

Report

Intercollegiate Athletic Committee

Senior Athlete Verbal Exit Interviews – Fall 2018

A total of five interviews were conducted in the Fall of 2018 out of a possible 18 graduates. These interviews included student athletes involved in [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. All of the student athletes were extremely positive in their compliments of the Office of Student Life (OSL), the University Athletic Association (UAA) and the University of Florida (UF).

Experience with Tutors

The use of tutors was reported to be nearly 2-3 times a week in the first couple of years, and then it tapered off quite a bit after that. Once a major was declared a student stated that maybe tutors were used once a week if needed. Some student athletes needed tutors more than others. Occasionally, a student athlete will change tutors when the fit between them and the tutor is off. Tutors continue to be a valued part of the student athlete experience at UF.

None of the students interviewed stated that there was never a time the athletes needed tutors that one was not available. A good general tutor is highly valued by the student athletes and the student athletes like to stay with one tutor if the fit is good. One student stated that they used the same tutor for their junior and senior years. It is normal for the tutors to change based on the specific courses a student athlete is taking during a given semester. All of the student athletes rated the tutoring sessions as “extremely” and most tutors as “they know their material,” and “there when you need them”.

Experience with Registration and Program Advising

This semester, the students represented majors in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences (2), Political Science (1) and Sport Management (2). The student athletes noted that they were always able to register for the classes needed to progress toward their graduation every term, including most of the electives that they desired. All of the student athletes relied heavily on both the Office of Student Life advisor as well as departmental advisors. In fact, one student athlete indicated they would not even know who to contact at Farrior hall for advising since the OSL advisor handled registration so well. All advisors were very helpful when it came to advising the student athletes. Student athletes tend to rely more heavily on advising from the Office of Student Life until they reach their final undergraduate semesters.

Student athletes indicated they were never advised to take a class that would hinder her progress toward graduation. Some of the student athletes admitted they should have been more knowledgeable about the process of the tracking audit for their majors. Some students indicated that they visited their advisors often, sometimes 2-3 times a week- sometimes just to “hang out”.

This indicates the advisors are very warm and personable. Two students (from the same sport) indicated that the advisor would have daily grade sheets, assignments, etc, that the students would bring to the coach (██████) and once the coach signed off the sheet would be returned to the advisor. This indicates a good relationship between all parties with ample knowledge of course activities.

Student athletes overwhelmingly love the physical space and resources they have at the new Hawkins Center. For many it is a great place to study and to stay focused on academics.

Conflicts and Resolution in Athletic and Academic Schedules

The student athletes described academic advisors as “very skilled” at resolving course schedule conflicts as well as being skilled at resolving conflicts between course scheduling and the athletic schedules. When asked about scheduling conflicts between courses and practice and athletic events, the most common comment was that it takes good communication between the student athlete and the instructors so that surprises are kept to a minimum and conflicts can be worked out. None of the student athletes complained of key course schedules that conflicted with practice schedules or any issues with any instructors. Faculty were very responsive and understanding.

Perception of Importance Placed on Academic Success

The student athletes all indicated that there is a high priority placed on academic success. This was publicly stated by the coaches and their coaching staffs for the sports during this interview period. There were many cases when the coaches willingly change practice schedules to accommodate the needs of a course, or exam schedule. A couple of the student athletes indicated this semester was a struggle to balance the need to practice and to maintain high academic expectations. In one sport it was indicated that each week the coach would check grades/assignments/etc with each student and were always aware of exams. This may be the case for all sports, but it was verbalized independently by two students from the same sport.

Although all the sports programs indicated that all the coaches will talk about the importance of academics, but it was hinted that for some coaches (assistant coaches in particular) the primary motivation for academic importance may just be to maintain academic eligibility and that athletic performance is critical at the University of Florida. In fairness to UF coaching staffs, hearing the underlying current of maintaining academic eligibility was the same as in other semesters.

What change would you make about your experience as a Gator athlete?

Here is as list of responses to this question:

- Not a thing (3).
- Take the educational side more seriously. It wasn't until later in the academic career that the importance of getting a great education really sunk in. Very impressed by the ██████ player that came back to finish his degree. He would be a great spokesperson for the

university about the importance of the right perspective between playing [REDACTED] and getting an education.

- Pay more attention to what it takes to be a successful student athlete at the University of Florida.
- “Be more disciplined about how I studied as a Freshman and Sophomore. This particular learned he was more successful academically when he studied by himself as opposed to studying with other student athletes (studying in groups is promoted by the Office of Student Life).
- Would do a better job of not getting behind in school in the freshman year.
- Getting to know more of the student athletes on campus.
- Attend more of the events on campus to be more of a student (get involved in clubs, etc.).

What is the best thing about being a Gator student athlete?

List of responses include:

- [REDACTED] Game day experience at UF is fantastic. Love the fan support [REDACTED]
- Being a student athlete gave her a larger purpose for being at UF. Helps to fill up her day, especially since many of the classes were online in business.
 - To continue a sport that was loved beyond high school.
 - Loved competing for UF.
 - Student athletes have the ability to extend their influence and circle of friends beyond athletics if they choose to do so.
 - The community of student athletes is a tight knit community. There is a lot of pride in being a Gator student athlete.
 - Going to all sporting events for free.
 - Being a student athlete gives you an immediate family on campus verses being 1 of 50,000 students.
 - Resources- So many things are provided to student athletes.
 - People always willing to help.
 - Hawkins center was great, all recourses are available in one place – a real life saver.
 - People want you to succeed.

What is the worst thing about being a Gator student athlete?

Comments include:

- Non-student athletes mostly don’t understand the training schedule our student athletes maintain in addition to being full-time students.
- Losing sleep because of the demands of training and taking just a little time off can mean you lose you athletic edge. Some sports [REDACTED] has little down time during the year.
- Need for better time management and prioritizing (2).

- The need to constantly stay focused and to manage your time. It is the only way to succeed academically and athletically.
- Constant pressure to perform at a high level.
- Everything is a schedule. A student athlete's life is highly regimented and revolves around schedules.
- None!

Contributions of Office of Student Life influence your academic success.

- Was a second home.
- A guide to success.
- Played a huge part in academic progress
- Had all resources in one place
- Always a place to go and study in private or in social group setting
- Liked that it was open early.

Plans after graduation

A few of the student athletes are attempting professional careers in their sports [REDACTED] while another had a professional [REDACTED] career and is now working on his second career. Most want to do something that makes a difference and something related to their majors at UF. One planning on doing an internship in a company in Calif. Another looking into grad school to get into coaching. Wants to work with children with disabilities and get them into sports activities.

Staying connected to UF

All the students interviewed in this cycle plan to stay connected to UF in one way or another (connected via sport).