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Analysis of the Demands of a Student Athlete:

Does participating in collegiate athletics affect hirability post-graduation?

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Analysis of the Demands of a Student Athlete:

Does participating in collegiate athletics affect hirability post-graduation?

Collegiate athletics has become nothing short of a staple in our society today. Sports such as football, men's/women's basketball and baseball captivate massive audiences every year and provide wholesome entertainment for those who love to see young men and women compete for their schools in the sports that they love. The NCAA currently sponsors 24 different sports that these athletes compete in every year. There are 15 men's and women's sports, 3 men's only sports and 6 women's only sports (Student-Athletes). Across all levels of competition, there are more than 460,000 student athletes that get the opportunity to call themselves student athletes (Student-Athletes). While this may seem like a very large number, when put into perspective it really is very minute. These 460,000 student athletes only make up about 7% of high school varsity athletes (Odds). This breaks down to roughly only about 1 in 14 high school student athletes that will go on to compete at the next level (Odds). Looking at this statistic in more detail, the percentage of high school student athletes that go on to compete at the highest level of collegiate athletics, Division 1, is only 2% or roughly 1 in 54 high school student athletes (Odds). From this standpoint, it is apparent that collegiate student athletes make up a very exclusive fraternity within the college world. Compared to the whopping 14.56 million college students enrolled in public and private universities, college student athletes are in a unique position that very few individuals ever get to experience (U.S. College).

The primary purpose of this research is to determine whether or not college student athletes and their unique position in the world of higher education have any effect on their

employment potential or hirability post-graduation. I took an autobiographical approach to this research as I am currently a football student athlete at Western Michigan University. I am currently entering into my senior season and have had the opportunity to experience many different aspects of being a student athlete so far in my first three years. As I grow closer and closer to my anticipated graduation, I have become more aware of the unique position that I am in as a student athlete and have started to take advantage of this in order to enhance my employment potential. I used what I have experienced as student athlete and how it relates to hirability and compared it to outside research and larger studies on the hirability of student athletes. This provided an insight as to whether or not participating in collegiate athletics has an effect on the hirability of student athletes compared to non-student athletes.

The job market is highly competitive, and employers are constantly looking for unique qualities that make candidates stand out. College graduates flood into the employment world every year, in fact, “during the 2018–19 school year, colleges and universities are expected to award 1.0 million associate’s degrees; 1.9 million bachelor's degrees; 780,000 master's degrees; and 182,000 doctor's degrees”(NCES). These numbers can be very intimidating for young men and women who often times graduate with thousands of dollars in student loans and are immediately looking for a way to start paying them back and ultimately starting a life for themselves. With the pressure to obtain employment shortly after graduation, students do whatever they can to make themselves appealing to potential employers. Employers on the other hand, have the strenuous task of sorting through candidates and finding a select few that can help their company thrive. Each company is looking for different things in employees and the skills that candidates bring to the table are carefully scrutinized, but there are often times multiple core skills that all employers look for in their employees. Many of these core values are skills and

abilities that college student athletes enhance and develop through their experiences as student athletes.

Teamwork is something that most, if not all, employers put a high value on. The ability to work effectively and efficiently with others is a growing need for many industries. College student athletes get a firsthand experience at working with a team and often times individuals from many different backgrounds. Non-student athletes also get the opportunity to work with teams and groups of people but the capacity in which this occurs is very different from student athletes. Student athletes must rely on their teammates in the heat of competition where stress levels are high, and adversity is commonplace. They put their bodies on the line for each other and sacrifice their physical health for the better of the team. Student athletes understand how to interact with others, how to make those around them better and ultimately achieve goals as a cohesive unit.

Companies often thrive when a strong leadership presence is felt by the employees. Leaders can move projects forward, keep individuals on the right track and drive the company into profitability. Student athletes are exposed to leadership roles constantly in their respective sports and develop this skill through their experience in college athletics. Just like companies, sports teams rely on leaders to propel the team in the right direction. When adversity strikes in the heat of competition, during a grueling workout or when a situation arises off the field, team members turn to leaders to get them through it. Non-student athletes are exposed to leadership roles very frequently as well, in the classroom and potentially in their occupation. This also serves as a solid foundation for the development of this skill, but the likes in which leadership is used between student athletes and non-student athletes is much different.

We live in a world where competition is all around us. As mentioned previously, the job market is extremely competitive and there are often times many people competing for a very limited number of positions. Collegiate student athletes thrive in competition. To participate in college athletics, one must love to compete. These student athletes are competing for playing time, during training and practice along with the competitions against other teams. They learn their strengths and weaknesses and how to use them to their advantage. Non-student athletes do have the ability to compete in various activities but the level to which student athletes compete every day is unmatched.

The largest aspect that sets student athletes apart from non-student athletes is the physical strain that they put on their bodies. For football players especially, the constant grind of training and contact that they put their bodies through is extreme. Injuries are commonplace and can accumulate as their career goes on. The student athletes play through pain in order to achieve their individual and team goals. Non-student athletes potentially have a hard time understanding this aspect as the probability of them experiencing an injury at one point in their lives is high, but it would have been nothing that they would have had to play through for the betterment of the team.

Outside Research on the Hirability of Student-Athletes Opposed to Non-Student Athletes

(Graduation Rates)

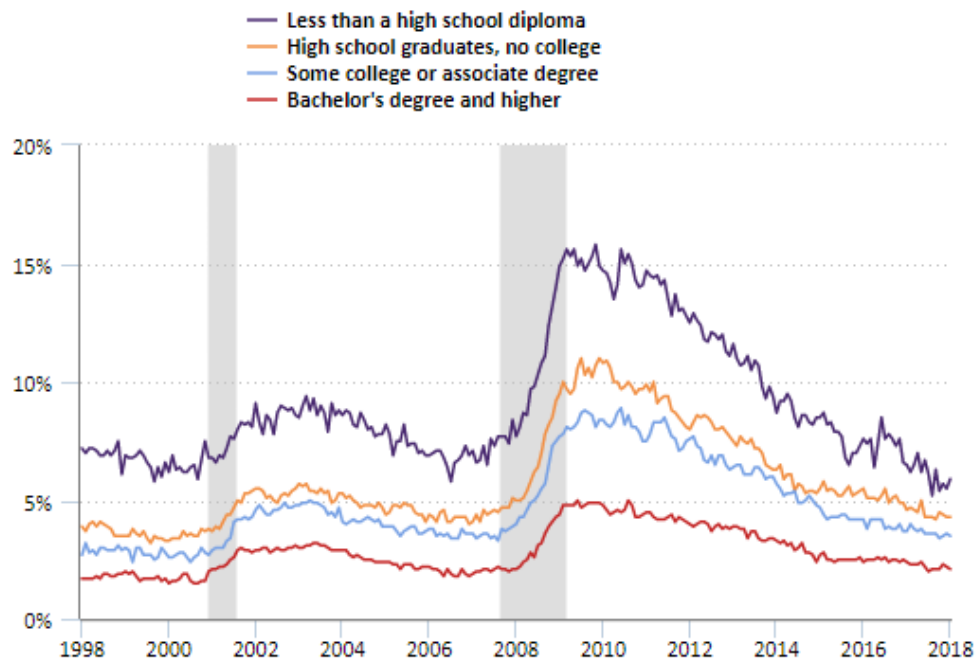
Obtaining a college degree plays a key role in one's employment potential following their graduation. Those that have a college degree are more likely obtain a job following their

graduation. Whether or not the job is related to their major is a completely different story, but the fact is, a college degree makes an individual more hireable. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2017 that the unemployment rate for those who graduated with a high school diploma but did not have a college degree was 5.0% (see Figure 1) (Unemployment). Those that graduated with a Bachelor's degree or higher only had a 2.4% unemployment rate (see Figure 1) (Unemployment).

Figure 1

www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2018/unemployment-rate-2-1-percent-for-college-grads-4-3-percent-for-high-school-grads-in-april-2018.htm?view_full.

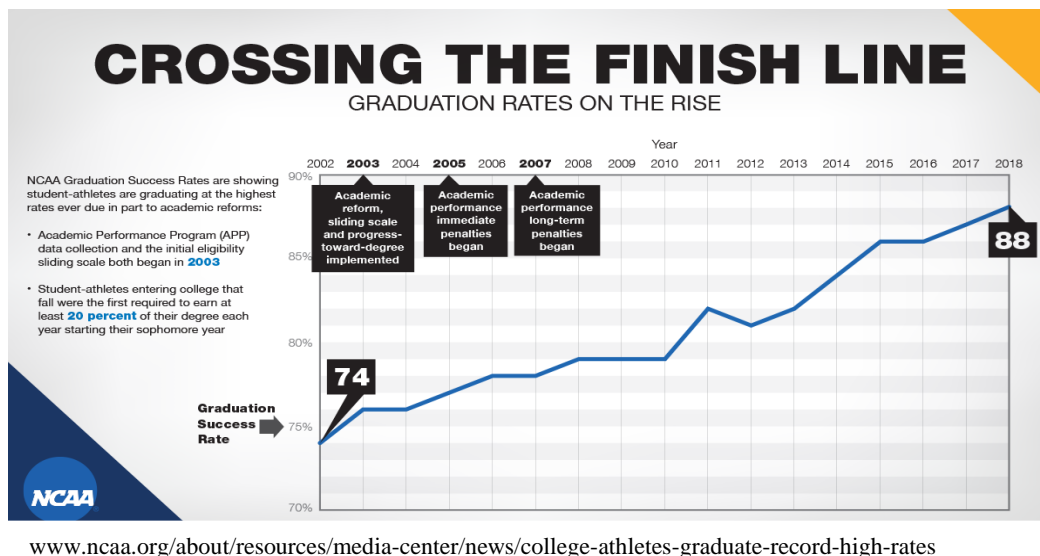
Unemployment rates for people 25 years and older by educational attainment, April 1998 to April 2018, seasonally adjusted



In 2018, NCAA student athletes graduated at a rate of 88% which is the highest that has been recorded (see Figure 2) (Hosick). Academic rule changes around GPA requirements,

required credit hours per semester and other factors have led to a positive trend in the rate of student athlete graduation (Division 1 Progress). John J. DeGioia, president of Georgetown and the chair of the Division I Committee on Academics reported that “Students engaged in intercollegiate athletics continue to graduate at record high levels, demonstrating excellence both athletically and academically.”

Figure 2



To measure the graduation rate of student athletes, the NCAA implemented a measure called the NCAA Graduation Success Rate (NCAA GSR) (Hosick). In order to compare the graduation rates of student athletes to non-student athletes, however, a different measure must be used. The Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) is used to measure the graduation rate of all collegiate students nationwide (Hosick). When the Federal Graduation Rate is used to compare student

athlete's graduation rate to non-student athlete graduation rate, the rates are similar. Student athletes graduated at a rate of 68% and non-student athletes graduated at a rate of 66% (Hosick). These percentages are very close and even though the student athletes graduated at a slightly higher rate, it is hard to say with certainty how significant this difference is.

The NCAA Graduation Success Rate and the Federal Graduation Rate have a few significant differences, however, that create discrepancies in the reported graduation rates of students, student athletes in particular. The NCAA Graduation Success Rate shows the proportion of student-athletes on any given team who earn a college degree (Graduation Success Rate). The Federal Graduation Rate, compiled by the United States Department of Education, measures the percentage of first-time, full-time freshman who graduate within six years of entering their original four-year institution (Graduation Success Rate). Where these two measures differ is in transfer students. The Federal Graduation Rate does not include students and student athletes that transfer and earn their degree from a new institution. Once a student athlete transfers, he/she is considered a non-graduate from that institution and therefore does not count towards the graduation rate (Graduation Success Rate). The NCAA Graduation Success Rate includes student athletes that transfer from original institution and graduate from a new institution (Graduation Success Rate). Transferring from one university to another has become very commonplace in collegiate athletics today and really for non-student athletes as well. For whatever reason, they are not comfortable with their environment, want to be closer to home, or simply just want a new start, these students and student athletes need to be included in the graduation rate and be rewarded for their hard work by being included in the graduation rate and not be considered non-graduates simply because they wanted a new opportunity for themselves.

Outside Research on the Hirability of Student-Athletes Opposed to Non-Student Athletes

(Hirability)

Looking at a more direct measure in terms of this overall research, in 2016 Gallup and Purdue University conducted a study that found student athletes are slightly more likely to find full time employment post-graduation than non-student athletes (see Figure 3) (Understanding).

Figure 3

		EMPLOYED FULL TIME (EMPLOYER)	EMPLOYED FULL TIME (SELF)	EMPLOYED PART TIME, DO NOT WANT FULL TIME	UNEMPLOYED	EMPLOYED PART TIME, WANT FULL TIME	NOT IN WORK- FORCE
Males	Non-Student-Athletes	71%	6%	6%	3%	5%	9%
	Student-Athletes	67%	8%	6%	3%	5%	11%
Females	Non-Student-Athletes	56%	4%	14%	3%	6%	17%
	Student-Athletes	62%	5%	17%	3%	4%	9%
Overall	Non-Student-Athletes	63%	5%	10%	3%	5%	13%
	Student-Athletes	65%	6%	11%	3%	5%	10%
Younger Than Age 65	Non-Student-Athletes	66%	5%	9%	3%	6%	12%
	Student-Athletes	66%	6%	11%	3%	5%	10%

www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2016_Gallup_NCAA_StudentAthlete_Report_20160503.pdf

The Gallup and Purdue University was a longitudinal study that highlighted 1,671 student athletes across all divisions and 22,813 non-student athletes from universities across the nation (Understanding). The student athletes and non-student athletes were surveyed from the same institutions. The responses were collected from athletes who graduated between 1970 and 2014.

Per the chart in Figure 3, it is apparent that the rates of employment between student athletes and non-student athletes are very similar. The study looked at all forms of employment, employed full time by an employer, self employed full time, part time employment etc. Across the board all rates were within a few percentage points. While student athletes were slightly larger in all categories, it is impossible to tell the significance of these percentage points due to their proximity. The study reported a margin of error of ± 1.3 - ± 1.7 percentage points at a 95% confidence level (Understanding).

The Gallup and Purdue University study also looked at five levels of “well-being” for the subjects in the study. The study compared student athletes and non-student athletes as well as football and men’s basketball student athletes to those in other sports. The five areas of well-being included, community well-being,

financial well-being, physical well-being, social well-being and purpose well-being.

Community well being looked at how engaged each was in their community. Those that scored high in this category felt safe

where they lived, had a high level

of pride in their community and

ultimately enjoyed living where they did. Student athletes scored higher than non-student

athletes, 51% to 43% (see Figure 4). Football and men’s basketball student athletes also scored higher than other student athletes.

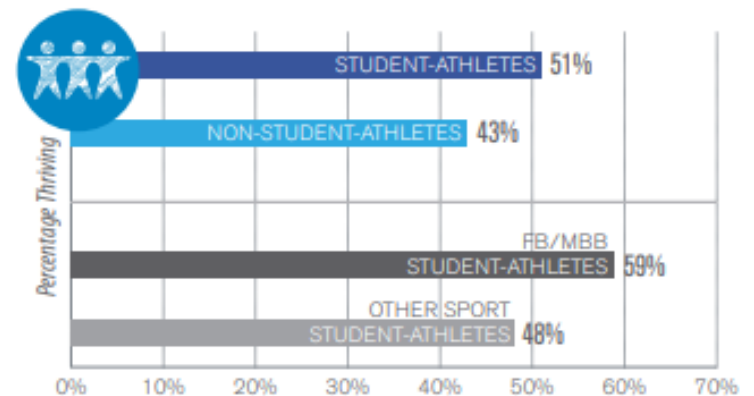


Figure 4

www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2016_Gallup_NCAA_StudentAthlete_Report_20160503.pdf

Financial well-being looked at the fiscal health of the subjects. Individuals that scored high in this category had a high sense of financial stability, felt as if they had a thorough and strategic plan for the future and reported minimal stress with money related issues. Student athletes were only slightly higher in this category at 38% as opposed to 37% for non-student athletes (see Figure 5). Football and men's basketball were behind other sports 38% to 39%.

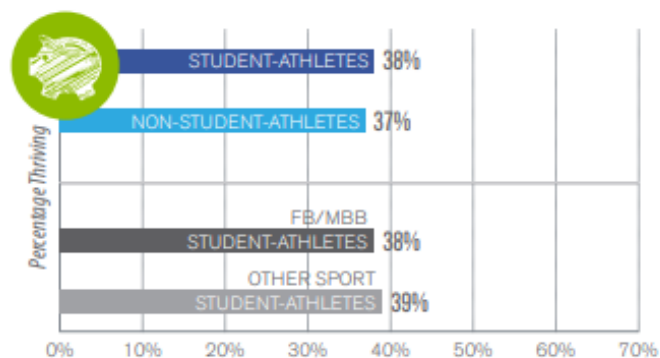


Figure 5

www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2016_Gallup_NCAA_StudentAthlete_Report_20160503.pdf

Physical well-being examined the overall physical health of the subjects. Individuals that scored high in this category reported to feel physically healthy, have ample energy throughout the day and feel

productive with their lives. Student athletes reported higher percentages than non-student athletes 41% to 33% (see Figure 6). Football and men's basketball student athletes reported lower percentages than other sports, 28% to 47%.

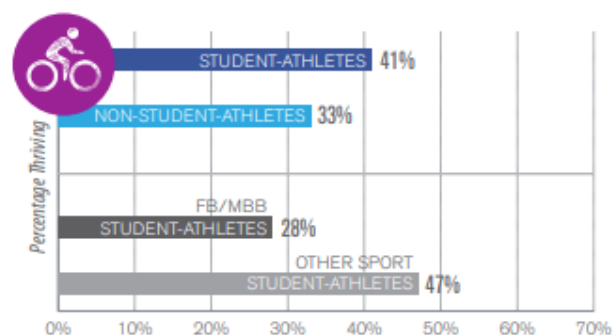


Figure 6

www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2016_Gallup_NCAA_StudentAthlete_Report_20160503.pdf

Social well-being looked at how individuals interacted with others on a personal and larger scale. Subjects that scored high in this category reported to have a large network of strong,

supportive relationships, have a sense of love in their life and are

confident in their abilities to interact with other people. Student athletes reported a higher percentage than non-student athletes, 54% to 45% (see Figure 7). Football and men's basketball were very similar to other student athletes 54% to 53%.

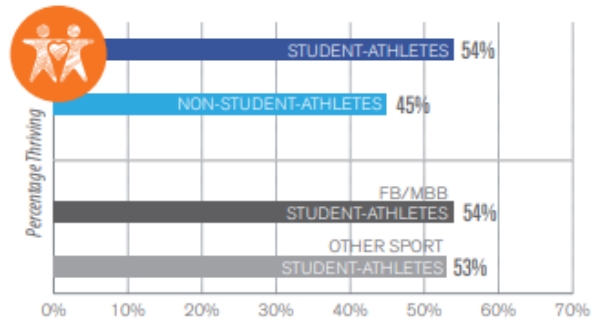


Figure 7

www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2016_Gallup_NCAA_StudentAthlete_Report_20160503.pdf

Purpose well-being looked at the direction of the lives of the subjects and their goals in life. Individuals that scored high in this category reported that they loved what they did every day, were motivated to accomplish daily tasks and had a clear vision of what they wanted out of their lives. Student athletes reported higher percentages than non-student athletes, 56% to 48% (see Figure 8). Football and men’s basketball student athletes scored higher than other sports, 62% to 54%.

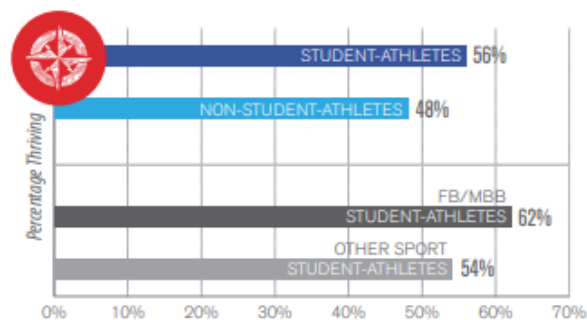


Figure 8

www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2016_Gallup_NCAA_StudentAthlete_Report_20160503.pdf

Autobiographical Experience of a Student-Athlete in Relation to Hirability

I am currently a redshirt junior on the Western Michigan University Varsity football team and will be starting my fourth season in just under a week. I have had the opportunity to experience many different aspects of the life of a collegiate student athlete in my time at Western Michigan University. Off the field, I am a Political Science major that is double minoring in Economics and Management. I maintain a 3.65 GPA and am currently enrolled in the Lee Honors College as well.

My experience as a Division 1 collegiate student athlete has been extremely beneficial to me both as a student athlete itself and as a person overall. I have matured and grown into a young man that is confident in myself and my abilities.

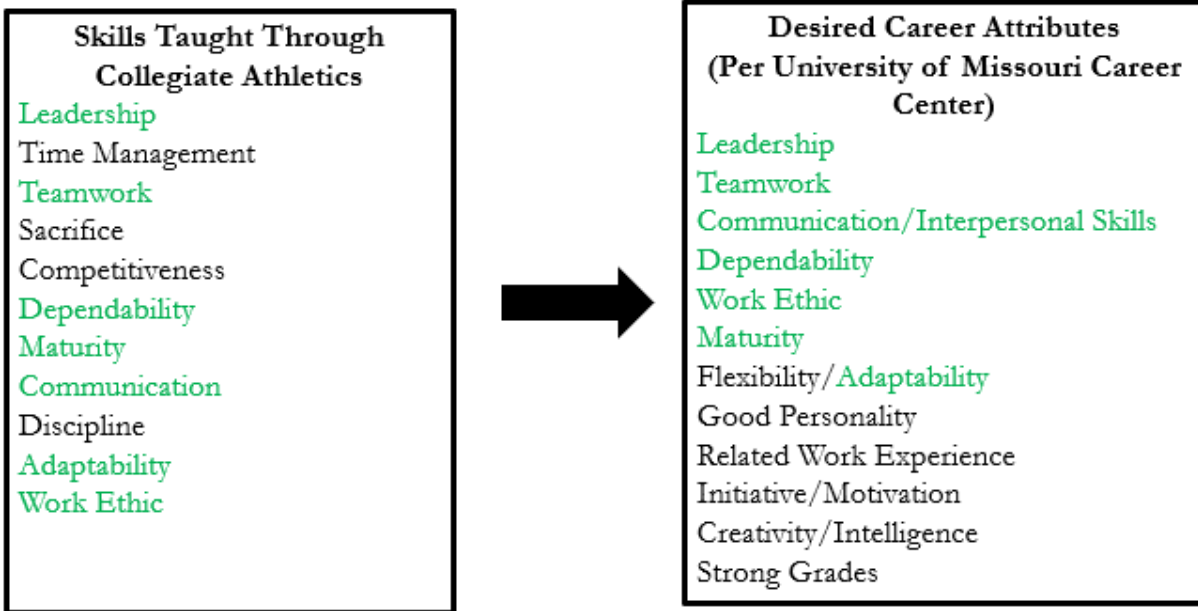
Just like the millions of college students across the nation, I will begin the daunting task of entering the job market following my graduation from Western Michigan University in December. The competition for employment has become fierce and employers are constantly looking for candidates that separate themselves from others. Due to my experience as a student athlete, I believe that I have gained enhanced and developed many skills and abilities that translate into the professional world and given me a platform to separate myself from other candidates.

Competing in collegiate athletics, at any division, is extremely demanding and requires a very dedicated individual to keep up with all that is expected. Student athletes have many more additional demands that do not apply to non-student athletes which is something that sets them

apart. During the football season that runs from roughly August through January, 20 hours are allowed per week for mandatory football activities (8 hours per week out of season) (Countable Athletically). These mandatory activities include, games, practice, training, meetings, meals, and in some cases study hall in the athletic academic resource center. On top of these mandatory demands, players are encouraged to do additional training on their own, watch film and scout the upcoming opponent, participate in community service events and attend team bonding activities. All of these demands are in addition to, not in place of, the daily demands of a non-student athlete such as class, homework and for some, a job. In order to effectively balance the additional workload, skills such as time management, discipline, and adaptability are enforced at a very high level. I have learned how to become an effective student athlete and take advantage of the amazing opportunity that I have been given.

Going more into the skills and abilities that are developed while participating in collegiate athletics, I compared the skills and abilities that I have developed in my experience as a student athlete and compared it to a list of the most attractive skills that employers are looking for, compiled by the University of Missouri career center. In Figure 9, the skills that translate over are highlighted in green. 7 of the 12 skills listed in the University of Missouri Career Center list translate over (Desired Candidate). There are more traits listed in each column and even though not all match up, there is a place for all of them in the workforce today.

Figure 9



Being a student athlete here at Western Michigan University gives us access to many luxuries that not all students get a chance to enjoy. Many of these luxuries are designed to help us off the field, in the classroom and our pursuit of a fruitful life following our football careers. Leadership and career development professionals work directly with our team to teach us useful ways to become better men, we have a fantastic academic support staff that assists us with tutors, advising and anything else around academics and we have the privilege of having priority registration when it comes to registering for classes which makes it easier to get in the classes we need to graduate. Non-student athletes have access to similar services, but student athletes are fortunate enough to have these resources directly affiliated with our program to make access much easier.

The phrase “It’s all about who you know,” has become very prevalent today in the business world. Many employment positions are filled due to relationships that people have

developed and career networks that they have built. Being a student athlete at Western Michigan University has allowed for me to network with many individuals that potentially could have an impact in the job market following my graduation. For the past two years I have been working for a local business leader in southwest Michigan that has proved to be an excellent mentor and guide to my future career. I was connected to this individual through former players and have taken advantage of this opportunity by learning everything I can about being a reliable employee. My boss participated in collegiate athletics himself and knows the quality of men that are football student athletes and is constantly looking for these individuals for his own company. Through me working with him, I have been offered an internship at his company which is recognized as one of the best places to work in the Midwest. If it was not for football and me participating in the program, I firmly believe that I would not be in this position today, nor would I have the opportunity that I do.

Conclusion: Comparing Outside Research to My Autobiographical Experience

As I have stated in the autobiographical section of this research, I firmly believe that participating in collegiate athletics has put me in a better position to obtain a job following my graduation than non-student athletes. I have developed and enhanced many employable skills, expanded my career network and made many valuable connections and I have received invaluable academic support that has helped me excel in the classroom and put me on track to graduate early. The larger data, however, shows that up to this point, there is not a significant difference in the rate of full-time employment between student athletes and non-student athletes. The 2% difference with a margin of error of $\pm 1.3 - \pm 1.7$ percentage points at a 95% confidence

level makes the results inconclusive. Even though student athletes consistently scored higher on the well-being ratings than non-student athletes, they are not directly related to employment potential and therefore cannot support a conclusion of there being a difference in the hirability between student athletes and non-student athletes.

The hirability of student athletes compared to non-student athletes is a very large topic that has many different angles and many different questions that one could investigate. Continued research into this subject could attempt to answer questions such as is there a difference between male and female student athletes and their employment potential? Whether or not there is difference in the hirability of student athletes based on race/ethnicity? As well as, Is there any difference in the financial earnings between student athletes and non-student athletes? This is all valuable information that can be attained with additional research and can potentially provide insight as to how one might become a better employee and give them the best chance to obtain the job of their dreams.

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What Is the Graduation Success Rate? grfx.cstv.com/photos/schools/sdsu/genrel/auto_pdf/what-is-grad-success-rate.pdf.