



Jeff Bain

Martin Methodist College

Executive Director of Athletics

Life Skills vs. GPA

A collegiate student experience is as much about perfecting life skills as it is academic skills. Both are acquired traits, meaning somewhere in a person's life these skills have to be taught to be obtained. Your potential employer will only inquire about your GPA once – with your first job. After your first job, your professional growth is all about your successful interactions with others, how you present yourself and how you are perceived by others.

Athletics departments have the opportunity and audience to teach/coach social, ethical and financial skills as well as professional etiquette and character development. Failure to offer a quality life skills program or merely giving lip service to the concept is detrimental to our student-athletes' academic and career success.

We built our campus initiative from components of various colleges around the nation and it is referred to as S.O.A.R. (Success Over and Above

the Rest). Our data reflects that program participation directly correlates to higher GPAs, graduation rates and team wins.

S.O.A.R. aims to help student-athletes achieve success in three key areas:

- **Academic Excellence:** By providing the tools to create an academic foothold of understanding, guidance and navigation with academia.
- **Life Skills:** By providing the resources for encouragement and planning for life goals related to family, society and professional endeavors.
- **Leadership Development:** By providing the environment in which leadership opportunities are valued, experienced, learned and shared.

Our programming model has a five-step approach:

1. **Be prepared to invest time and effort for success.** For full success, all coaches must promote and encourage participation in the program. Send reports to coaches noting which and what percentage of student-athletes participate in the program. Quality preparation will produce quality results.
2. **Develop checklists of steps for success.** Identify specific tasks and needs to help student-athletes achieve academic,

leadership, career and life goals. Have a specific checklist for freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. (I will be glad to share our checklists with you.)

3. **Start early and follow-up.** Within the first month of the semester, but after coaches hold team meetings to cover their expectations, hold your own meetings to review steps for success. Meet with freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors separately. Offer make-up sessions the following week.
4. **Partner with academic advising and track data.** This will help provide staffing and leadership for your program. Consider starting with part-time staff in athletics to lead the program, or even an adjunct faculty position. Data will reflect the program value.
5. **Share the game plan and success.** This type of quality programming is the best recruiting news for the parents. It is a golden opportunity for a title sponsorship. It is a great interaction with local businesses. And for many student-athletes it is a tremendous career enhancer.

In conclusion, let me share feedback that we hear every year from our graduates two and three years post-graduation: "The value of S.O.A.R programming really sinks in when we get into the real world – thank you!"



Carlyle Carter

CCCCAA

Executive Director & CEO/President

The California Community College system is often referred to as the largest higher education system in the world, enrolling in excess of two million students annually. A subset of that system is the California Community College Athletic Association (CCCCAA) which offers 24 championship sports and provides 24,000 student-athletes annually the opportunity to pursue their dreams of higher education and continued participation in intercollegiate athletics.

Technology has enhanced the ability to academically track the progress and success of the student-athlete population and compare that to the non-student-athlete population on multiple measures. Through an online program operated out of the California Community College

State Chancellor's Office, we are able to upload the data identifying students participating in intercollegiate athletics from the CCCCCAA eligibility database. Once uploaded, the data must be matched with the existing academic records which makes it relatively easy to disaggregate the student-athlete population from the non-student-athlete population, permitting "clean" comparisons.

The system in use is referred to as Cal-PASS Plus and is accessible to member colleges. There are numerous queries embedded that will generate reports that can be designed by the individual user just by including it as a part of the search. For example, let's say we would like to generate a report to determine how women's soccer participants are performing academically compared to the non-soccer playing students. Once the report is generated it can be downloaded to Excel for further analysis or reporting.

There are many parameters available, including if the student was enrolled full-time in both academic terms, the average number of units taken, GPA, retention and "completion," as well as others. The data can also be narrowed to compare how students did when compared

against others from their same ethnicity, both overall and sport-specific.

The availability of the data and the ability to design a report based upon a target audience has benefited the CCCCCAA membership greatly in providing justification for the continued existence of some sport teams and further in some instances, support of offering intercollegiate athletics. With the use of verifiable data, Cal-PASS Plus demonstrates that student-athletes outperform non-student-athletes in nearly every measure.

That is a very powerful and persuasive argument for all but those that have already made up their mind! Use of accurate, clean and objective data is an argument that can't be challenged but, unfortunately, is sometimes.