FSU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed that they attend all athletic practices. 95% of FAMU student-athletes agreed or strongly agree that they attend all athletic practices. 40% of FSU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed they had enough time to complete all homework assignments. 45% of FAMU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed they had enough time to complete all homework assignments. 50% of FSU student-athletes disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was easy to balance their academics. 35% of FAMU student-athletes disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was easy to balance their academics. 80% of both FSU and FAMU student-athletes agreed that they came to college to advance their athletic career. 45% of FSU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed academic performance was more important than athletic performance. 35% of FAMU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed academic performance was more important than athletic performance. .80% of both FSU and FAMU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed the institution provided the necessary tools for academic success. 60% of FSU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed that they were pleased with their overall GPA. 65% of FAMU student-athletes agreed or strongly agreed that they were pleased with their overall GPA. The finding shows that (55%) of FSU student-athletes disagreed or strongly disagreed that academic performance was more important than athletic performance. (65%) Of FAMU student-athletes disagreed or strongly disagreed academic performance was more important than athletic performance. Keeping the motivational stream of support from both coach, friends, and family would allow the student-athlete to make healthier academic choices.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The football student-athletes at both had high rates of attending classes with FSU and FAMU. To increase the number of students -athletes that attend class, the coach should give a certain incentive or award for the individual who attends classes more often. Completing assigned academic assignments and balancing academic and athletic schedules seemed to be difficult for many of the football student-athletes. To best address this issue academic advisors must assist student-athletes with maintaining the proper course schedule. This course schedule should place student-athletes in a position to balance managing the academic assignments with he the athletic assignments. Also it is important to enhancing the student-athletes awareness of the potential opportunities that education can bring through seminars and other real-world activities.

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