On the Same Team?
Student-Athlete and Faculty Relations at Trinity College

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Educational Studies Senior Research Project
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Personal Background

- Senior, from Long Island, New York
- Double Major: Educational Studies & Sociology
- 3.0 GPA
- Four-Year Letter Winner for Varsity Football at Trinity College
Research Question

- What is the overall academic perception Trinity College faculty members have of varsity student-athletes and how does this perception compare to the academic persona that Trinity College varsity athletes have?
Significance of My Research

- **The Game of Life**
  - Literature, written by James L. Shulman and William G. Bowen, that was read and discussed in our Educational Studies Senior Seminar.
  - Conference held earlier this semester at Trinity College based on the book’s subject matter.

- **Life as a Student-Athlete at Trinity College**
  - Personal feelings of needing to hide my affiliation with the college’s football team to faculty members due negative academic perceptions placed on student-athletes.
What I Hope to Attain Through My Research

- I hope to uncover any significant differences between student-athletes and faculty members at Trinity College concerning academic performance and mindset of student-athletes.

- Hopefully, if any differences are discovered, future work can be done to better the relationships between student-athletes and faculty members.

- I am **NOT** looking to provide solutions to any existing problems between student-athletes and faculty members.

- I also am **NOT** interested in whose views are “right” and whose are “wrong”.
I believe there is a significant gap between student-athletes and faculty members at Trinity College, in regards to understanding one another. I feel faculty members have generalized the academic work ethic of student-athletes as poor and not up to the “academic standards of Trinity College.” Hopefully, with honest participation from both faculty members and student-athletes, we will see that such generalizations exist, but are not accurate.
Methodology

- I handed out two different surveys: one for faculty members and one for student athletes.
- Surveys questions were the same for both groups, just worded differently in order to address the appropriate group of respondents.
- A third survey was created and distributed to head coaches at Trinity, but due to a poor response rate, this element was eliminated.
Student-Athlete Respondents
38 Total Respondents

- Male Varsity Sports
  - Football
  - Baseball
  - Basketball
  - Ice Hockey
  - Lacrosse
  - Soccer
  - Tennis
  - Crew

- Female Varsity Sports
  - Field Hockey
  - Volleyball
  - Softball
  - Soccer
  - Tennis
  - Crew
  - Lacrosse
  - Ice Hockey
Faculty Member Respondents -Department Representation-

- Religion
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Economics
- English
- Political Science
- Public Policy
- History

- Mathematics
- Chemistry
- Biology
- Anthropology
- Music
- Philosophy
- American Studies
Questions for Analysis

- **Student-Athletes**
  - Do you let professors know that you are a student-athlete or do you tend to hide your affiliation to your sport?
  - Do you feel that athletics have brought down the academic reputation of Trinity College?

- **Faculty**
  - Do you feel students let you know that they are a student-athlete or do they tend to hide their affiliation to their sport?
  - Do you feel that athletics have brought down the academic reputation of Trinity College?
Results (Student-Athletes)
Do you let professors know that you are a student-athlete or do you tend to hide your affiliation to your sport?

[Bar chart showing the percentage of student-athletes who let them know and those who hide their affiliation.]
Results (Faculty)

Do you feel students let you know that they are a student-athlete or do they tend to hide their affiliation to their sport?

![Bar Chart]

- Let You Know: 60%
- Hide Their Affiliation: 30%
- Don't Know: 10%
Results (Student-Athletes)

Do you feel that athletics have brought down the academic reputation of Trinity College?

- Yes: 10%
- No: 90%
Results (Faculty)

Do you feel that athletics have brought down the academic reputation of Trinity College?

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

Yes No Don't Know

Faculty
Faculty Comments on “Do you feel that athletics have brought down the academic reputation of Trinity College?”

- “In the sense that – especially in the case of male athletes, who are much more clustered/ cloistered in their own subculture than female athletes – the College admits a whole lot of people too much on the basis of their sports gifts. Football alone tackles us for a big loss.” – Male Respondent who answered yes to the question.
“Because some athletes are admitted who would never get in except for their athletic ability- and some of these (not all) are not committed to their academic work at all” – Male Respondent who answered yes to the question.

“Not sure – I have many athletes in my courses – some are outstanding or competent students, some less than so. Occasionally, I encounter an athlete who is marginal or sub-standard. But there is a spread.” – Male Respondent who answered don’t know to the question.

“I answered yes because I believe we put too much emphasis on athletics in admissions.”- Male Respondent who answered yes to the question.
Conclusions

- Based on the survey results, the only glaring difference is that more student-athletes would hope to make Dean’s List than faculty members believe.

- Assuming that all respondents answered truthfully, there is not a significant problem with how student-athletes are academically perceived by Trinity faculty.

- Like many of the respondents stated, academic work ethic depends greatly on the individual student, and conversely, academic perceptions depend on the individual faculty member.