Impact of Playing a Collegiate Sport on Retention Rates

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EDUC 400: Senior Research Project
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12/16/10
Background

- Trinity College softball player
- Previous projects on more specific aspects of playing a sport
  - Reasons why men and women participate in sports
  - How sports affect athletes’ grades
- Broader topic for this study: impact of playing sports in college
Research Question

• How does playing a collegiate sport affect a student’s chance to remain at the same college for all four years (i.e. not dropout or transfer)?
Significance

- Playing a collegiate sport is a popular and growing phenomenon
- Answer broader questions of playing a sport in college
- Future recommendations
Lit Review

- Retention rates can be a measure of success at a school
  - GPA, SAT scores, academic climate, professor relationships, gender, student beliefs, past performances (Johnson 1997 & DeBerard et. al. 2004)
- Better time management, making new friends, making better decisions: all contribute to success in academics and athletics (DeBerard et. al. 2004 & Bennet 2007)
- Community Colleges face the most amount of dropout and transfer students (Hoyt 1999 & Horton 2009)
  - Participation in sports and college expenditures play a role (Wyman 1997)
- Sports put a huge emotional and physical strain on athletes, which can hinder grades (Despres et al 2008)
- NESCAC conference has placed restrictive rules on sports (Jacobson 2002)
Methods

- Electronic survey sent to all Trinity College athletes
- 220 responses; 139 acceptable results
- 20 questions: multiple choice, write-in, open-ended
- Minor biases
  - Involvement in sports
  - Recoding of variables
  - Small sample size
Thesis

- Playing sports at Trinity College has given the athletes a very positive outlook on Trinity that makes them want to stay here; additionally, the more a team or individual wins, the more this perception of Trinity’s campus is enhanced.
“I can't imagine my experience at Trinity without [sports]...it really adds so much to my overall collegiate experience and I'd feel imbalanced if I didn’t”.
Data and Analysis

- Fairly even distribution of participants regarding sport, sex, and class year
- Three main dependent variables
  - Overall experience, best athletic experience, how playing a sport at Trinity has impacted a participant’s experience
- 10 out of 27 cross references were rendered significant
Data and Analysis

- Athletes who were recruited rated their overall experience higher than those who “walked on”
- Sport played varied when looking at impact on an athlete’s experience at Trinity
- Upperclassmen chose championships; under classman chose individual games
- For best athletic experience, the most chosen themes included winning
Quotation

My best athletic experience at Trinity is...

“When we win, our team is great and everything feels awesome. The team has a lot of fun together, more so this year than past years”.


Higher player-coach ratings meant higher overall ratings

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<th>Player-Coach Relationship</th>
<th>Horrible Experience</th>
<th>Overall Experience</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Athletes in the Social Sciences rated their overall experience highest.

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</table>
Data Analysis

- Insignificant data
  - Winning and losing sports and overall experience
  - Sex and overall experience
Conclusion

- The thesis was repeatedly supported

  “[Playing a sport] is the single greatest reason as to why I have enjoyed my time here”.

- Room and need for further research
- Important to aid future athletes and non-athletes alike
Quotations

“I love being on a team! Makes me feel like I'm not just another Trinity student, but rather a “Trinity athlete”.”

“I view [playing a sport] as an extension of my education”.

Thank you!

- Professor Elliott
- Classmates
- Rachel Barlow
- Robin Sheppard
- Mike Renwick
Resources


