

SCORE Study: The Division II Experience

The overall collegiate experience of a Division II student-athlete includes academics, athletics, and campus and community involvement. Student-athletes are asked to navigate competing priorities and time demands to have a successful academic, athletic and overall collegiate experience. To gauge the impact of this experience, the NCAA developed the Division II Study of College Outcomes and Recent Experiences (SCORE) of former student-athletes.

Data from 5,400 SCORE participants who were college freshmen in 1999 or 2000 suggest that Division II student-athletes are, in fact, earning bachelor's degrees at higher rates than suggested by the Division II Academic Success Rate (ASR). By asking former student-athletes to describe their academic pathways across multiple colleges, it was determined that 89 percent of the former Division II student-athletes in the study had earned a bachelor's degree within 10 years of initial college enrollment. Almost one-third (32 percent) also reported having earned an advanced degree in that timeframe. While these numbers are for study respondents who may not be fully representative of the population of former Division II student-athletes, they do indicate high levels of academic success and make it clear that the ASR underrepresents the rate of eventual graduation.

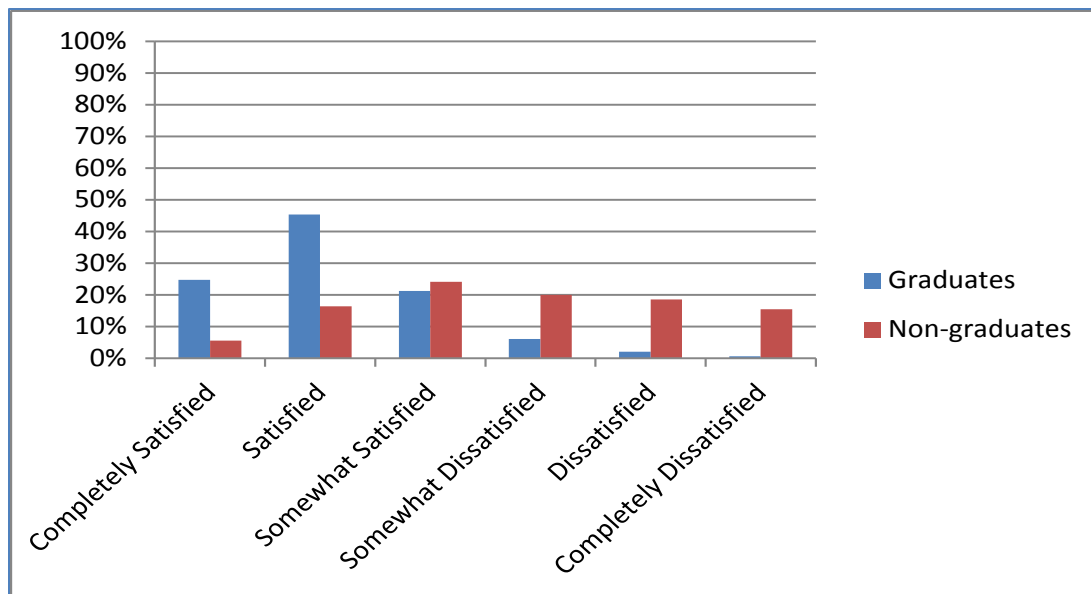
Not only are Division II student-athletes graduating, but they also report that they were engaged in the academic process. Overall, 85 percent reported having positive feelings about the effort they put forth in the classroom, and 91 percent reported feeling positive about their relationships with faculty.

The academic choices student-athletes make in regards to their major seem to be paying off as well. More than three-quarters of former student-athletes reported that their current job is related to their major field of undergraduate study, and 60 percent reported they would *definitely* or *probably* choose their major again.

While the former student-athletes did report high measures of academic success, 42 percent also reported that their athletics obligations did cause them to spend less time on their academic work than they would have liked. Still, the overwhelming majority (85 percent) did not regret this sacrifice.

In all, approximately two-thirds of former Division II student-athletes reported being *satisfied* or *completely satisfied* with their college academic experience. However, as shown in Figure 1, non-graduates look back much less fondly on their college academic experience.

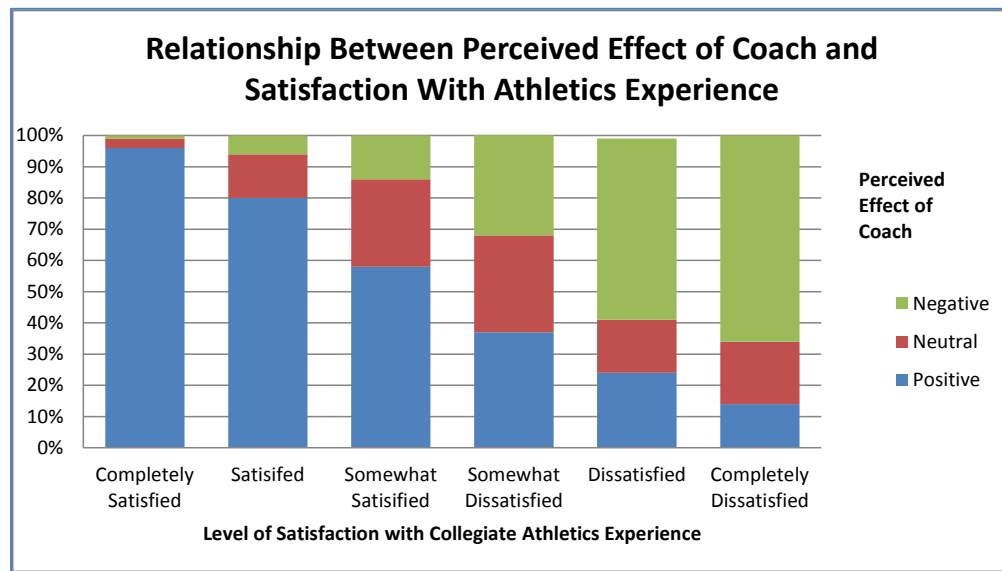
Figure 1: Satisfaction with college academic experience by degree status



Former Division II student-athletes also reported a great deal of satisfaction with their athletics experience. However, nearly one-half reported leaving their sport before exhausting their eligibility. Those who competed for four or more years were more likely to report that athletics taught them valuable life lessons than were those who stopped competing early. When questioned specifically about the effect that collegiate athletics participation had on a variety of life skills, at least 90 percent of respondents overall reported that it had a positive effect on valuable life skills, including teamwork, work ethic and the ability to take responsibility for oneself. They also reported in large numbers that it had a positive effect on commitment to volunteerism (51 percent) and understanding of people of other races and backgrounds (73 percent). Sportsmanship is another important lesson learned through Division II athletics participation. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated that participation in athletics and the lessons learned as a result of that participation have made them a more ethical person. And the majority agreed that their former teammates conducted themselves in a sportsmanlike manner.

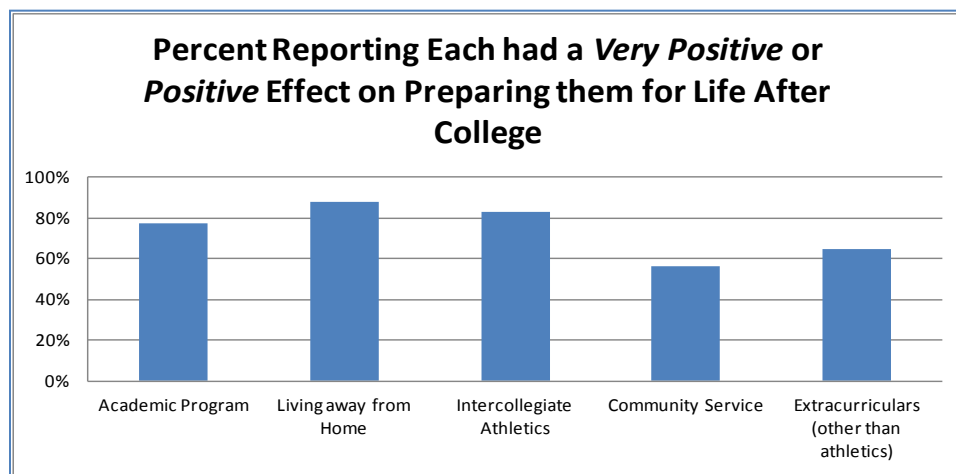
Overall, 83 percent of former Division II student-athletes reported some level of satisfaction with their college athletics experience. Just over 70 percent reported that they believe their college coach had a positive influence on their athletics goals, and as can be seen in Figure 2, there is a strong relationship between the perceived effect of the coach on the student-athlete’s athletics goals and overall satisfaction with the collegiate athletics experience. In other words, the coach may play a big role in the long-term satisfaction with the Division II athletics experience.

Figure 2: Percent reporting satisfaction with athletics experience by perceived effect of coach on athletics



A Division II student-athlete’s collegiate career is about much more than just academics and athletics. We were interested in what role a variety of activities played in helping them prepare for life after college. As can be seen in Figure 3, former student-athletes reported that the Division II athletics experience shaped their life after college nearly as much as living away from home and more than academics, community service and other extracurricular activities.

Figure 3: Percent reporting activity had a very positive or positive effect on preparing student-athlete for life after college



Establishing a balanced collegiate experience that includes academics, athletics and other activities such as community service is of paramount importance within the Division II philosophy. The majority of student-athletes (86 percent) reported that they were able to find an appropriate balance between academics and other activities, including athletics. When asked if there were activities they wished they had had more or less time for, very few student-athletes wanted to spend *less* time on anything. In

fact, only one activity received endorsement from at least 10 percent of respondents stating they wish they had spent *less* time doing: working at a job. The areas where student-athletes reported really wanting *more* time were educational opportunities, extracurricular activities and community service. Among these, class work/educational opportunities stood out among the others, with 63 percent stating they wish they had had *more* time to put toward those endeavors.

Overall, student-athletes reported strong satisfaction with their Division II experience. The overwhelming majority of former student-athletes reported some level of satisfaction with their overall collegiate experience (92 percent), as well as with their individual academic (86 percent), athletics (83 percent) and social experiences (92 percent). Satisfaction with the overall Division II experience is related to several variables, including having both a strong academic and athletics identity, engaging academically, voluntarily retiring from sport (versus having to quit due to injury or inability to make the team), not transferring, earning a bachelor’s degree, and finding an appropriate balance between academics and other collegiate activities. These factors are important across all demographic groups. Among these variables, finding an appropriate balance between academics and other activities had the strongest relationship with reported satisfaction, followed closely by whether the student-athlete earned a bachelor’s degree. The data back up the Division II philosophy that “life in the balance” is vital.

Given that such high proportions of former Division II student-athletes reported finding balance and earning a bachelor’s degree, it’s not surprising then that a vast majority of them – 93 percent – reported that they would *probably* or *definitely* recommend the Division II experience to a high school student. This is perhaps the “bottom-line” endorsement of the Division II experience on the part of former student-athletes.

Figure 4: Percent responding if they would recommend the Division II experience

