

The Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes
Strategic Plan
Narrative: Annual Review 2020–21

The ASPSA staff continued to demonstrate resilience and made successful adjustments to support student-athletes as the pandemic continued over the academic year. Despite making initial responsive changes in Spring 2020, ASPSA continued to adapt and respond to the continued changes of each subsequent semester. Department priorities continued to shift, impacting the progress of the Strategic Plan. While some initiatives were suspended given the circumstances, the department progressed on several initiatives and objectives. 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.

Summer 2021 programming remained similar in format and delivery to Summer 2020, which had moved to a virtual format in response to remote instruction. However, as Fall 2021 marked a full return to in-person instruction, summer programming incorporated preparation for that return. Our current, as well as our incoming students, had not been in an in-person class for over a year and a half. Moreover, our first-year students and sophomores would be attending in-person college classes for the first time. Consequently, we worked to prepare and support two distinct groups of cohorts with this transition. This year's summer programming included sessions on finding buildings and classrooms, managing time to get from place to place including planning extra time for parking and commuting, and preparing for face-to-face academic work. We continued with our traditional programming as well with other sessions addressing topics such as campus resources, succeeding in math courses, communication essentials, and mental health and wellbeing. In addition, the student-athlete panel discussion continued to be a highlight. The majority of the incoming student-athletes enrolled in EDUC 330: The Science of Learning. This three-credit hour course focused on cognitive psychology, educational psychology, and the learning sciences to maximize student learning.

While study abroad was limited during the pandemic, one student-athlete participated in study abroad in Summer 2021 by attending the American University in Cairo, Egypt. In the absence of study abroad programs, ASPSA continued to prepare for future opportunities. Staff created a video highlighting student-athletes who had previously participated in a study abroad experience. This video allows participants to share their varied stories, demonstrating that there are a variety of ways to have a global experience while being a student-athlete.

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

Academic recognition events, including the academic banquet, the highest academic performance team dinner, and the AD Scholar-Athlete basketball half-time event, were all cancelled due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, the celebration of student-athlete academic successes continued. The Top Ten Student-Athletes, typically celebrated at the banquet, were congratulated on Twitter and GoHeels with carefully curated graphics. In order to showcase the scholar-athletes' reflections on their faculty mentors, they recorded personal stories about those faculty members who had the most impact on them in the Athletics Media and Communications Center, which were then featured on the ASPSA website.

ASPSA staff members had the opportunity to share information regarding the high-impact value of the student-athlete experience with faculty members. The Center for Faculty Excellence hosted an ASPSA workshop for faculty as part of the Equity in Teaching Institute. This workshop provided information on the day in the life of a student-athlete, shared what faculty should know if they have a student-athlete in their class, and offered information about ASPSA services and how we can support both faculty and student-athletes.

Assistant Provost Brown and Senior Associate Athletics Director Ille coordinated the submission of the UNC System Intercollegiate Athletics & Financial Transparency Report on behalf of UNC-Chapel Hill. The report was released in Summer 2021, and Athletics Director Cunningham and Assistant Provost Brown presented the report to the UNC Board of Trustees (BOT) in early Fall 2021. This was an opportunity to share with the BOT the academic successes of the student-athletes including a summary of the top five majors for student-athletes, and the most recent academic metrics including ACC Honor Roll, federal graduation rates, and NCAA APR and GSR rates.

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 staff members strengthened relationships with campus partners and contributed to the campus's Strategic Plan by participating on several committees and maintaining liaison relationships with multiple units. In August 2020, the majority of ASPSA staff members returned to work on campus on a rotating schedule and allowing for physical distancing. Staff intentionally maintained relationships with campus partners by holding Zoom meetings. By being responsive to this new working environment, staff members were able to not only keep partnerships but also make new ones.

Changing NCAA legislation has resulted in an increase in the student-athletes who are interested in pursuing graduate programs. As a result of the pandemic, every student-athlete was granted

another season of competition. Therefore, student-athletes revisited their academic plans and the changes varied based on the students' academic interests and goals. Many student-athletes decided to graduate and pursue a graduate degree with the extra year. To garner more information regarding the graduate certificates and degrees, ASPSA staff members established relationships with new campus partners and learned about the various program options available in order to guide the students appropriately.

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.

There were two key changes to the organizational structure of the ASPSA. The first accommodated a new approach to the support provided to the basketball student-athletes. The basketball programs adopted a team approach; two individuals will work with each program. The second change elevated three academic counselor positions to the assistant director level. This structural change marks a new organizational approach to ASPSA. In 2020-21, we focused on hiring and reorganizing staff; in 2021-22, we will prioritize the implementation of the new structure.

Attracting diverse and highly qualified candidates when conducting searches was originally identified as a strategic direction under this initiative. In late spring, ASPSA conducted two national searches for academic counselor positions. By focusing on recruitment, ASPSA increased its reach for a diverse candidate pool. Due to COVID, interviews were conducted via Zoom, eliminated the opportunity for candidates to visit the campus community. Despite the challenges, we were able to fill the positions and we are very excited about our new staff members who joined us.

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.

Last year, ASPSA created a new transfer evaluation form to evaluate transfer credit hours for prospective transfer student-athletes. The new workflow process allows Compliance, ASPSA, the Office of the University Registrar, and Admissions to complete this form through a shared communication platform, affording improved communication and collaboration across departments. The form was launched in Fall 2020. A subsequent feedback and review process helped identify further revisions of the form so as to improve the process. Those changes have since been made, and the form has been adopted by all the stakeholders.

ASPSA launched its Twitter account to promote the academic success of the student-athletes and highlight important dates and information for all students. Undeniably, the Twitter account

became more valuable in the virtual environment and served as an excellent tool for celebrating the numerous academic achievements of our students, including the recognition of our Academic All-ACC Honorees, the Weaver-James-Corrigan Postgraduate Scholarship Award Recipients, Chi Alpha Sigma Inductees, and many more.

The Awards and Recognition page on the ASPSA website now houses an archive of previous recipients. Previously, the site recorded only a single year. Now, guests to the site will be able to view who won the awards historically, further recognizing and highlighting the academic successes of the student-athletes.

The tutorial program created a SharePoint site for ASPSA tutors. The resource includes tools and information that tutors need in their work with ASPSA. Short video tutorials serve as a quick FAQ resource. With approximately 90 tutors and 1,200 sessions running a week in our tutoring program, this site serves as a one-stop shop for the tutors and the tutorial program.