

The Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes
Strategic Plan
Narrative: Annual Review 2021–22

2021–2022 remained a hybrid of remote and in-person services as we move further away from the pandemic. Operations and programming were modified again to adjust for this new flexible working and learning space that had not yet returned to the pre-pandemic norm. Staff remained flexible and continued to make necessary adjustments, taking the initiative to reinvent our practices. Student-athletes also continued to adjust and adapt their approach to learning. Some of the accomplishments pertaining to the strategic plan 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 programming that focuses on academic and personal development has always been an important touchstone to help incoming students transition from high school to UNC. Summer 2022 programming was held in-person and modified to create smaller groupings. 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.

Study abroad opportunities began to reopen this academic year. Two student-athletes participated in a UNC study abroad program in Spring 2022, and eight participated in Summer 2022. Program destinations included London, Athens, Barcelona, and the Galapagos. This increased participation highlights student-athletes' eagerness for experiential learning opportunities.

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 Scholar-Athlete Academic Banquet, the Carolina Academic Excellence team dinner, and the AD Scholar-Athlete basketball halftime event, are occasions that provide us with an opportunity to celebrate the academic success of our students in several different ways. Regrettably, the Carolina Academic Excellence team dinner was not held this year given the continued public health concerns. Furthermore, as concerns about Covid remained, the structure of the Scholar-Athlete Academic Banquet was modified. Seniors and Top 10 recipients were invited to the banquet, and a new event was created to recognize juniors, sophomores, and first-year students. At this event, students were recognized for their academic performance while celebrating in an open space with their fellow student-athletes. While it was not quite the same as having all students at the banquet, the students appreciated the food, fellowship, and t-shirt they received.

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.

In Fall 2021, undergraduate and graduate classes returned in-person with some remote offerings. While some campus offices continued to remain primarily remote, ASPSA staff remained working full-time in the facility. Campus meetings remained remote, and both staff and faculty needed to foster new campus relationships and partnerships in this new work environment. As new employees joined the university or campus colleagues changed positions, each of us was challenged to be intentional about acknowledging and building relationships while always centering the student-athlete experience.

Changes to NCAA legislation asked us to be responsive to the changing landscape of college athletics. The extra year of eligibility due to Covid as well as changes in NCAA transfer legislation has meant we have more current and transfer student-athletes interested in graduate certificates and programs at UNC. ASPSA staff has worked assiduously to learn about available programs so as to continue to provide high-quality student advisement. Modifications to eligibility and certification have meant that the Compliance staff, the Registrar's Office, and ASPSA have had to work diligently to understand how the NCAA legislation applies to these new-to-us programs.

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 academic year, we promoted one staff member to Senior Associate Director within the office, which is a new organizational position. In addition, one staff member was promoted to Assistant Director, bringing the total to four assistant directors, a substantial achievement as there has only been one assistant director in the past ten years. We continue to advocate to increase the number of full-time staff members. This academic year, we did increase the number of interns from three to four beginning in Summer 2021. Three did leave during the academic year for full-time positions, and one was promoted to a full-time position.

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.

An ASPSA Assistant Director created a new shared worksheet to streamline the textbook process. By moving this to a shared document, staff could now receive updates in real time, improving communication and functionality.

ASPSA partnered with GoHeels Productions to build a photo library of images highlighting student-athletes and their academic lives. These photos have since been used to update the ASPSA website.