

Athletics is Education: Chickering and Gamson's Seven Principles Applied to Intercollegiate Athletics

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Abstract: While participation in intercollegiate athletics has historically been classified as extracurricular, sports have the potential to serve as an educational avenue in postsecondary institutions if reframed through a higher education lens. Through a synthesis of research on traditional college students' and athletes' educational experiences, the current article highlights the unique nexus of higher education and Division I intercollegiate athletics by extending Chickering and Gamson's (1987) seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education to intercollegiate athletics. First, the Seven Principles are briefly presented in their original form relating to the traditional higher education environment: (1) encourage contact between students and faculty, (2) develop reciprocity and cooperation among students, (3) encourage active learning, (4) give prompt feedback, (5) emphasize time on task, (6) communicate high expectations, and (7) respect diverse talents and ways of learning. Next, these factors are reconsidered and applied to the educational development of Division I intercollegiate athletes. Finally, implications of applying this framework and further integrating the educational components of collegiate sport to cultivate improved experiences for athletes are provided.

Keywords: Higher education, college athletics, athlete education, athlete development

Entertainment to Education

Even though intercollegiate athletics is housed in higher education and the two have been connected for over 150 years, limited scholarship has applied higher education theories directly to sport (Ketcham et al., 2022; Patton et al., 2016; Springer & Dixon, 2021). Not viewing athletics through a higher education lens and referring to it as merely "beer and circus" (Sperber, 2000) likely contributes to the uneasy marriage of elite academics and big-time athletics while invalidating the educational opportunities that are inherent in sport participation (Clotfelter, 2019; Foster et al., 2021; Gurney et al., 2017; Vanover & DeBowes, 2016).

To extend the knowledge base of athlete education and development, the current article turns to a seminal piece in college student education: *The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* proposed by Chickering and Gamson (1987). These principles have been foundational and pervasive in college student development literature but have yet to be adapted to athletics (Patton et al., 2016; Springer & Dixon, 2021). Recently, leading higher education professional societies (e.g., the Association for the Study of Higher Education and the American Educational Research Association) have released calls to expand how scholars and practitioners perceive, understand, and promote education, noting education should be more inclusive (Stewart, 2022). This perspective complements other sport scholars' contention that

athletics is a space for education and development and should be brought further into the fold of higher education (Clotfelter, 2019; Coakley, 2008; Foster et al., 2021; Springer & Dixon, 2021; Weight et al., 2020a).

The calls to bring academics and athletics into enhanced alignment are loudest at the Division I level (Clotfelter, 2019; Smith, 2011). Division I is the most high-profile and commercialized level of competition in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which results in the most palpable tension between academics and athletics (Clotfelter, 2019; Gurney et al., 2017). Examining how college athletics may serve as an educational avenue in this context is appropriate. Similarly, examining the education-sport nexus at the Division I level may be more necessary as scholars contend that other levels of competition such as Division II and Division III already promote fairly strong academic-athletic congruence (Clotfelter, 2019; NCAA, 2018; Stevens, 2009). One way to consider how Division I athletics align with academics is by examining sport participation through higher education lenses, such as Chickering and Gamson's (1987) Seven Principles.

Examination of sport as a form of education is significant for a host of reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of literature examining athletics through higher education frameworks and perspectives (Gayles et al., 2018a; Ketcham et al., 2022; Springer & Dixon, 2021). If athletics is ever to gain educational legitimacy by the academy, reframing how scholars and practitioners view and understand sports in an educational setting is critical (Clotfelter, 2019). In this way, the current article urges scholars and practitioners to reconsider, or at least reflect on, the longstanding acceptance that traditionally views intercollegiate athletics as only having entertainment value tangential to education (Brand, 2006; Sperber, 2000). Second, viewing sport participation as a HIP will likely further legitimize athletes as students, working to dismantle the dumb jock stereotype (Edwards, 1984; Stone et al., 2012; Weight et al., 2020a). Indeed, college athletes often perceive their sport experiences as educational and developmental as students, athletes, and people (Ketcham et al., 2022; Weight et al., 2020a). Both aims can be accomplished by extending the Seven Principles to Division I intercollegiate athletics (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Next, Chickering and Gamson's Seven Principles as they relate to the traditional student population are coupled with examples of how the principles are applied to college athletics spaces and foster beneficial educational experiences for college athletes. The article concludes with implications for scholars and leaders in sport and education based on this unique application of the Seven Principles.

The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

Chickering and Gamson (1987) proposed the *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*, in which practitioners and students work together to improve undergraduate learning and development. The authors founded their theory on six forces that, when combined, offer an effective means to improve the college educational experience: activity, expectations, cooperation, interaction, diversity, and responsibility (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). These six forces are also present in intercollegiate athletics (Chalfin et al., 2015; NCAA GOALS, 2020; Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007; Weight et al., 2020a).

The six forces led to the production of the following seven principles: (1) encourage contact between students and faculty, (2) develop reciprocity and cooperation among students, (3) encourage active learning, (4) give prompt feedback, (5) emphasize time on task, (6) communicate high expectations, and (7) respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

Encourage Contact Between Students and Faculty

Chickering and Gamson (1987) argued that frequent faculty-student contact in and outside of the classroom is the most important factor in developing student involvement and motivation because this relationship bolsters students' commitment and values development. Additionally, research since Chickering and Gamson's model has supported the importance of faculty-student interaction (Astin, 1999; Crisp et al., 2017; Dwyer, 2017; Guzzardo et al., 2021; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). For example, using a student-faculty interaction scale, Komarraju and colleagues (2010) examined types of undergraduate student-faculty interactions. The authors discovered that students who interacted more with faculty and found them available and approachable were more likely to report higher levels of academic self-confidence and develop increased motivation (Komarraju et al., 2010). In addition, the more interactions the students had with faculty, the more they experienced joy and felt positively challenged during the learning process. Micari and Pazos (2012) also examined this dyad and discovered that positive faculty-student relationships predicted students' subject confidence and grade. These positive relationships involved faculty approachability, respect for students, and students' admiration for the faculty.

Similarly, research concerning athlete experiences generally supports positive athlete-faculty relationships (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Ketcham et al., 2022; Umbach et al., 2006). For example, Comeaux and Harrison (2011) note that positive interactions between faculty and athletes increase athlete commitment to the institution and academics, improving educational and developmental outcomes (e.g., grade point average, matriculation, critical thinking skills, etc.). Athletic administrators and coaches know this, and often encourage athletes to visit office hours, ask questions in class, and cultivate rapport with faculty members (Grafnetterova et al., 2020; Rubin & Moses, 2017). Not all athletes heed this advice. However, neither do all non-athletes. Umbach and colleagues' (2006) study found that athletes did not differ from their non-athlete peers in positive integration and development activities, such as informal faculty interactions.

In fact, more than two-thirds of NCAA athletes say they have a close relationship with at least one faculty member (NCAA GOALS, 2020). Similarly, in an examination of Division I athlete exit interviews and surveys, Harry (2021) found that 80% of athletes who were asked about their faculty interactions and relationships noted professors were positive forces in their academic careers. Just as positive student-faculty dyads foster learning and growth, so too do healthy athlete-faculty relationships.

Athletes also have opportunities to cultivate relationships with other mentors on campus, most prominently coaches (Jowett & Poczwadowski, 2007; Weight et al., 2015). Traditionally, literature employing the Seven Principles has failed to acknowledge how other campus leaders

outside of faculty (e.g., advisors, student affairs professionals, coaches) influence the experiences of students. This exclusion is a limitation of Chickering and Gamson's (1987) work, but this extension is addressed in this article. While coaches are not faculty, some scholars have acknowledged their roles as educators and their importance in developing athletes in similar ways that faculty can (Brand, 2006; Weight et al., 2015; Weight et al., 2020b). Healthy relationships with coaches and faculty assist athletes in persisting through challenging times, further encouraging them to develop goals and plans post-college (Lu et al., 2018; Weight et al., 2020b). This is not unlike positive faculty-student relationships that assist with student persistence (Crisp et al., 2017; Dwyer, 2017).

Using survey methods, Weight and colleagues (2020b) explored college athletes' experiences with transformative and/or destructive coaches who either strengthened or hindered their self-efficacy belief. Almost 70% indicated they had trained under a transformative coach who offered verbal support, encouragement, and constructive criticism of their athletic performances. Athletes who worked with transformative coaches noted that they were able to push themselves beyond what they believed they were capable of and expand their knowledge and performance. Working with these coaches ultimately resulted in athletes learning about resiliency and overcoming adversity, two key learning components of competing at elite levels in sport and enrolling at institutions with strong academic programs (Weight et al., 2020a). Additionally, the influence of coaches may prove to be even more critical in educating and developing athletes compared to faculty given how much time coaches and athletes spend together (NCAA GOALS, 2020; Weight et al., 2015).

Develop Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students

This principle states that learning is strengthened through teamwork and collaboration among students. Working with classmates can increase involvement, and sharing perspectives and values provides opportunities for understanding and development. Similarly, group work can provide practical applications of course concepts and enable students to engage in more practical experiences prior to entering the job market (Lam, 2015). Group work boosts positive relationships among team members and enhances productivity (Johnson et al., 2014). Additionally, research supports the idea that students learn differently and effectively through collaboration opportunities, such as group projects (Johnson et al., 2014). As long as students are held individually accountable, promote one another, and are positively interdependent (Johnson et al., 2014), this method is powerful for improving undergraduate educational and developmental experiences.

Reciprocity is also one of the most espoused educational components of intercollegiate athletics (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007; Weight et al., 2020a). The team dynamic provides a unique learning opportunity that emphasizes support and collaboration. Even athletes in individual sports practice and train with teammates and have scores that count toward team totals. A synthesis of research by Park et al. (2013) emphasized the importance of teammate relationships in providing informational (e.g., insight into available resources for academic and athletic support and networks during and after college) and emotional support (e.g., encouragement during adversity and mentorship).

Similarly, Rubin and Moses (2017) noted that teammates played a crucial role in establishing a culture that was supportive of athletic, academic, and social endeavors. So, just as group work between students can develop reciprocity through accountability and support (Johnson et al., 2014), the same holds true for athletes and their teammates. Raabe and Zakrajsek (2017) used a survey to explore athletes' perceptions of their teammates' influence on their need satisfaction, or their ability to develop basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Athletes perceived that their teammates positively influenced their satisfaction with the three basic psychological needs, which is akin to findings on student perspectives of working in positive group environments (Johnson et al., 2014). The findings of this study bolster the importance of teammates and collaboration in sport and further the idea that athletics has educational properties much like group activities and assignments.

Finally, most athletes do not enter college as starters and major contributors to their teams. Rather they must develop mentally and physically to master the intricacies of their team systems and learn from peers. This sharing of ideas and responding to others is one of the ways Chickering and Gamson (1987) noted that students, in this case athletes, can be more involved in the development process. As they mature mentally and athletically, athletes understand their roles (e.g., bench warmer, practice player, second string, starter, captain) can change over the course of their eligibility. Their contributions to the team, athletic department, and institution can also increase. As they develop, they also hone their teamwork and leadership skills, with some athletes advancing to captain status. In this case, athletes must gain the trust and respect of their teammates and cooperate even more with the team and coaching staff (Grandzol et al., 2010; Weight et al., 2020b).

Encourage Active Learning

Students learn more when they are actively engaged with the subject (Dwyer, 2017). Any instructional method that engages students in the learning process and encourages meaningful reflection on activities is considered active learning (Prince, 2004). Chickering and Gamson (1987) suggest that through active learning, students reflect, write about, and relate topics to their own experiences. In this way, students "make what they learn part of themselves" (Chickering & Gamson, 1987, p. 4). As such, a recent adaptation from lecture-focused courses to interactive ones can be seen across higher education (Dwyer, 2017; Lumpkin et al., 2015). Active learning, coupled with faculty-student interaction, is the best predictor for students' educational gains (Doyle, 2011; Kuh et al., 1997). Freeman and colleagues (2014) conducted a study examining undergraduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses. They compared students who received active learning opportunities to those with standard lectures and found that students in the active learning sections were significantly more likely to score higher on exams, while students in the traditional lecture were one and a half times more likely to fail the course (Freeman et al., 2014). This and other research demonstrate the importance of active learning in creating student-centered classrooms in maximizing students' academic potential (Doyle, 2011). Additionally, active learning has been shown to have a positive influence on students' persistence through college (Dwyer, 2017).

A powerful tenet of active learning is that it can take place outside of the classroom (Kolb, 2014; Seidman & Brown, 2006), the exact space that college athletics offers (Coffey &

Davis, 2019; Ketchman et al., 2022). For example, athletes in a leadership course can draw upon their individual experiences and engagement with coaches, the athletics director, and others to further understand course topics, such as vision, communication, and leadership orientations. Tightly coupled with active learning is experiential learning, a theory that states learning occurs in stages via experiences (Coffey & Davis, 2019; Kolb, 2014).

Learning is a result of direct activity in particular contexts and these experiences serve as an individual's primary source of knowledge. At the heart of this concept is a four-stage cycle beginning with a concrete experience that flows into the second stage, which is a reflective observation of the action (Kolb, 2014). A concrete experience might be a basketball player missing her free throws and then noticing how these misses overwhelm her and disrupt the remainder of her game, a reflective observation. The third stage involves learning and developing after the experience, or abstract conceptualization. In this example, abstract conceptualization might include the athlete attending a sport psychology lecture and learning about visualization techniques and coping mechanisms she can employ when she starts to notice feelings of disappointment or stress. The fourth stage is active experimentation when the student practices what was learned: the athlete applies her newly acquired visualization and coping strategies to her next basketball game (Kolb, 2014).

By combining the court and classroom contexts, practitioners can emphasize active and experiential learning that allows for greater reflection and development in the college athlete population (Harry & Weight, 2019). Through the lenses of active and experiential learning, Coffey and Davis (2019) examined former college athletes' reflective observations about their classroom and athletics experiences. This sample of athletes noted that when topics were holistically approached through both classroom and sport engagement opportunities, they had better learning outcomes, particularly in their ability to absorb and understand the material. Indeed, "traditional classroom instruction provides opportunities for learning that parallel the experiential learning derived from sports" (Coffey & Davis, 2019, p. 5). Such active learning coupling may also be beneficial for athletes' academic and athletic persistence and matriculation (Dwyer, 2017; Matz, 2020), and offers one explanation of how athletics satisfies Chickering and Gamson's (1987) Seven Principles.

Give Prompt Feedback

For students to advance their learning in a particular area they need effective and timely feedback. Thus, faculty should provide multiple performance opportunities that allow for suggestions and improvement (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Additionally, students should learn how to assess their own competency through the educational process. Research has demonstrated the critical role that timely and constructive feedback play in student developmental success (Braxton et al., 1996; Kuh, 2003; Sorcinelli, 1991). Braxton et al. (1996) found that faculty, regardless of institution or discipline, are supportive of the positive implications that clear and timely feedback can have for enhancing the academic achievement of their students. Students also note the importance of prompt feedback, and recent literature on timely feedback from faculty in online courses notes that this principle should also be translated into e-learning classrooms. For example, Martin and colleagues (2018) surveyed students enrolled in online

courses and asked them to rank the most important qualities of an instructor. Timely feedback and prompt responses on assignments were rated as the most important factors by the students.

Like non-athletes, athletes receive prompt feedback from faculty. They also receive prompt feedback from coaches. Athletes experience this immediate feedback from coaches in practice, games, and film sessions. This feedback not only covers plays and decision-making but also leadership development and sportsmanship. Feedback from coaches is crucial to the growth and motivation of athletes (Rubin & Moses, 2017; Weight et al., 2020b). Coaches are critical sources of information and feedback because they enable athletes to improve preparation and expand their understanding of various concepts, e.g., sports performance, academics, diversity, and inclusion. Clearly, feedback plays a significant part in athletes' academic, athletic, and social roles (Park et al., 2013).

Still, the type of feedback matters: constructive criticism and positive feedback are associated with improved performance and intrinsic motivation in athletes both academically and athletically (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Raabe & Zakrajsek, 2017). Research by Feltz and colleagues (1999) found that high-efficacy coaches employed more timely encouragement and praise than their low-efficacy counterparts. High-efficacy coaches used positive reinforcement strategies and technical instruction that led athletes to achieve desirable outcomes (Feltz et al., 1999). More recently, Weight and colleagues (2020b) found that athletes who said they had coaches who offered positive and constructive feedback believed that they were able to reach their potential on and off the field. These athletes also expressed that such feedback was crucial in cultivating their self-belief during college, after graduation, and across academic and athletic realms. Like non-athletes, prompt and constructive feedback allows athletes to learn from their experiences and improve their performance (Feltz et al., 1999; Raabe & Zakrajsek, 2017; Weight et al., 2020b).

Emphasize Time on Task

Chickering and Gamson (1987) stated: "time plus energy equals learning" (p. 5). Learning time management skills is crucial for students to enhance their college experience and future development. Various scholars have noted that students who devoted appropriate amounts of time and effort to educationally purposeful activities experience enhanced learning (King, 2003; Kuh, 2003). Lahmers and Zalauf (2000) asked students to record their time allocation in a diary and use a time management scale that examined behaviors that did/did not allow for the development of successful time management. Results indicated that time on task (studying) and successful time management skills were positively associated with increased grade point averages. While there is limited research on this principle, time management and time on task have been frequently shown to correlate with academic success (Farrington et al., 2012).

Time on task is also pertinent for the educational development of college athletes. Athletes are dedicated to perfecting their skills, with some reports indicating that athletes spend almost 30 hours per week on their sport on average (NCAA GOALS, 2020). These hours exceed the NCAA-mandated limits of 20 hours per week on sport-related activities (NCAA Manual, 2020), and critics note that this time may take away hours that could be allotted to other extracurricular activities or academics (Gurney et al., 2017). However, the NCAA's most recent

research also indicated that athletes spent almost 40 hours per week on academics, which is more than the time they devote to athletics (NCAA GOALS, 2020).

Importantly, some literature notes the negative implications of too much time spent on athletics, such as identity foreclosure, lack of career development, and isolation from the greater campus community (Gayles et al., 2018a, 2018b; Lu et al., 2018). These are concerns to take seriously in understanding the development of athletes. However, these hours allocated to sport are significant as they teach dedication, hard work, leadership, sportsmanship, compassion, and trust (Chalfin et al., 2015; Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007; Weight et al., 2020a). When taking an NCAA-sponsored survey, athletes were asked if they considered themselves to be dedicated athletes. On a scale of strongly agree (6) to strongly disagree (1), athlete respondents averaged a score of 5.40, demonstrating a high level of devotion to their athletic development (NCAA GOALS, 2020). If the sport-related time on task was reframed using Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles, this time on sport could be appreciated as educational and developmental. With this in mind, the time athletes devoted to sports is time spent in pursuit of a newly appreciated educational and growth-centric endeavor. Athletes' time spent on sport can be viewed as the essence of time on task.

Communicate High Expectations

Faculty should set high expectations for all students, regardless of their motivation, preparation, or skill level (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Research demonstrates that when faculty appropriately challenge students, they will make extra efforts to meet that challenge (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Lundberg & Schreinder, 2004). However, some studies have found that faculty hold different expectations for students based on race/ethnicity, gender, and first-generation status (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Arum & Roksa, 2011; Collier & Morgan, 2008). These varied expectations often stem from White dominant perspectives and wrongly socialized beliefs about certain groups of students, their motivations, and intellectual capabilities (Patton et al., 2016). Still, Lundberg et al. (2018) found Latinx students responded well to high expectations: the students worked hard to meet faculty expectations and therefore experienced more gains in their general education tracks. When faculty hold high expectations, students are often more likely to develop and push themselves to succeed (Arum & Roksa, 2011).

When faculty hold lower expectations for athletes, these students are more likely to fall victim to stereotype threat, affirm the "dumb jock" stereotype, and struggle to reach their intellectual potential (Edwards, 1984; Harrison et al., 2006; Lawrence, 2009; Stone et al., 2012). The "dumb jock" stereotype holds that athletes are academically inferior to their non-athlete peers and are not on campus to gain an education, but rather to play their sport (Wininger & White, 2015). The "dumb jock" stereotype does not account for the developmental opportunities and learning pathways facilitated through athletics participation. Research by Comeaux (2011) demonstrated that faculty hold athletes and non-athletes to different standards. In a survey completed by faculty at a public Division I school, respondents noted negative connotations of college athletes, particularly concerning intellect, special services, and achievements outside of sport (Comeaux, 2011). Faculty did not hold the same prejudices toward non-athletes. Such disparate experiences between student groups are concerning as they can lead to inequitable and hostile experiences for athletes. College athletes who have faculty and mentors who challenge,

stimulate, and encourage them to attend graduate school have higher levels of academic success than athletes who do not have the same level of positive interactions (Harrison et al., 2006; Harry, 2021). Similarly, non-athletes who develop strong mentorship relationships with faculty and others in the academy are more likely to continue to graduate school (Crisp et al., 2017).

Finally, athletes are familiar with and used to high expectations from family, peers, coaches, and themselves (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). The concept of exceeding expectations is often ingrained in athletes from the time they begin participating in their sport, through their collegiate careers, and beyond. Coaches, in their prompt feedback, often communicate these high expectations. Research from Weight et al. (2020b) demonstrated athletics' facilitation of this sixth principle: athletes who had high expectations of themselves and felt that their coaches held them accountable to these standards had more successful sport experiences than athletes and coaches who had lower expectations.

Respect Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

Each student brings a unique learning style and talent to classrooms and subject matters. Students should be afforded the chance to showcase their talents and learn in ways that enhance their education. Then, they can be exposed to different ways and encouraged to accept diverse perspectives. Faculty who honor diversity in their classrooms are more likely to develop their students holistically (Schwarzenthal et al., 2020; Sorcinelli, 1991). This acceptance of diverse perspectives could be demonstrated by appreciating different forms of cultural capital students from various backgrounds bring with them to college (O'Shea, 2016). For example, Yosso (2005) proposed that historically oppressed groups of students, such as students of color and those from low economic brackets, have unique cultural capital that helps them succeed. Such capital includes aspirational capital that keeps them resilient in their educational goals and resistant capital that helps them challenge injustices in educational systems (Yosso, 2005).

Students from non-traditional or minoritized backgrounds should be appreciated for their diverse talents and ways of knowing, and instructors' views of these groups should shift from a deficit to an asset-based perspective. Other research has noted that such acceptance leads not only to academic success, but also to personal development and persistence (Jack, 2016; O'Shea, 2016). Samuelson and Litzler (2016) interviewed 31 Black and Latinx students who reflected on their time enrolled in engineering programs that emphasized diversity, inclusion, and cultural wealth. Students in this study noted the importance of this philosophy in their feelings of overall support from faculty and ultimately their matriculation (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016). Guzzardo and colleagues (2021) also noted that faculty who were more inclusive created accepting environments, resulting in students feeling valued, more confident in their ability to succeed, and willing to develop in ways that they previously might not have. Additionally, this principle requires faculty to broaden their definitions of success and student development and embrace new epistemological perspectives about education (Lustbader, 1999).

Historically, the academy has discredited athletics as an educational experience, focusing instead on its extracurricular nature and tangential relationship with the mission of higher education (Brand, 2006; Clotfelter, 2019; Weight et al., 2020a). This perspective neglects diverse talents and other ways of learning, while further isolating athletes and athletics from the heart of

higher education (Brand, 2006; Weight & Huml, 2016). Indeed, many scholars contend that such perspectives are an inequitable way to view college athletes (Brand, 2006; Springer & Dixon, 2021; Weight & Huml, 2016; Winingar & White, 2015). Students bring to college an array of talents and ways of learning (Bowman et al., 2011; Patton et al., 2016) and one of these is through sport. When one of the athletes' modes of education and development is not appreciated in the same ways as other students, their college experience is invalidated. By respecting intercollegiate athletics, athletes may be encouraged to showcase their talents both athletically and academically, and therefore develop stronger feelings of belonging at their institutions and further increase their engagement.

Gayles et al. (2018b) expanded on athletes' sense of belonging, or feelings of connection and isolation within their campus community. The authors found that athletes felt a higher sense of belonging and developed more academically when institutional climates were positive and respectful of their identities as athletes (Gayles et al., 2018b). Additionally, when athletes feel supported by the academy, they become more accepting of learning from others and respecting others outside of athletics (Gayles et al., 2018b; Rankin et al., 2016). NCAA research found that 81% of Division I athletes reported that their sports experiences in college have made them more understanding of others who are different from them (NCAA GOALS, 2020). Just as classrooms serve as spaces to engage with and respect diverse talents, athletics environments can offer similar educational pathways and benefits.

Implications

The early works of some scholars, such as Chickering and Gamson (1987), have been critiqued, noting that the work may not adequately reflect the experiences of all students, particularly those from underrepresented or stigmatized groups (Patton et al., 2016). While Chickering and Gamson (1987) stated their principles are appropriate for a variety of students, some scholars have questioned whether their framework is culturally sensitive. This is a limitation of this paper and the work of Chickering and Gamson (1987). However, the Seven Principles were designed to be generalizable (Sorcinelli, 1991) to reach most practitioners and students and continue to be widely used in practice throughout higher education. Similarly, other critical scholars have worked to adapt these principles to be more inclusive (Patton et al., 2016). So, the Seven Principles are an appropriate lens through which to view practices in higher education and extend them to the context of athletics. This article expands on the work of equity-driven scholars (Patton et al., 2016; Stewart, 2022) by making this framework inclusive of learning avenues present in college athletics.

Springer and Dixon (2021) contended that a central issue of athlete development literature rests in the need to expand education frameworks to explore intercollegiate athletics spaces. Such a framework expansion improves practitioner understanding of athletes' experiences while providing "a more comprehensive overview of areas of congruence and incongruence between sport programs and the educational institutions they represent" (Springer & Dixon, 2021, p. 194). This work addresses this call to action by Springer and Dixon (2021) and notes the ways in which athletics, when viewed from the perspective of the Seven Principles, positively intertwines with the academic missions of postsecondary education. As such, there are a host of important implications stemming from this innovative shift in thought.

First, understanding intercollegiate athletics participation as an educational endeavor is the first step in expanding the academic and athletic communities' epistemological view of education (Stewart, 2022). Additionally, subsequent implementation and expansion of this way of knowing can foster an improved understanding of athletes' experiences. Epistemologically, higher education has promoted the notion that declarative knowledge, or "knowing that" (Brand, 2006, p. 12), is the most valuable form of knowledge attainment (Kuh, 2003). Declarative or factual knowledge is valuable and a common component of educational curricula; however, an overemphasis on this type of knowledge expression often limits the appreciation of procedural knowledge, or "knowledge 'how'" (Brand, 2006, p. 12). Scholars across a host of disciplines contend that knowing "how" is just as powerful and important for education and development (Brand, 2006; Freeman et al., 2014; Kolb, 2014; Kuh, 2003; Lumpkin et al., 2015; Weinberg & Gould, 2019). Knowing "how" is at the heart of elite sport participation.

Second, critics of intercollegiate sport note that the relationship between the academy and athletics is an "uneasy marriage" (Clotfelter, 2019, p. 26). Thus, viewing intercollegiate athletics from the educational lens of the Seven Principles may assist in mitigating some tensions between academics and athletics on Division I campuses (Clotfelter, 2019; Matz, 2020; Weight & Huml, 2016; Weight et al., 2015).

Applying Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles to sport may improve understanding between the academic and athletic arms of campuses. Academic advisors, student development directors, administrators, and coaches in athletic departments would benefit from education or training in the Seven Principles as they relate to intercollegiate athletics. Once these practitioners cultivate an appreciation of this perspective of athletics, they may be able to develop athletes more holistically in their programs. For example, the Seven Principles could be the foundation for a seminar series to show athletes how they can grow their athletic capital to flourish in multiple spheres. Each week one of the principles could be highlighted while athletes reflect on how their experiences inside and outside of sport enable them to work on that principle. While athletes often note their strenuous time demands, many do not consider how these constraints help them develop transferrable life skills such as time management, leadership, ownership of responsibility, and problem-solving (Harry & Weight, 2019). Using the fifth principle of time on task, athlete development directors could encourage athletes to think about time demands and time devoted to various tasks in a new, more positive light. Such thinking could be beneficial for athletes post-graduation as they interview for jobs and draw connections from their athletics experiences to their potential careers (Chalfin et al., 2015).

With training in this unique perspective, coaches can further see themselves as critical leaders and educators in athletes' lives (Weight et al., 2015). Coaches could offer improved mentorship by engaging with athletes' academic and social endeavors and their goals outside of sports. Athlete anecdotes from previous scholarship (Weight et al., 2020b) have noted their appreciation for coaches who value them as people beyond their courts and fields of competition.

Similarly, faculty and academic administrators could receive education from this perspective. Previous scholarship noted that faculty do not understand intercollegiate athletics, particularly how an activity that has historically been classified as extracurricular without

educational value serves institutional missions of teaching, research, and service (Brand, 2006; Clotfelter, 2019). Additionally, most faculty and academic leaders see athletics as a business, fostering tensions between sport and education (Clotfelter, 2019; Sperber, 2000). Other faculty are ambivalent toward athletics and college athletes (Lawrence, 2009). With knowledge from this framework, members of the academy may begin to care about athletics' role in higher education and the educational experiences of college athletes, both inside and outside of the classroom. This reconsideration of the educational value of athletics includes the sixth principle of holding athletes to high expectations and helping them achieve or even exceed their goals. With this, faculty and academic administrators may start valuing the educational and developmental contributions of sport.

Once the academy and members of athletics understand this perspective, tensions currently reinforcing the separation of sport and education could decrease. For example, tensions about athletes being unmotivated or “dumb jocks” could be mitigated as practitioners and scholars realize how athletes earn their education in the classroom and through athletic competitions. If athletes feel more respected (such as through the seventh principle), they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and engage in the campus community both within and outside of athletics (Astin, 1999; Gayles et al., 2018b). Integration may open the door for increased communication across campus, improved collaboration through programming and policies, and enhanced educational and developmental outcomes for athletes.

Third, with the above in mind, academic practitioners (e.g., faculty, academic advisors, administrators) can use this adapted framework to develop athletes holistically while respecting athletics as an avenue for involvement and growth. When appropriate and applicable, faculty could use more athletics-centric examples in their course materials or ask athletes to provide examples of how a sport experience is relevant to topics in the lecture. Faculty have taken steps to provide such examples that engage other student groups (Kachani et al., 2020). Similar respect should be provided regarding the experiences of athletes. These actions capitalize on the seventh principle—respecting diverse talents and ways of learning—by showing students that athletics has academic components, instead of simple entertainment value that only jocks participate in (Brand, 2006; Wininger & White, 2015). This reframing could develop a more trusting, transparent, and respectful relationship between athletes and faculty, a weakness both sides of campus have expressed needs improvement (Clotfelter, 2019; Lawrence, 2009). Additionally, such respect of sport-for-development may encourage athletes to make more consistent contact with faculty, highlighting the first principle. Practitioners are encouraged to consider how they can develop athletes through these principles.

A fourth innovative yet controversial way to expand upon Chickering and Gamson's (1987) framework in sports is through developing and implementing an athletics-centric curriculum (Brand, 2006; Harry & Weight, 2019; Matz, 2020). Such integration truly proves that the academy values athletics as an educational endeavor worthy of academic credit. Harry and Weight (2019) surveyed a variety of athletic stakeholders including athletes, coaches, administrators, and faculty, and found a moderate interest in an athletics-centric curriculum. Participants in the study voiced how athletics had served as an educational and developmental avenue for them, with one respondent saying: “I have learned things through my participation on a team that I never would have learned anywhere else... The lessons learned are applicable to

life post-graduation and should be treated just like any other experiential education” (p. 24). Thus, it appears that mutual respect and appreciation for diverse talents and ways of learning between academic and athletic arms of college campuses can cultivate a better athlete experience.

An athletics-centric curriculum capitalizes on the unique opportunities that athletes are afforded and encompasses all seven principles. Constructing such a curriculum would immediately appreciate diverse talents and ways of learning. Those enrolled would engage with faculty and academic administrators, potentially working with coaches and athletic administrators, too. Faculty and athletics leaders could collaborate to organize or even teach these courses (with faculty holding the grading authority). Additionally, cooperation among students is a main tenet in athletics and could be emphasized off the courts and fields through group work in the courses, achieving the principle of student reciprocity. Pairing some experiences athletes might have on the court or field with the classroom would ensure active learning and emphasize appropriate time on task (principles three and five, respectively; Coffey & Davis, 2019). As with traditional students enrolled in other majors, this active learning could lead to improved grades and engagement (Doyle, 2011; Freeman et al., 2014). Finally, students enrolled in the curriculum would be held to rigorous expectations and receive prompt feedback from their various instructors.

Because an athletics-centric curriculum would include performance-based activities, this curriculum could be modeled after other performance-based majors such as music, theater, or art (Brand, 2006; Jenkins, 2020; Lombardi, 2014). Most art performance students, once general education requirements are satisfied, move into major courses focusing on areas such as history, theory, sociology, composition and performance, internships, and elective courses. An athletics curriculum counterpart could include similar offerings: sports history, theory and game strategy, sociology, psychology and performance, internships, and a host of electives (Matz, 2020). The fourth implication offers a brief overview of such a curricular design, as an in-depth discussion is outside of the scope of the current scholarship.

Fifth, this research could serve as a catalyst for future scholars seeking to extend higher education models to intercollegiate athletics. Scholars have argued that there has been limited consideration of college student development in intercollegiate athletics spaces (Gayles et al., 2018a; Springer & Dixon, 2021). Expanding student development implementation to athletics could foster improved educational outcomes for college athletes and may shift the landscape to be more aligned with higher education (Brand, 2006; Springer & Dixon, 2021).

Conclusion

Chickering and Gamson (1987) note that “these principles seem like good common sense, and they are” (p. 2). These principles apply to intercollegiate athletics. Athletics and academic practitioners alike can employ this extension of the Seven Principles: (1) encourage contact between students and faculty, (2) develop reciprocity and cooperation among students, (3) encourage active learning, (4) give prompt feedback, (5) emphasize time on task, (6) communicate high expectations, and (7) respect diverse talents and ways of learning. Doing so

will serve as a first step to meeting the missions of the NCAA and higher education to develop and bring education back into the fold of intercollegiate athletics.

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