

**The Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes
Strategic Plan
Narrative: Annual Review 2018–19**

2018–2019 was a productive and busy year for UNC’s Athletic Support Program for Student-Athletes (ASPSA). ASPSA finalized the ASPSA Strategic Plan at the start of the Fall 2018 semester and immediately began working to accomplish the tasks identified for the first year. Some of the accomplishments are identified under each initiative.

Strategic Initiative 1: Academic Support Initiatives. Identify, develop, and assess innovative academic support initiatives for the student-athlete population.

Aligning itself with the University’s Arts Everywhere initiative, the Annual Tar Heel Scholar-Athlete Luncheon expanded its list of invitees to include student-athletes with outstanding talents in the arts. Invitees included academic award recipients, including Tar Heel Scholar-Athletes, the 4.0 Club, and ACC Scholar-Athletes as well as student-athletes who had created works of art, photography, and literature. These artistic works became the centerpieces for the banquet, providing an opportunity for diverse student-athlete voices to be shared and seen.

By instituting a collaboration with UNC’s Study Abroad office, ASPSA prioritized the global experience as an opportunity for student-athletes. Liaisons from each department met regularly to identify potential opportunities for student-athletes, created and maintained webpages on both the ASPSA and UNC Study Abroad websites (see <https://aspsa.unc.edu/aspsa-services/global-experiences/> and <https://embark.unc.edu/global-guide/make-the-most-of-your-time/student-athletes/>, respectively), and showcased the global experiences of UNC student-athletes. The UNC Study Abroad office increased its visibility for student-athletes by holding office hours in the Loudermilk Center for Excellence and attending the Student-Athletes Majors, Minors, and Interests Fair in October 2019.

Strategic Initiative 2: Value and Awareness. Advance and promote the high-impact value of the student-athlete experience, both internally and externally.

In partnership with the Arts and Sciences Advising Program (AAP), ASPSA proposed an updated advising model for student-athletes. Under the current model, student-athletes in the College of Arts and Sciences meet with a university academic advisor every semester. Recognizing that academic advising occurs in many contexts over the course of a student’s time at UNC, ASPSA and AAP proposed to expand the list of advising options available in specific semesters so as to include meetings with counselors from University Career Services and the Office of Retention as well as academic workshops and transition courses. By expanding the choices, ASPSA and AAP recognized the diverse ways in which students experience the university and recognizing the agency of individual student-athletes, allowing them to choose

which interaction will be most beneficial for them in terms of major exploration, career selection and preparation, and academic planning. In 2018–19, the proposal was presented to the Executive Committee on Student-Athlete Academics for approval. The proposal was approved and adopted for the 2019–20 academic year.

ASPSA leveraged its website to communicate new information to current students, prospects, and the campus community. In 2018–19, several new pages were added to the website—Global Experiences, Academic Scorecard, ASPSA Strategic Plan—and new resources were provided—an Accessibility Resources and Service flowchart and a faculty education compliance document.

The Global Experiences webpage shares information about student-athlete global opportunities, including highlights from other student-athletes' experiences in hopes of communicating that a global experience may look different for everyone. The number of student-athletes who have participated in a global experience [approximately one-eighth of the student-athlete population] is now included on the Academic Scorecard and Student-Athlete Recognition pages.

The Academic Scorecard and the ASPSA Strategic Plan webpages provide, respectively, information on the annual academic performance of student-athletes and share the ASPSA's five-year strategic plan. The ASPSA Services page now includes information on the process for seeking support from Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS), and the Information for Faculty page now introduces teaching faculty to relevant NCAA legislation.

Providing more insight into the world of a student-athlete, the website has been a powerful tool to promote the academic success of UNC student-athletes.

Strategic Initiative 3: Relationships. Build partnerships, collaborations and strategic alliances to enhance outcomes in the following areas: success of minority males, student-athlete retention, success of first-generation students, academic support/tutoring, and faculty/TA relations.

ASPSA strengthened its relationship with the Office of Retention by naming an ASPSA staff member as a liaison to the Office of Retention. The liaison attends biweekly meetings with the Office of Retention and its campus partners and communicates on behalf of the ASPSA. This addition has increased communication across both offices and will continue into the next year.

The Department of Athletics, Men of Color Engagement, and ASPSA collaborated for the second year on summer programming. Incoming football student-athletes joined one of START Strong's weeklong transition programs offered for minority males. The students also enrolled in a section of Navigating the University (EDUC 130), which focused on the transition of minority males to UNC. This partnership provided student-athletes with the opportunity to engage with non-student-athletes and learn about campus resources available to them outside of Athletics and ASPSA. In addition, the students participated in additional experiential programming, such as the etiquette dinner offered by Student-Athlete Development.

Strategic Initiative 4: Staffing and Personnel Development. Assess, analyze, and implement staff and personnel hiring and training strategies to best support our student-athletes and allow for continuous growth and development of the ASPSA staff.

This year, ASPSA focused on assessing and developing its intern program. Upon review of department and student needs, the number of interns was increased, including the hiring of one intern specifically for the Learning Services Unit. In addition, a broader representation of ASPSA staff members was included in the intern search committees.

Strategic Initiative 5: Infrastructure. Adopt the best digital and technology infrastructure to support daily operations, improve access to information for key stakeholders, and provide academic support for students.

ASPSA worked with Information Technology Services (ITS) to improve the technological infrastructure for the daily operations of the office. The biggest endeavor was the move of the ASPSA database to a new platform so as to improve ASPSA operations and securities. This project took over a year of designing, testing, and implementation.

ASPSA and ITS also worked to bridge the divide between athletics and academics by integrating the information found on Connect Carolina, a university-based communication system, and Teamworks, an athletics-based communication system. This bridge improved functionality for student-athletes by allowing for daily updates to classes, practices, and assigned academic sessions such as tutor appointments.

The ASPSA purchased licenses for Sonocent, an assistive technology for audio notetaking, as a resource for student-athletes. The tool provides students with the capability to record classroom lectures while students simultaneously take notes that coincide with the lecture. Afterwards, students have the ability to adapt these notes via mark-ups and annotations, modify color and font, and embed additional course materials, such as pdfs.

Students who chose to sign up for this program were provided with a training session and frequent check-ins. The initial feedback from student-athletes suggests the technology is helpful; therefore, ASPSA will continue to purchase licenses for the upcoming academic year.