



**Tennessee**  
**TECH**

# **“Food for Thought” for Student-Athletes: An Online Education Program Aimed to Fuel Student-Athletes with Sports Nutrition and Mental Health Knowledge and Resources**

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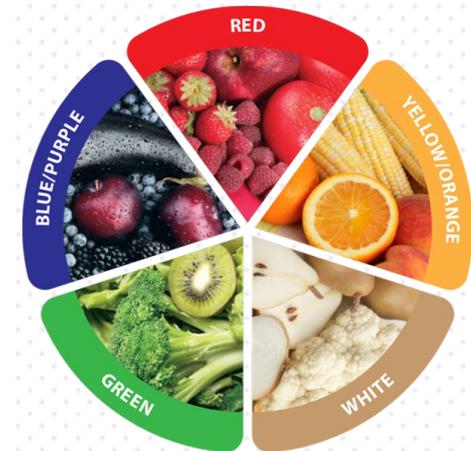
# Objectives

- Improve the overall well-being of student-athletes through providing information regarding:
  - nutrition,
  - sleep habits,
  - anxiety,
  - depression,
  - eating disorders, and
  - life after college.
- Aligned with NCAA's Mental Health Best Practices

# Program Design

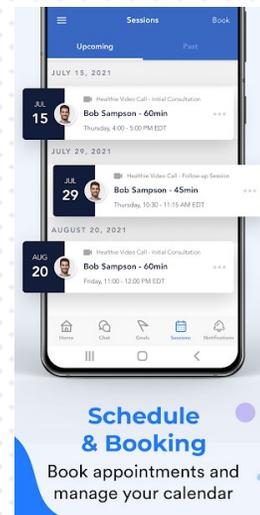
- Researchers implemented a self-paced online nutrition and mental wellness education program. Delivered via app.

<b>Overview of Module Topics: <i>Food for Thought for Student-Athletes</i></b>	
Week 1	Nutrition: An Overview of Quality
Week 2	Nutrition: Food Security and Resources for Student Athletes
Week 3	Mental Health: Eating Disorders
Week 4	Mental Health: Mindfulness and Coping with Stressors
Week 5	Nutrition: NCAA Rules on Supplements and Identifying Credible Information
Week 6	Nutrition: Meal Planning, Budgeting, and Campus Meal Plans
Week 7	Mental Health: Anxiety and Depression
Week 8	Mental Health: Sleep
Week 9	Nutrition and Mental Health: Tying it All Together
Week 10	Nutrition and Mental Health: Transition Strategies for Post-Grad Life



# Program Design

- The app was created with a platform made for dietitians (Healthie)
  - Could host educational content in the described program.
  - Offered a method for dietary surveillance, telehealth appointments with the dietitian, and some additional features that give a well-rounded package to sports nutrition initiatives.



# Program Design

- Participants:
  - Division I varsity student-athletes
  - 74 participants (21 male, 53 female); 50% completed all educational modules
  - Incentivized with “snack stipends”
- Assessment:
  - Knowledge; sleep index; food insecurity; anxiety; depression; eating disorders
  - Qualitative interviews

# Key Findings

- Quantitative:
  - 79 individuals participated including 73 student-athletes (SAs) and 6 coaches and staff.
  - 10 SAs completed both the pre/post knowledge assessment.
  - Results indicated a significant p-value =0.004 for pre/post knowledge of the SNKI instrument items. When non validated instrument items were included in analysis, no significant results were noted (p=.080).

# Key Findings

- Quantitative

Screening Method	Participants Screened	Notes
Mental Health (anxiety/depression)	22	14% reported high anxiety or depression (According to PHQ-9 and GAD-7)
ASBQ Sleep Screening	25	28% reported poor sleep behavior (according to ASBQ)
FAST Eating Disorder Screening	22	14% reported subclinical eating disorder (according to FAST)
Food Insecurity Screening	10	30% reported low food security (according to USDA 6-item)

# Key Findings

- Qualitative

- Three participants completed the qualitative interview: two student-athletes and one administrator within the athletic department.
- Six categories were identified in the transcripts.
  - *General Assessment of (A) Content and (B) Accessibility, Holistic Content, Suggestions for Improvement, Reaching out to the RDN, Changing Habits, and Increasing Participation.*

# Implementation at Other Universities

- Data suggest:
  - Students tend to prefer and perform better with in-person interactions and experiential learning opportunities.
  - Comments regarding the program content, accessibility, and delivery were positive.
  - Participants appreciated the holistic content, and ability to access additional reputable resources on a topic.
  - Survey participation might have been achieved if the surveys were housed within the app and available within the lessons.

# Implementation

- Other institutions can use these materials to assess and screen their student-athletes and deliver a virtual nutrition and mental health education course.
- Sports medicine, strength coaches, and dietitians are likely most suited to construct and deliver such a program to their athletics program.
- The app was created with a platform made for dietitians (Healthie)
  - allowed the researchers to release a portion of each module each day, which most participants appreciated.

# Implementation

- In order to increase participation, participants suggested a competition between various teams, coach encouragement, and an overview of the program from the registered dietitian/nutritionist, or others who deliver the program on campus.

# Contact Information

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