A large, light gray watermark of the Rowan University logo is centered in the background. It features a stylized torch with a flame at the top, set within a circular frame. The text of the title is overlaid on this watermark.

**MULTIMETHOD STUDY OF A HIGHER
EDUCATION SPECIAL ADMISSIONS POLICY:
EXPLORING HOW STUDENT-ATHLETES
NAVIGATE THEIR EDUCATIONAL
EXPERIENCES**

*Sean P. Hendricks, Ed.D.
Assistant Director of
Academic Transition Programs
Rowan University*

Agenda

- Purpose
- Design
- Data Collection
- Data Analysis
- Findings
 - RQs
- Discussion
- Implications



THE SPECIALLY ADMITTED STUDENT-ATHLETE

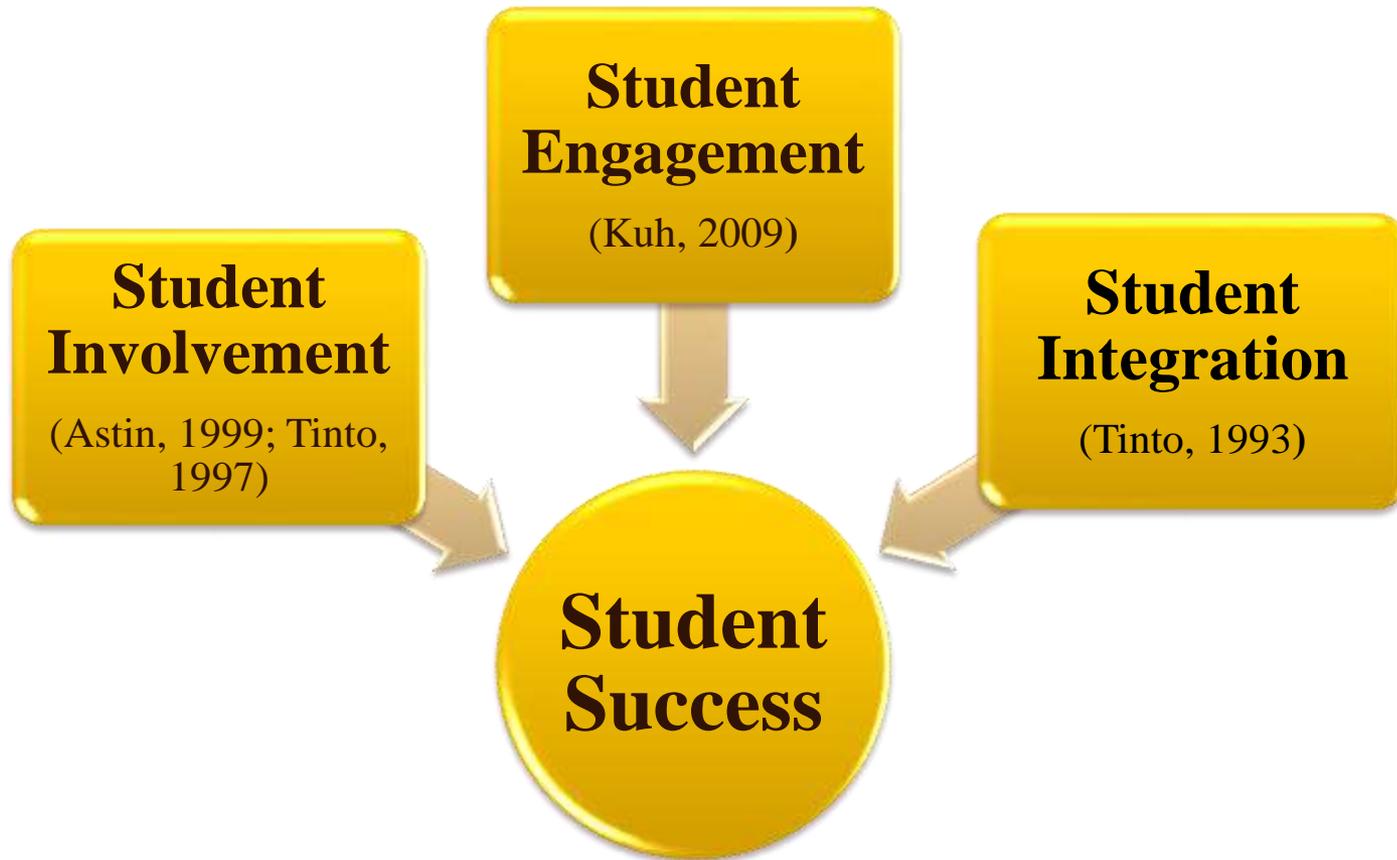
- Background – Advocacy Perspective
 - “an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers’ lives” (Creswell, 2007, p.21).
- Problem Statement
- Context (Kerry State University)
- Participants (Division III)
 - 820 SAT and 2.0 GPA



Purpose of the Study

- To explore the challenges that specially admitted student-athletes endure
- To add to the literature surrounding student-athletes at the Division III level
- To provide the support needed for this population to succeed

Theoretical Framework



(Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009)

Research Questions

- (1) What challenges do specially admitted student-athletes encounter at Kerry State University as they navigate their academic experiences?
- (2) What support systems are currently in place to aid student-athletes as they enroll and advance toward graduation at Kerry State University?
- (3) In what ways do the challenges specially admitted student-athletes endure help to explain the academic standing of these students?
- (4) What significant themes emerged as a result of this mixed methods research project?

Methodology

Explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011)

Rationale (Bryman, 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Green, 2008; Ivankova, et al., 2006; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009)

- analyze quantitative results before collecting rich, thick qualitative data (Ivankova, et al., 2006).

Strategy of Inquiry: Within Site Case Study (Yin, 2003)

- Yin (2003), “A case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomenon” (p. 1).

The Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design



The Explanatory Sequential Design. Adapted from “Prototypical Versions of the Six Major Mixed Methods Research Designs” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 69).

Data Collection

Multiple Data Collection Approaches

“both smooth and jagged, full of certainties alongside possibilities and even surprises” (Greene, 2008, p. 20).

Quantitative (Questionnaire)

- Piloted (Validity)
- Closed and open-ended questions (15)
- Used to gather preliminary data

Qualitative (Interview Protocol)

- Piloted (Validity)
- Open-ended questions (10)
- Given priority (Creswell, 2007)

Sampling Techniques

Quantitative

- Convenience and nonprobabilistic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011)
- Included every specially admitted student-athlete willing to participate

Qualitative

- Intensity sampling
- “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely” (Patton, 2002, p. 243).

Participants and Response Rate

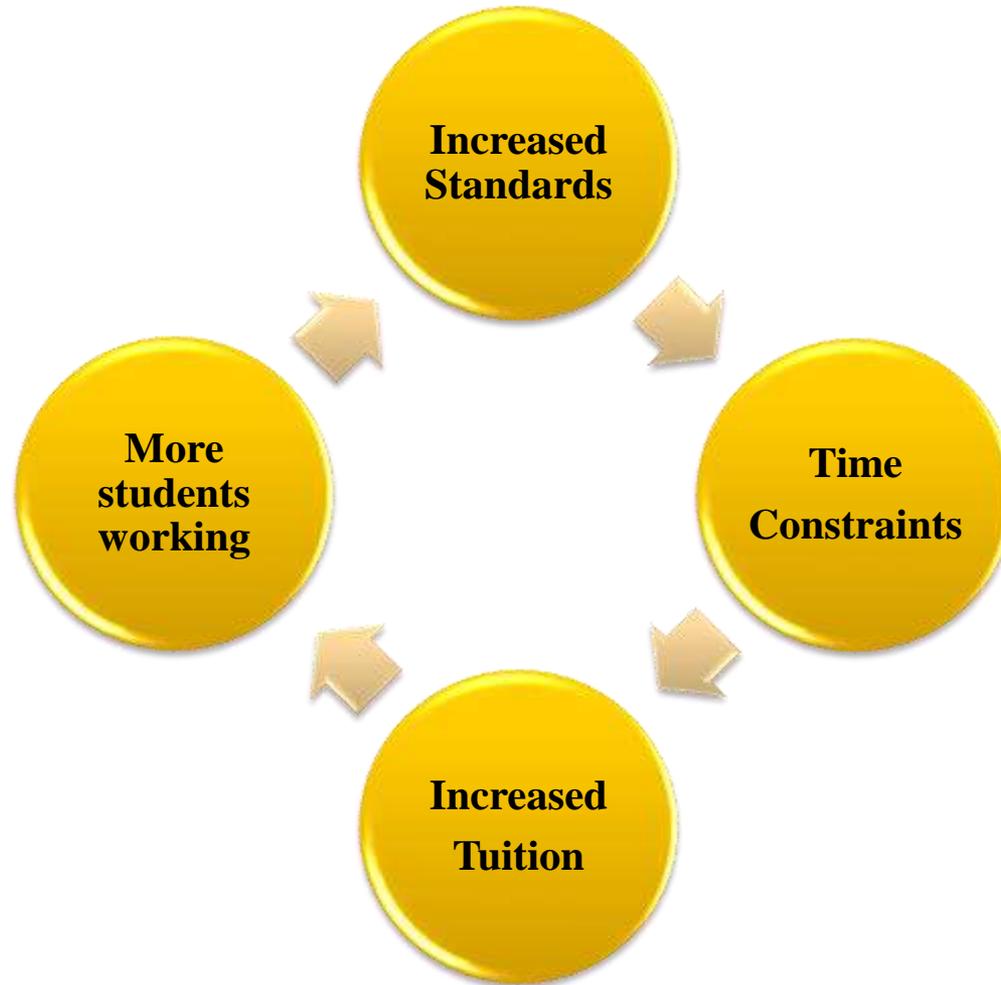
- 199 Specially Admitted Student-Athletes (2007-2011)
- Quantitative (Questionnaire)
 - 45 of 199 (22.6%)
- Qualitative (Interviews)
 - 12 specially admitted student-athletes (8, 2, 2)
 - 8 athletic department personnel

Data Analysis

- Institutional Data (academic standing)
- Quantitative (Descriptive statistical methods)
 - “be able to understand the data, detect patterns and relationships, and better communicate the results” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 258).
- Qualitative (Saldana, 2009)
 - In vivo Coding
 - Pattern Coding
- Mixing of Data (Ivankova et al., 2006)

FINDINGS

RQ 1. Challenges



RQ 1. Challenges

- **Rise in the Enrollment Standards**

- 2009 (1,066) – 2013 (1,111)
- 45 point increase
- Special admit scores stagnant

Men's head coach, "Our profile has also gone up. The students that get here are in the classroom with better students than let's say 10-15 years ago. There are more challenges associated with the increased academic rigor."

- **Time Constraints**

- Structured schedule in-season
- Practice, weight training, film sessions, study hall, attending class, studying, and working

Men's student-athlete, "The schedule of playing a sport and attending class was crazy. I often times felt overwhelmed and wasn't prepared. I hung out with friends way too much and didn't do my work enough."

- **Burden of Increased Tuition**

- Increased tuition six of last seven years
- More student-athletes working
- Less time for educationally meaningful activities (student involvement)

Women's student-athlete, "I'm not really into track this year. I feel like I don't have time to play this year. I'm tired all the time and I have a job. I work at Shoprite. I am in my own apartment and I have bills to pay."

RQ 2. Support Systems

Student Engagement

- Essential component to student success (Kuh, 2009)
- Special programming?
- 31% felt institution not at all committed or only somewhat committed

Academic advisor, “If you look at Division I institutions, they may have anywhere between 3-20 academic advisors (for athletics). They have someone looking over them (student-athletes) in the event that they don't go to class or aren't doing the things that they need to do.”

Student Involvement

- Clubs and Organizations
- Coaches Role
- Isolating Element to Participating in Athletics
- What if the student-athlete stops participating?

Women's student-athlete, “I am not involved in anything else. Everything I do is through the athletic department.”

Men's student-athlete, “It would have been nice if someone would have followed up with me after I stopped playing. I felt like since I wasn't playing anymore, no one cared. I stopped going to class and no one checked in on me at all.”

RQ. 3 Challenges and Academic Success

	Graduated	Pursuing	No Longer Pursuing
2007	20 (51%)	0 (0%)	19 (49%)
2008	16 (67%)	2 (8%)	6 (25%)
2009	13 (27%)	17 (35%)	18 (38%)
2010	2 (4%)	30 (67%)	13 (29%)
2011	0 (0%)	34 (79%)	9 (21%)

28% of the 2007 class left after or during their first year

RQ 4. The Athlete-Student

Men's student-athlete, "My biggest challenge has been balancing my time between football and school. They say you are a student-athlete but in actuality you're really an athlete-student."

The Athlete-Student

- Perceptions
 - 20% not at all or only somewhat committed
- Internal Conflict

Academic advisor, "Many times the sport is the driving force rather than the other way around."

Men's student-athlete, "Football is very important and even though the coaches say that being a student is more important, I feel like they hold football over being a student. Sometimes you feel like which one is a priority, like which one are you going to pick. Should I go out and practice or should I study more?"

Discussion

Division I

- Full scholarships
- Sliding Scale
- Lower enrollment scores
- Academic advisors to stay eligible
- Academic fraud issues
- Path to graduation?
- Andrew Wiggins

Division III

- No athletic scholarships
- No uniform admission standards
- Lower enrollment scores
- Resource and programming issues (coaches as advisors)
- Burden of not graduating - student loans without a degree

Implications

Research

- Additional research for Division III student-athletes
- Support and programming
- Multi-case study (Yin, 2003)
- Differences in sport and gender



Implications

Practice

- College success course for all specially admitted student-athletes
- Increased communication between athletics department and advising center

Policy

- Uniform admission standards for Division III
- Long term impact of enrolling and not completing a program

College Success Course

General Findings of Course

- Immature Pre-frontal cortex – impulsive
- Tech savvy – but can't format a paper
- Writing is an issue
- Lack ownership of their academic journey



Conclusion

- Specially admitted student-athletes enroll with lower scores and are not supported in their academic endeavors
- Students face challenges that make the process of navigating their education pathways difficult
- Additional support and research is needed

Thank you!

Questions?

Contact Information

Sean Hendricks, Ed.D.

Rowan University

hendrickss@rowan.edu

856-256-5655