

**NCAA Innovations in Research and Practice Grant Program  
2024 Funded Projects**

**Share, like and subscribe: The impact of social media use on student-athletes' identity and sense of belonging on and off the team**

Hofstra University

Project team: Rebecca Bertuccio\*, Ph.D., NCSP, LP; Brittany Rhoden, MEd, MSc; Grace Landrigan, MPH

*Despite the prevalence of social media, little is known about the potential risks posed by its use—especially in the student-athlete community. The purpose of the present research project is to deliver an educational intervention to student-athletes to raise awareness about social media habits, identity development, social connectedness, and sense of belonging. With such programming, the project team strives to support student-athletes in making prosocial changes that will facilitate healthy social media use, promote a strong sense of self, and encourage in-person connection. Using a waitlist-control design, pre-test, post-test, and follow-up assessments will be employed to measure treatment effectiveness.*

**Online resilience: Empowering student-athletes in navigating social media feedback with intervention techniques**

University of Kansas

Project team: Nataliya Bredikhina\*, Ph.D.; Bomin Paek, Ph.D.

*Social media is important for student-athletes, facilitating networking, information exchange, and - in the era of NIL – also personal brand monetization. However, social media also poses risks to student-athletes' well-being, including authenticity tensions, social comparisons, privacy breaches, and negative feedback. To address this, we propose an "Online Resilience Training" program for student-athletes, which will be developed through a sequential mixed-method research design. Study 1, featuring a constructivist grounded theory approach, will explore student-athletes' decision-making in handling social media-induced pressures. Study 2 will entail the development and testing of an intervention educating student-athletes on healthy social media usage and feedback resolution.*

**The locker room files: Developing data-driven digital well-being strategies to mitigate social media effects on mental health, well-being, and team relationships**

University of Delaware

Project team: Claire Wanzer\*, M.A.; Amy Bleakly, Ph.D.

*NCAA athletes' ability to profit from use of their name, image, and likeness (NIL) has incentivized social media use, specifically through marketable personal branding. However, problematic social media use among student-athletes has been linked to worsened mental and physical health, as well as declines in academic and athletic performance. To combat problematic social media use within the landscape of NIL, this project uses a behavioral change theory to assess athletes' social media use and to develop and test messages which promote digital well-being strategies. Findings have implications for our understanding of athlete mental health, well-being, and relationships.*

\* Denotes project director.



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