

**STUDENT-ATHLETES AND ACADEMIC PEER MENTORS: A CASE ANALYSIS OF
EXPERT/NOVICE RELATIONSHIPS IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS**

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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Kulia I Ka Nu'u

Strive to reach the summit

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ABSTRACT

As National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I student-athletes arrive on university and college campuses with the basic academic and social skills needed to survive in high school, many often struggle in transitioning to the rigors of college academics and social life. To aid in this transition from high school to college, Division I athletic departments often utilize peer-mentor study hall programs, where incoming student-athletes work with non-athlete undergraduate and graduate master students to develop academic, study, and time management skills necessary for college success. The purpose of this study was to evaluate how the thoughts and feelings about the purpose and outcome of study hall differed across the expert/novice spectrum. How do student-athletes, peer mentors, and academic support staff perceive the purpose of study hall? What is the expected outcome of study hall? These questions will be explored and the varying array of results presented in a discussion that will illuminate the differences between expert and novice perceptions regarding study hall.

“Expertise is not a single skill; it is a collection of skills and the same professional may be an expert in some tasks in his/her domain while remaining a novice in others.”

Daniel Kahneman, Thinking Fast and Slow

CHAPTER I: AREA OF FOCUS

It is 6:30 in the evening, and while students across campus are mentally flipping through their catalogue of dinner options, a group of physically exhausted students is preparing to transition from athlete to student. Some have been up since 5:00 in the morning, having checked off morning weights, rehabilitation and conditioning, class, lunch, and afternoon practice from their list of things to do. Before the freedom of the evening and dinner calls, there is one last box to check off. Welcome to team study hall. For the next two hours, this group of first year, Division I student-athletes will work on homework and prepare for upcoming papers, exams, and projects in the confines of a room that hides the sunset. While other students have the flexibility to pick and choose when and where they want to study, this particular group of students shuffles in to the conference room for another Monday night of study hall. Living in the hyphenated world of both student and athlete, these individuals are both expert and novice. How does one transition from being an expert in the sphere of athletics to that of a novice college student looking to succeed both on and off the court, field, and pool deck?

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athletes arrive on university and college campuses armed with the basic academic and social skills needed to survive in high school, but often struggle in transitioning to the rigors of college academics and social life. The number of NCAA student-athletes participating in intercollegiate athletics reached an all-time high during the 2011-2012 academic year, which means 450,000 student-athletes are living the double life of competitive athlete and aspiring student (NCAA.org, 2012). As Adler and Adler (1991) note, intercollegiate student-athletes are faced with the internal dilemma “what is my salient identity?” At the Division I level, many student-athletes dream of a professional career beyond the confines of the NCAA where athletic ability can punch a ticket to fame and wealth.

However, many student-athletes find over the course of their intercollegiate careers that the demands and rewards of the athletic role are overwhelming and become engulfed by their athletic identity. Welcome to role engulfment (Adler and Adler, 1991). In the process of yielding to the athletic role, student-athletes sacrifice other activities, interests, academic goals, and relationships. As the academic and social roles vie for what little time and attention student-athletes have leftover after dedicating so much of their day to the athletic role set, student-athletes struggle to maintain a balance. In yielding to the athletic identity, student-athletes ultimately sacrifice dimensions of themselves and thus role abandonment enters the picture as they progressively “detach themselves from their investments in other areas and let go of alternative goals or priorities,” (Adler and Adler, 1991, p. 28). Thus athletic departments are faced with the staggering fact that of the 450,000 possible student-athletes, only 1.3% of men’s basketball players, 0.9% of women’s basketball players, 1.6% of football players, and 9.7% of baseball players will have professional athletic careers (NCAA.org, 2011b). How does one prepare the remaining majority for a life beyond competitive athletics?

To aid in this transition from high school to college, athletic departments often utilize team study hall programs where student-athletes spend several hours a week studying and preparing for upcoming assignments during designated study times (Enochs and Roland, 2006). With a day that is literally blocked out from morning weights, class time, team meetings, and afternoon practice, it makes sense that studying also receives a chunk of a student-athlete’s day. One model of study hall of particular interest to the researcher revolves around the relationship between a peer mentor and a team of student-athletes. This mentor is often an upperclassmen or graduate student that has been identified as a “master student” by the academic support staff as one who excels in academic, study, and time management skills. By working with “novice

college students” the peer mentors help first year student-athletes successfully make the academic transition to college.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how the thoughts and feelings about study hall differed across this expert/novice spectrum. How do student-athletes, peer mentors, and academic support staff perceive the purpose of study hall? What is the expected outcome of study hall? From the perspective of student-athletes, what have they learned during their first semester of study hall? How do peer mentors and staff members differ from student-athletes regarding what skills are to be cultivated in study hall? What would be the dream study hall format for student-athletes, peer mentors, and academic support staff? These questions will be explored and the varying array of results presented in a discussion that will illuminate the differences between expert and novice perceptions regarding study hall.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The First Year Experience

The first year experience (FYE) is a phenomenon of great interest to researchers in higher education, as young adults make the transition from high school to college life. As students grapple to find their place in a new educational, emotional, and social frontier, educators argue that the first year is a critical benchmark for retention and attrition. Universities have turned to peer mentor programs as a cost-effective solution for providing first year students with opportunities to become invested in the school community. In general, those who receive mentoring benefit from the experience in a number of important ways. Studies evaluating peer mentoring as a means of assisting first year students in their transition to university life indicate that peer mentoring enhances skills development, reduces stress and the negative effects of stress, and facilitates professional socialization and identity development (Tsang, 2011). More importantly, higher education formal mentoring programs have been related to retention of “at risk” students (Sharkey, Bischoff, Echols, Morrison, Northman, Liebman, and Steele, 1987). Astin (1984) argues that student involvement predicts academic success, thus university peer mentoring programs hold the potential to increase student involvement for both the mentors and mentees. Factors that influence student persistence to graduation include commitment to the institution, commitment to the goal of graduating, and social and academic support. Thus the establishment of a mentoring relationship may positively influence these constructs and subsequently the persistence level of students. Sanchez, Bauer, and Paronto (2006) argue that because mentees would be more likely to believe that they are receiving “inside” information and social support from university experts in the mentor group, they are likely to be more satisfied with their university experience than non-mentees. Finally, not only is peer mentoring found to

be beneficial to the mentees, but it is also of great import to the mentors as it promotes sense of self-satisfaction, enjoyment in sharing expertise, gaining new personal insights, and enhancing professional confidence (Tsang, 2011). But how does a mentor begin acquiring the skill needed to become an expert student?

Acquiring Expertise

In the book *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman (2011) argues that the acquisition of expertise in complex tasks is both intricate and time consuming, for expertise in a domain is not a single skill but rather a “large collection of mini skills,” (p. 238). Studies of chess masters revealed that at least 10,000 hours of dedicated practice are required to attain the highest levels of performance. Those 10,000 hours break down to six years of playing chess, five hours a day where the time is spent familiarizing oneself with the thousands of possible configurations and how these pieces relate to each other in both offensive and defensive positions (Charness, 1991). In learning to become an expert reader, one must first learn how to recognize letters. Next letters are assembled into syllables and words. When faced with a new word, an expert reader has already developed the ability to assemble familiar letter, syllable, and word elements in a myriad of patterns and can recognize these patterns to correctly pronounce the word. Novice readers on the other hand are more focused on the building block units of individual letters and often struggle to see new words as sound units as opposed to individual letter sounds (Kahneman, 2011).

However, it must be noted that for the expert reader, it is not just a matter of being able to manipulate the basic elements of letters and sound groups, but it is also possessing the knowledge of rules that enables one to develop and excel as a reader. In addition, the expert is drawing from a database of equivalent situations that exist in the memory bank of possible

scenarios that one may encounter while reading. The expert reader is mentally cross-referencing the new word against thousands of previously encountered words (Lewis, 2009). On the other hand, not only is the novice reader grappling with acquiring the foundation blocks of reading, he/she is also learning to navigate the rules of how these blocks are to be used. The novice must perform these calculations and comparisons in real time due to lack of a sizeable database of situations, and thus become mentally exhausted. Only with time and repeated practice can the novice be exposed to the many combinations of letters and sounds, therefore honing the skill of reading and learning from success and failure.

Thus the difference between experts and novices is not merely a matter of the sheer amount of accumulated knowledge; it also reflects qualitative differences in the organization of knowledge and its representation (Chi, Glaser, and Rees, 1982). The knowledge of an expert is often encoded around key, domain-related concepts and solution protocols that allow rapid and reliable retrieval of stored information whenever needed. In contrast, novices encode information using everyday concepts that make retrieval of their limited relevant knowledge increasingly difficult and unreliable. Finally, experts have “acquired domain-specific memory skills that allow them to rely on long-term memory to dramatically expand the amount of information that can be kept accessible during planning and during reasoning,” (Ericson and Kintsch, 1995). The superior quality of the experts’ representation space is essential for the experts’ ability to monitor and evaluate their own performance so that they can keep improving their performance by adapting new knowledge (Ericson, 1996; Glaser, 1996).

Optimal Conditions for Acquiring Skill. Kahneman (2011) proposes that in addition to the 10,000 hours required to hone one’s expertise, it is important to also take into consideration one’s environment. First, the environment must be sufficiently regular and predictable. For

student-athletes looking to hone their study and time management skills, this means creating a stable study hall time and location. Just like practice and class, study hall becomes another predictable commitment that student-athletes factor into their day. This may mean having study hall in the computer lab, the conference room, an empty office, or the auditorium.

Second, the environment must also have a stable structure with limited distractions and interruptions. A stable structure for study hall often involves checking in with the peer mentor at the beginning of study hall, identifying what tasks or assignments are to be worked on, selecting a seat, and then working on said tasks. For those students in the communal computer lab, distractions and interruptions may include students coming and going from their own team study halls, chatter from proximal tutoring appointments, individuals typing on keyboards, or printers spitting out page after page of readings and PowerPoint handouts. While the largest space to house study hall for student-athletes, one could see how the computer lab would not qualify as an optimal condition for acquiring skill. Armed with a consistent time and place, how to student-athletes make the transition from athlete to student in preparation for team study hall?

Which Comes First – Student or Athlete?

As college sports have become increasingly popular as a form of mass commercial entertainment, college athletes are faced with the dilemma of whether their salient identity falls into the student or athlete camp. In 2011, the NCAA ended the fiscal year with a total revenue stream of \$757 million (ncaa.org, 2011). As a consequence of the commercialization and high-stakes investment of intercollegiate athletics, there is a greater urgency to produce winning seasons and secure corporate sponsors at the expense of student-athletes' academic goals (Eitzen, 2009; Sack, 2001). However, calls for reform have demanded that academics become a top focus for intercollegiate athletics across the country, as seen in the Knight Commission's Report

on Intercollegiate Athletics (2011) where the first principle for recommendations is “Academics first – each institution must make decisions regarding athletics budgets with a view to how they will affect its academic mission and values. Spending on educational activities should not be compromised to boost sports funding,” (Knight Commission, p. 12). With the heightened commercialization of intercollegiate athletics, colleges and universities must recognize that the level of academic investment among college coaches and other internal sources can influence student-athlete success and life goals (Comeaux, Speer, Taustine, and Harrison, 2011).

Integration and likelihood of academic and social success. In line with Tinto’s (1987) student-attrition model, student-athletes’ grades, intellectual development, and engagement with peer mentors in study hall increase the likelihood of academic and social integration. Academic integration is expected to influence institutional commitment, athletics, and ultimately academic success. In the social domain, peer group interactions, faculty interactions, and peer mentor interactions result in social integration. Likewise, student-athletes’ participation in sport-related activities such as team practices and games also results in social integration. Like academic integration, social integration is expected to also influence goal, sport, institutional, and academic commitment and success (Comeaux and Harrison, 2011).

However as Adler and Adler’s (1991) qualitative study over four years of a men’s basketball team at the NCAA Division I level revealed, student-athletes transition into college life with feelings of optimism about their desired academic goals. Nevertheless within one or two semesters, they begin to devalue their academic roles because sport demands and expectations structurally inhibit their involvement in academic support activities. These impediments, coupled with the strong commitment of many student-athletes to their athlete roles makes it

easier for these students to focus on becoming elite athletes at the expense of their academic futures (Adler and Adler, 1991).

Feedback and Practice

In a collegiate lifestyle that is structured around sport, feedback is an integral part of an athlete's life. When faced with a situation within athletics, athletes are drawing from their action plan profiles, a database of equivalent sporting situations that exists in their memory banks. The expert athlete is one who is able to successfully evaluate one's situation or opponent while in the movement and move from plan A to plan B. These decisions and outcomes are then categorized as being successful or unsuccessful. In addition, techniques and plays are critiqued in practice and game situations, and athletes are constantly being reinforced for actions done correctly or incorrectly by the coaching staff or teammates. Once feedback is received, athletes are able to tweak and adjust their actions in real time and immediately see the effect of the change (Starkes and Ericsson, 2003).

However collegiate athletes also fulfill the dual role of student, where feedback is anything but immediate. Students are required to work on assignments away from their main source of feedback – the instructor. After completing the assignment, the turn around time for feedback can extend anywhere from 24 hours to a week. By that time, the student has already moved on to the next assignment and if there was any feedback about structure or content, it is too late. Thus student-athletes are faced with a conflict between their pulls between immediate versus long-term reinforcement. Athletic participation gives them immediate feedback for their efforts in the form of “adoring fans, immediate attention, praise and rewards from the coaching staff, and the admiration of their peers,” (Adler and Adler, 1991, p.149). In contrast, academic participation is something that will not pay off for student-athletes until some time in the future.

Before they can reap the benefits, they have to finish four to six years of college and graduate. Even then, the reward is hopefully a job and a secure lifestyle. Harshly juxtaposed to the glitz and glamor of the allure of a possible professional athletic career despite the slim odds of making it, student-athletes often defer to the immediate forms of gratification. Following the four year qualitative study of a men's basketball team, Adler and Adler (1991) concluded that many student-athletes soon succumb to the orientation toward the immediate and buy into the "ethos of cashing in" on the rewards for all their hard work in the here and now (p. 198).

If one were to take the 10,000-hour rule into consideration, first year college students should already be expert students. If the student has regularly attended school from first grade through twelfth grade for seven hours a day, five days a week, for ten months a year, that means he/she has been a student for approximately 16,800 hours. One may assume that this expert student already possesses the necessary study skills needed to succeed based on 12 years of practice and feedback. However as many professors and academic support staff can attest to, there is still a need for first year transition programs. Thus it is the role of the peer mentor in study hall to create an environment where college study skills can be practiced, constructive feedback can be given in real time, and hands-on involvement is the norm as opposed to passive observation.

Scaffolding and the Expert Student-in-Training

As the peer mentor is tasked with transforming incoming students into successful college students based solely on the fact that he/she is a good student, the task may seem daunting at first. Enter scaffolding, a learning process through which sufficient support is provided to promote learning when concepts and skills are being first introduced (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding may appear in the form of resources, templates, guides, the modeling of a task, or

advice and acts as training wheels during the training process. These supports are eventually removed thus enabling the student to develop learning strategies independently based on what was learned during the scaffolding period. Peer mentor study hall is the scaffolding period, with hopes from academic support staff that the student-athlete will be able to take the skills learned during study hall and transfer them to their subsequent years of schooling outside of study hall. Thus the role of the peer mentor is to provide scaffolding by engaging a student-athlete's attention in study hall, aiding in the identification of tasks and goals, controlling for frustration when confronted with a difficult task, and demonstrating tasks as needed (Rodgers, 2004).

Rodgers (2004) notes that there are two types of scaffolding. The first is soft scaffolding where the type and amount of support is contingent on the needs of the student. In the case of study hall, this may mean the peer mentor circulates throughout the room, checking in with students, providing assistance and feedback, and moving from student to student. The issue with soft scaffolding is that it is difficult to maintain consistently when the group is large and when members have varying levels of needs. This is particularly evident during study intensive periods of the semester such as during midterms when every student requires one-on-one assistance for different projects, papers, and exams. Then the peer mentor may have lull weeks where everyone is maintaining and simply working on smaller tasks that require little scaffolding.

The second type of scaffolding is labeled as hard or embedded, where scaffolding is planned in advance to help students with a learning task that is known to be difficult (Gallagher, 1997). For students in study hall, hard or embedded scaffolding may be instituted if an academic support staff member has notified the peer mentor that a specific student is having difficulty with time management based on constant requests for assignment extensions. The peer mentor may

prepare a plan of action that best meets the needs of the identified student prior to study hall so that the scaffolding goes smoother than if the mentor had simply stumbled upon the issue through rounds in soft scaffolding. Thus the peer mentor is responsible for structuring study hall sessions such that developmental instruction in study and time management skills is broken down into small steps based on tasks that the learner is already able to accomplish independently (Saye and Brush, 2002, Holton and Clarke, 2006).

The Zone of Proximal Development. According to Vygotsky (1978), there are three zones where a learner can dwell during the acquisition of knowledge – the “what I can’t do, what I can do, and what I can do with help,” zones. The optimal place for scaffolding to occur is the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which exists in the gap between what the learner has mastered and what he/she can achieve when provided with support. It is here that the expert peer mentor works with novice, incoming students by breaking down complex tasks into smaller building blocks. The ZPD is comprised of actions that novice students are capable of understanding, but not capable of performing alone. The student knows that he/she has limited time in a week to fit in studying and homework time, and so the abstract concept of “time management” is put on the table, but what does it mean? Working with an expert peer mentor, time management becomes writing down assignments, setting daily, weekly, and semester goals for each course, blocking out the day to see where all the time goes, and creating “to do” lists for each block of studying. As the semester progresses, and the peer mentor continues to check in with the student about how these various methods of time management are working, we see a collaboration between the expert and novice. The novice may decide that setting aside eight hours on a Sunday to study for an exam on Monday is the best use of time, but come study hall on Wednesday has self-evaluated that perhaps that was not the most efficient use of time due to

distractions and lack of focus. Development in the ZPD takes shape when the novice student becomes capable of doing independently what yesterday they could only do in collaboration with an expert peer mentor (Zaretski, 2009). It is the hope of the peer mentor and academic support staff member that the novice student is able to continue expanding his/her ZPD so that when assistance or scaffolding is required the novice student is able to build on what he/she already knows. This “light bulb” moment is often seen when novice students who struggle with time management and on-task behavior initiate contact with a peer mentor to ask for assistance instead of the peer mentor constantly inquiring about whether the student needs assistance.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In hopes of exploring this notion of expert/novice knowledge acquisition in the realm of intercollegiate athletics, the researcher began her search for answers at a large, public university in the southwest with a strong presence in the NCAA Division I sphere of sports. Like other Division I schools, the University houses its student-athlete academic support arm within the walls of the athletics department making the basketball arena a one-stop-shop for all things athletics. The NCAA classifies a Division I school as one that meets the following criteria:

“Number of required sports: Division I members must offer at least 14 sports (at least seven for men and seven for women, or six for men and eight for women). The institution must sponsor at least two team sports (for example, football, basketball, or volleyball) for each gender. The school must also have participating male and female teams or participants in the fall, winter, and spring seasons.

Scheduling: Each Division I program must play a minimum number of contests against Division I opponents. The minimums vary by sport.

Financial Aid: Division I institutions must offer a minimum amount of financial aid but may not exceed established maximums. Football Bowl Subdivision football, men’s and women’s basketball, women’s gymnastics, women’s volleyball, and women’s tennis are considered head-count sports for financial aid purposes in Division I financial aid equivalences (one grant-in-aid package divided into smaller pieces) may be offered in all other sports,” (ncaa.org, 2011c).

The designation of Division I is important to note, for it is at these institutions that the top caliber of gifted athlete resides. Division II is seen as the intermediary between Division I’s superior level of athleticism and Division III which has the environment of no scholarship funding tied to athletics (ncaa.org, 2012). Thus the level of achieved excellence in respective sports programs at the Division I level can account for the amount of public coverage, time, and attention that most Division I athletes will dedicate to their sport in a lifetime.

Having been a peer mentor and content tutor with the department of student-athlete academic support services at the University for the past four years, the director was eager to

green light this project due to the researcher's "insider role" that would hopefully lead to more honest and insightful feedback regarding the study hall program. Like Adler and Adler (1991) who were fully immersed in the culture of the department, the researcher was able to take a membership role that warranted recognition and was treated by others as a member of the student-athlete academic support staff community. She became privy to members' innermost thoughts, activities, and emotions, which is "particularly important in a setting such as athletics departments that are characterized by secrecy and exclusiveness," (Adler and Adler, 1991, p. 22).

Interview research was selected as the method of inquiry for it allowed for more qualitative and broader data collection that created a realistic depiction of the sample. The interviews were structured and enabled the researcher to ask follow-up and clarification questions. This study provides holistic and meaningful descriptions of the purpose and expected outcomes of the peer mentor supervised study hall program from three levels of analysis – the student-athlete, the peer mentor, and the academic support staff team, which includes academic counselors and learning specialists.

Research Questions

The following questions provided the main frame for this study: What is the purpose of study hall? What is the role of the peer mentor during study hall? What skills do you expect to have cultivated after the first year of study hall? Since the evaluation of expert/novice relationships between students and peer mentors would emerge from in-person interviews, the participants' language became very important to the understanding of the nature of expertise.

The following questions guided the collection and analysis of data:

1. During a typical study hall, what types of tasks do student-athletes work on?
2. What are the desired qualities of a peer mentor?
3. What types of tasks does the peer mentor assist student-athletes with?
4. What would be the ideal model of study hall?

5. What skills have student-athletes cultivated in their first year of study hall?
 - a. How will these skills be of use in the future semesters to come?

The researcher hypothesizes that student-athletes will demonstrate a novice understanding regarding the purpose of study hall, the role of the peer mentor, and the projected outcome of study hall. Conversely, peer mentors and academic support staff will demonstrate an expert understanding of the short and long-term goals of the study hall program.

Procedure

Recruitment. The search for participants began when permission was requested from the Director of Student Learning Services for Student-Athletes. Site authorization was crucial, for the central athletic facility at the University housed all athletic department coaches, staff, and student-athletes and would thus be the key location of interest on campus due to the high concentration and diversity of student-athletes that would be present on a consistent basis. After permission was granted by the Director to recruit student-athletes for this research project, flyers were posted in the athletic facility. These flyers were specifically hung in and around the areas where study hall and tutoring sessions took place. In addition, an electronic version of the flyer was transmitted to student-athletes via the student-athlete listserv, to peer mentors via email from the Assistant Director, and to academic support staff during an announcement made during weekly staff meetings. Once participants made initial contact with the researcher, the purpose of the study was explained and participation was agreed upon voluntarily with no additional urging or prompting. Since interview data were only being collected during one point of the semester, participants were reassured that it would only be a one-time commitment. Interviews were recorded with an audio recorder and took place in quiet areas that provided privacy.

Participants

A total of 32 participants were interviewed. The participants were drawn from three different groups. The first included student-athletes ($n = 16$) who participated in peer mentor supervised study hall. These participants were categorized as first year, transfer, or returning student-athletes who were required to participate in mandatory study hall hours. Student-athletes from the sports of baseball, women's basketball, men's and women's swimming and diving, and softball were interviewed (see Table 1 for participant sport distribution). The second group of participants included peer mentors ($n = 7$) who were junior, senior, or graduate students who had been identified as "expert students" by the assistant director based on grade point average and course content proficiency. Their areas of content knowledge varied from biological sciences, to business, to the social and behavioral sciences. The final group of participants ($n = 9$) encompassed the academic support team of academic counselors and learning specialists. Academic counselors are defined as individuals who work with a specific team, assisting in the selection of courses, majors, tracking academic progress, transcript evaluations, and all aspects leading to degree completion. Learning specialists work with identified student-athletes in individual or small group study session that focus on developing the academic skills necessary for success at the university level (cats.arizona.edu, 2012).

Table 1 - Participant Sport Distribution

Sport	Number of Freshmen	Number of Returning Students	Number of Transfer Students	Number of Participants
Baseball	1	1	1	3
Women's Basketball	1	2	-	3
Men's Swimming and Diving	3	-	-	3
Women's Swimming and Diving	3	-	-	3
Softball	3	-	1	4
Total	11	3	2	16

Data Sources

Three interview protocols were created by the researcher to include questions related to the purpose of study of hall, the role of the peer mentor, and expected annual study hall outcomes (see Appendices A – C). The protocol included items to stimulate think-aloud responses (i.e. – what types of tasks do you work on during study hall?) as well as responses to hypothetical questions (i.e. – what would be the ideal study hall model?). Additional questions asked participants to discuss how their own personal experiences from high school or other institutions of higher education influence their thoughts about study hall (Smith, 2004). Interviews ranged from 10-45 minutes.

Analysis of Data

The microanalysis coding of the data was inductive in nature as the data drove the formation of themes. Individual interviews were broken down into discrete parts through transcription before being closely examined for coding themes. Data were then further broken down by participant membership group, and in the case of student-athletes by sport.

As each participant's data set was transcribed, all relevant data were broken down and grouped into emerging themes. Participants' exact words were filed within each coding theme, which allowed for within-group comparisons amongst the student-athletes, peer mentors, and academic support staff participants.

During the cross-case analysis stage, open coding began again. Based on the within-case labels, the researcher looked for patterns that encompassed all three participant groups.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings from the research collected from the first year student-athletes, peer mentors, and academic support staff regarding their perceptions of study hall. The qualitative data were teeming with rich findings regarding how perceptions of study hall varied on the spectrum of expertise. Thus this study was important in providing not only a voice for student-athletes, but for peer mentors and academic support staff whose opinions are often isolated and rarely juxtaposed to those of student-athletes.

After analyzing the 10.8 hours of interview data and 86 pages of transcribed dialogue, several key themes stood out. The themes that were most prevalent were as follows:

1. The former student-athlete as peer mentor experience.
2. The purpose of study hall is to cultivate time management and study skills.
3. The role of the peer mentor in study hall.
4. The long-term goal of study hall is...
5. Transfer and returning students' reflections on study hall.
6. Ideal study hall models.

The diversity of responses was astounding, yet these were the common themes that emerged. Each theme is presented and reviewed as it relates to the overall purpose of study hall and how perceptions differ on the expert/novice spectrum.

Common Themes

1. The former student-athlete as peer mentor experience.

Of the seven peer mentors interviewed for this study, two identified as former student-athletes who had competed at the Division I level. While their four years of eligibility were over, both elected to stay at the University to complete their degree programs. Their familiarity and inside

knowledge of what it was like to be a student-athlete separated their thoughts and opinions of study hall from those of the non-student-athlete peer mentors. One mentor noted:

“I just kind of think that my background as a student-athlete has definitely benefited me as a peer mentor. I think that as far as my students go they really feel like they have trust in me and they’re able to confide in me. I like to offer my insight as a peer mentor because I can tell them how I balanced athletics and school...they ask me questions that they know I’ve been through like ‘how many units did you take during travel season?’ things like that and I can actually give them a real perspective as opposed to going to their advisor and their advisor being like ‘just take 12’...so I definitely think for me as a peer mentor I think they look to me for more relatable advice...It’s nice to feel useful because you’re making an impact with students.”

For this peer mentor, she strongly identified with the group of student-athletes that she worked with as evident in her description of the students as “so intelligent and very driven,” and when she said, “Like I took 15 units and I was fine and I would consider myself a smart student like them.” This ability for the peer mentor to personally identify with the student-athletes as having not just athleticism in common but intelligence as well created a bond of trust and investment that was missing from the non-student-athlete peer mentors. One non-student-athlete peer mentor noted that, “The hardest part is dealing with the fact that they’re always very tired and as a grad student I know what that feels like but at the same time I don’t know because I’m not physically doing things. I mean they are physically exhausted and so that’s the hard part.” Thus it appears that former student-athlete peer mentors were better able to identify with their students in study hall based solely on the fact that they have been in the shoes of a competitive student-athlete before. For this peer mentor, the fact that students felt comfortable seeking her opinion beyond that of the academic counselor’s shows that her thoughts carry legitimacy with the students that she works with. This finding reinforces the conclusions that Tsang (2011) made regarding the reciprocal effects of peer mentor programs promoting self-satisfaction, enjoyment in sharing expertise, and enhancing professional confidence for the peer mentor.

The second peer mentor reinforced the first peer mentor's claim of how identifying as a former student-athlete made being a peer mentor different when she said:

“I'm sure if I had a mentor who had like been in the same situation as us I'd think 'it's cool working with a previous student-athlete.' It's something that like student-athletes bond together on like even if you tend to hang out off the court or off the sport. It's very student-athlete grouped with friendship and I think that we all look up to each other in some way or think we're like you know crucial to the school in some way. We think we're awesome so I mean I think it's good for them to listen to someone who's been through the experience too.”

It is important to note that this former student-athlete still identifies very strongly with her student-athlete social group as evidenced by her use of “we,” and “us.” She also identifies the notion that student-athletes felt “crucial to the school in some way,” and that “we think we're awesome,” which highlights the perceived celebrity status that student-athletes adopt as part of their athletic identities. The concept of the “glorified self,” claims that student-athletes' identities are reinforced by the constant attention that the institution, community, fans, and the media place on the importance of athletes (Adler and Adler, 1991).

This notion of common identity carried over when it came time to be a rule enforcer as a peer mentor as well. However the second peer mentor reflected on how being a former student-athlete can be a double-edged sword when she said:

“I mean they have like the freedom to be goofy with me cause we know similar people which can kinda draw a line sometimes because they feel so comfortable in a way talking to me...If they ever want to ask to do something they always come to me because they know me personally...So I think whenever they want to like you know try to get out of study hall they always come to me and let me know what they're doing before they do it.”

This peer mentor's insight demonstrated that while identifying as a former student-athlete was useful when it came to creating rapport and understanding where student-athletes come from, it also created a personal dilemma between helping out one's friends and maintaining the authority figure role of a peer mentor.

This theme of line blurring between peer mentor and fellow student-athlete is further reinforced when the first peer mentor talked about the challenges in dealing with difficult students when she said:

“That’s something that I struggle with because I don’t feel like it’s my role to be necessarily authoritative but you also want them to get their stuff done. I don’t want to come across as your coach, or a staff person, but sometimes you have to. That’s something that I struggle with, especially because I’m only 2-3 years older than them. But you know you get somebody who has like a concussion and they can’t play in that week’s game so now they’re pissed off about class and their game and you know it’s hard to work with somebody like that who has so much other stuff going on... There’s kind of a very blurry line between being a student-athlete and then crossing over into academics because you are still in academics all the time and you know I don’t want anybody to ever like look at me as like ‘oh I’ve known her the last 3 years, I don’t need to listen,’ you know. So there’s certain things like that where yeah, you want to come across as professional even though you’re on the other side.”

This particular response stood out to the researcher because it is the only one that identified injuries caused by sport to be a source of frustration during study hall. As a former student-athlete this peer mentor recognized that sports injuries can cause one to be frustrated with school and subsequently uncooperative when in study hall. The other peer mentors simply cited difficult students as being “unmotivated.” It is also interesting to note that the issue of familiarity due to the former student-athlete experience is a common theme between the two peer mentors and that it is a source of concern when it comes to being a rule enforcer in study hall.

2. The role of the peer mentor in study hall is...

When asked what the role of the peer mentor in study hall was, answers fell into two distinct groups – gatekeeper/rule enforcer and valuable resource. Many of the adjectives used supported this idea of gatekeeper and rule enforcer as shown in the following excerpts from student-athletes:

- “They’re just there making sure everyone is doing their work, staying on top of their stuff.”
- “[They] make sure it doesn’t get too loud and that people don’t leave study hall. And then to just make sure people aren’t just sitting there if they actually have stuff to do.”
- “Their job is to watch over and make sure that we are doing what we’re supposed to be doing and not goofing off and getting in trouble.”
- “They’re there to make sure we’re on track and like doing things right...so they draw the line when there’s too much of being a kid and we need to start working more.”
- “I think it’s kinda like an overseer, making sure everybody is working.”
- “I feel like they are the monitor to just make sure you’re not screwing around too much and getting work done and actually being productive.”

Thus many of the student-athletes felt that the role of the peer mentor was to keep them on task and be responsible for ensuring that work was actually being done. This idea of a rule enforcer is interesting to note because it is contradictory to the use of the title “peer mentor,” which infers that the relationship between mentor and student-athlete is linear as opposed to hierarchical as the quotes support.

When juxtaposed with how the peer mentors described their role, it was like night and day. The follow excerpts highlight how the peer mentors viewed their role in study hall:

- “You’re there to sort of be someone who knows a little bit more about everything. You’re also there to answer questions based on your personal study skills so you go over the assignments with them and give them hints about how to get ready for an essay, how to prepare for a test, when you should start studying, things like that.
- “It’s to help [students] get the proper study skills and ingrain those study habits. All of us are accomplished students enough, we have these things in our own habits so we try to pass those along to the students, demonstrate to them how it should be done, walk them through how they do these things.

The idea of being a baby-sitter and rule enforcer as described in the student's responses was missing from the peer mentors' evaluations of their role in study hall. This was particularly interesting because it highlights the glaring difference in role expectation from both parties involved during study hall.

While the peer mentor sees him/herself as a resource for study skills, the student simply sees the peer mentor as an authority figure. This theme of seeing the peer mentor as a resource is further reinforced by the academic support staff's descriptions:

- "I really like that the peer mentor helps students transition to college. It's being able to answer basic questions about college life, like how to deal with a certain roommate or where this building is or what this test is going to be like."
- "I would like the [peer mentor] to speak with students about the relationships between good study habits, good academic performance, personal responsibility, and good athletic performance."
- "I want peer mentors to be that person of influence or the master student to help them break the assignment down into smaller tasks and help them understand it...I expect them to teach, instruct, support, encourage, those are things I want them to do when they're sitting down with a student."
- "It is a big responsibility. Someone who is conscientious, intelligent, works with integrity...someone that is taking that extra step. We definitely want to foster independent learning but if they don't know in the first place, at least showing [the student] where to go to get started."

Identifying the peer mentor as a master student is important to note because it reinforces the idea of expertise in study hall, for it is the peer mentor that is the master student and the student-athlete who is the novice learner. Breaking tasks down into smaller pieces and providing support reinforces Vygotsky's idea of the zone of proximal development as well as the need for scaffolding when helping student-athletes acquire new skills. In addition, this idea of being an independent learner is echoed throughout several other responses, and is important to highlight because it reflects the overall mission statement of the department. The campus wide focus for

all student learning service units is to “empower students so that they can master the necessary skills needed to become successful, independent learners,” (assessment.arizona.edu, 2012). The evaluation of the role of the peer mentor from the perspective of the academic support staff takes the peer mentors’ idea of providing study skills and moves to the next level of abstract qualities that garner academic success. The staff’s image of the peer mentor creates one of a master student and role model, something much different than the student-athletes’ perception of the peer mentor as a gatekeeper and rule enforcer.

3. The purpose of study hall is to cultivate time management and study skills.

While the previous themes have highlighted the differences in opinion regarding the role of the peer mentor in study hall, the overarching theme that the purpose of study hall is to cultivate time management and study skills was one echoed across all three participant groups as seen in the following comments:

- “The purpose is to get [the students] acclimated to college, teach them how to study, and that there must be a dedicated time to study.”
– Academic support staff member
- “...that they are progressing academically, that they are learning new study skills, that they are applying those study skills.”
– Academic support staff member
- “We want [the students] to learn skills like time management skills and organizational skills, that they’re doing the work necessary to be successful at the end of the semester and learn how to be more independent learners.”
– Academic support staff member
- “[Students] should expect to have better time management skills so that they understand their schedules and that they really do have to start working ahead.”
– Peer mentor
- “I hope that [the students] cultivate time management skills, especially the first year students because they just don’t know. They are starting from ground zero.”
– Peer mentor

- “I think it’s to kinda give us time to do our homework because we’re athletes and so it’s hard to kind of manage our time to find when we can do our homework. And they help us with that during study hall.”
– Student-athlete
- “To get my homework done...no cuz I always have homework so that’s the best time to do it because the advisor sets my hours and like she sets up my classes so that I can have study hall so that’s probably like the best time I can do it because I’m not distracted by anything.”
– Student-athlete

It is important to note that the student-athlete responses differed from those of the peer mentors and staff members in that the purpose of study hall is given meaning by someone other than the student. The authority of study hall comes from the academic counselor who the student-athlete perceives to know more about the first year transition experience. It’s more of a “well they know better than we do because we’re just first year students so we have study hall.” The student-athlete does not take ownership of study hall as being the source of learning about time management and study skills. This lack of hindsight and ability to connect big ideas is fitting of the novice as defined by Dreyfus (1986) who describes the novice as an individual who has little or no conception of dealing with complexity, who tends to see actions in isolation as opposed to steps in a series or part of long term goals.

4. The long-term goal of study hall is...

When analyzing what the long-term goal of study hall was projected to be, the researcher noticed that there was yet again a difference in opinion between the student-athletes and peer mentors and academic support staff. Some student-athletes saw the first year of study hall as a source of negotiation for the subsequent number of hours in years to come. Their belief was that if they did well during the first year of college, they should be able to negotiate having either

reduced or zero study hall hours the next year as seen in the following comments from student-athletes:

- “I know it motivates people to have that reward of keeping your grades up and then you don’t have to do study hall...to just have that motivation to work harder outside of study hall can help us build better habits.”
- “Like I know study hall shouldn’t be optional the first year but if we’re able to prove ourselves that we keep up grades up, we should be able to just come in, check in, and jam. Let the peer mentor know what’s happening and then leave.”
- “I just think six hours is a lot, like I’d want three to four hours. Two hours in the evening just cuts into so much time – time where I could be resting. I could be in my bed studying instead of in study hall...if you’re a good student you should get less study hall from your advisor. If I come out of [the first semester] with over a 3.0 [GPA] I don’t want over two hours.”

It should be noted that all of these comments come from both male and female student-athletes whose sports had yet to start. Thus the perception was that “well I did fine in fall semester, so spring semester will be fine too,” despite the fact that competition and travel had yet to start. Had additional interviews been conducted following the start of their travel schedule perhaps the sentiments regarding the negotiation of study hall may not be the same. The argument that study hall could be better spent in bed was one example of many where student-athletes attempted to justify how the time spent in study hall could be better allocated. Other student-athletes argued that study hall in the evening cut into “time I could be eating dinner,” which reinforces the argument from academic support staff that “study hall is always scheduled after classes, practice, weights, and conditioning. We are at the bottom of the totem pole, so we get whatever hours are leftover.” The idea that study hall hours is up for negotiation is further reinforced by the argument that the teenage mind has not matured to the point where it is able to judge long term risk (Bjork, Knutson, Fong, Caggiano, Bennett, and Hommer, 2004). Thus teens operate on the basis that the least amount of work should lead to the biggest outcome, or that the reward should

be immediate as opposed to delayed. These particular student-athletes supported this argument in their belief that their effort from the first semester of study hall should pay off and lead to the immediate lessening of study hall hours for the next semester.

Conversely, the academic support staff was more interested in the holistic growth of the student-athlete beyond time spent in study hall. Several staff members reinforced the idea of “cultivating not just academic skills but life skills as well,” as seen in the following comments:

- “I tell them it’s not so much about getting an A in nutrition as it is that I want you to be able to pay your bills on time, and take care of your kids, and be available for your family. I want you to learn how to just do basic life skills so that you can handle this stuff in the future.
- “If I were to go further I would say just taking responsibility, maturing, thinking outside of being an athlete...I hope they’re learning and can take things away into the real world.”
- “My personal goal is to support them in their holistic development, not just the learning of educational subjects and study skills but to also discover who they are and what they want to be in life...and to develop their own stances and positions about different issues because they are in such an interesting time in their lives.”

While the staff members were looking at the development of abstract, life skills that would be applicable after college, peer mentors acted as the intermediary between staff and students. They argued that following the first year of study hall, student-athletes should “be able to apply the study and time management skills they learned to new assignments and be successful,” as seen in the following comments:

- “One of the biggest things I try to stress to them is being able to write because papers more than any other assignments that you’ll do in college are usually worth a lot of points. You have a lot of time to do them, and there’s no reason that you should get anything less than a B if not an A because you have the necessary tools especially if you’re a student-athlete who has mentors, tutors, and the writing center.”
- “Learning how to skim readings...you don’t have to read word for word but at least open the readings because a lot of exam material may come from that or it will help you comprehend the lecture material better...and make sure that they know that a highlighter is not a magic wand that sends info that it highlights straight to their brain.”

- “I want them to have a lot of basic skills – outlining, how to write a thesis statement, how to write an email to a professor, note taking skills, knowing in lecture that if they see a picture on the screen don’t just look at the picture, listen to what the professor has to say, skills like that. These sort of basic study skills that quite frankly a lot of freshman should be learning”

While still immersed in their role as master student, the peer mentors’ long term goals for study hall extended to academic success and the mastering of certain basic study skills that were class specific blind. Several of the peer mentors were graduate students who either taught classes or acted as teaching assistants, and so their advice was often targeted not specifically at student-athletes but at all undergraduate college students.

5. Transfer and returning students’ reflections on how study hall.

Of the 16 student-athletes that were interviewed, three were identified as returning student-athletes and two were transfer student-athletes. The researcher believed that it was important to highlight these five students’ experiences for their stories contain insight as to the benefits of study hall following the first year and how previous institutions differ from the University.

When asked about what they would tell their freshman year selves about the importance of study hall, returning students said:

- “It’s clichéd to say but just do your homework. It’s as good an environment you’re gonna have. I used to tell myself all the time ‘well I’m tired after practice and I’m just gonna kinda hang out in study hall for a little bit and then any work I really need to do, I’ll just do when I get back to the dorm.’ Get back to the dorm and you lay in bed and you fell asleep and you don’t get anything done ever. I mean how often do you get a chance to have a bunch of people helping you for an hour to two hours just to get all of your work done. Like it’s just a huge advantage, so why would you not use it?”
- “I basically learned that study hall is really important, even if I don’t have to do study hall I’m sure going to go in there next year because that sets aside that extra time during the day. I know now that like last year I hated going into study hall whereas this year I’m like ‘I’m going to go to study hall to get

work done,' instead of last year when it was like going because I had to. Whereas I learned that I needed to use that time to my advantage."

- "I think I learned that you should actually do your work in study hall [laughs] not just play around and procrastinate because you really get it done during your study hall time because you don't have anything else to worry about for the rest of the day or week. So just learning like study hall it's not a punishment like 'I have study hall again today.' Like do your work, it really helps you out."

This sense of appreciation for study hall was lacking from most first year students who simply saw study hall as a hindrance to nap time, dinner, or a place to be "checked in by the peer mentors for the academic advisors." The ability to recognize the value of study hall and understand how it can help you fulfill your goals as a student was a sign of maturation.

Only one first year student articulately demonstrated awareness of the value of academic support services that student-athletes receive when she said:

"I think if we didn't have study hall period I'm pretty sure we'd all fail classes because...like all of us got recruited to play sports so our first mentality here is 'I gotta play this sport, I gotta do good in this sport.' I would pour my all my energy, focus, and time into my sport. Having study hall has me switch my mentality so I don't have to worry about my sport, I just focus on school...I just think student-athletes here can't say 'Well no one's helping me with my homework, no one wants to help me with my homework, I'm just bad at it,' like no. It's all for free. Our coaches support us on the field and the advisor and mentors support us in the classroom. Like I don't know if a lot of people know that we're really blessed to have all this stuff...I don't know, some people don't take advantage of what we have..."

This first year, student-athlete also expressed frustration about the negative attitudes of other student-athletes regarding study hall when she said:

"I can hear other athletes like 'Oh my gosh, I don't wanna do study hall right now.' It's like we only have to invest a certain amount of hours doing this right now throughout the week to get your homework done. And over the weekend instead of saying 'Oh my gosh, I have to do this, I have to do this,' it's like 'Well I don't have to do that because I already did it in study hall. I just have to go play my game or whatever.' Like this is my job. One day I'm going to wake up and go to a real job. But my job right now is to just come to school and play [my sport]. Like why not do that for someone that's paying me. Like the [University] is

paying me to go to study hall, to work out, to play [my sport]. Like no one else can say that.”

This self-awareness or metacognition was such a striking difference from the other 10 first year students and made the researcher hopeful that following their first year of college, other first year participants in the study would be able to appreciate the value of study hall.

Transfer students also discussed how their old institutions differed from the University as noted below:

- “[When writing a paper] I wasn’t able to get outside sources and relate them to what I’m working on, coming from a junior college. It just like advanced high school work but now I can kinda get in depth into what I’m working and get into it more...I told people I needed help focusing and stuff so they put me with [a learning specialist] and in independent [study hall] too. I mean like any course I need help with, there’s a tutor for. I have tutoring like four times a week, team study hall twice, and independent study hall three times, it’s like more than enough definitely. Sometimes too much [laughs].”
- “Transferring I learned not to procrastinate. Stay on top of your stuff, know when things are due, and be able to get help yourself, reach out to others to help you and not be afraid of what they might say...I also think I’m a role model for the most part to the freshmen because they know I’ve been there, I’ve done that so I still have the answers even though I went to a different school.”
- “I absolutely love study hall here. I went to another school and you would think their study hall would be a lot more strict and a lot easier to reach people and it is not. It is so straightforward here. I absolutely love it. It’s so easy and they’re so helpful and everyone is so kind...it’s a friendly environment but you are getting your stuff done because that person is there to help you 100% so I really enjoy that.”

While one student transferred from a junior college that he equated to being an advanced high school, the growth after one semester is significant. He was able to self-identify that he needed help focusing and so he was paired with a learning specialist who provided additional one-on-one assistance to ensure that this student was on track for meeting all of his academic goals and

deadlines. The other student transferred from a comparable institution from the same athletic conference as the University and as her comments illustrated, based on her former institution's prestige she thought it would have better resources for student-athletes. Both students seemed satisfied with their decision to transfer based on the improved academic support resources they were able to receive once arriving at the University.

6. Ideal study hall models.

The final interview question for all participants was to describe what their ideal study hall would look like; taking into consideration space, mentor to student-athlete ratio, resources available, and how students would be split up into study hall. The following subcategories stood out as the most frequently mentioned:

A. Integration of technology

- “I would like to have a variance of different kinds of technology that they could use to get their work done. From iPads to Macs to maybe PC's or other kinds of tablets for learning...to have an e-reader or iPad that has all of their books already loaded on it, I get the sense that kids today really like to be able to use technology so any time we can put it into their hands I think that just fosters their learning.”
- “I think most athletes are kinesthetic so when they learn it's hard to sit in a class just in a lecture. But if they can pull up a map of the stars and click on it and see the cluster it would be great.”
- “I would like to see us also do more with Twitter and Facebook. I don't think it has to be overdone but I think there are ways for it to be done because they're checking those anyway more than email...like finding times to do review sessions. We're trying to constantly figure out where do we have this, when do we have this? There are kids we forget about sometimes who aren't in study hall, or with a learning specialist, or who are getting A's I'm sure they'd like to be a part of these things. Incorporate video so they can log on or some sort of Facebook chat. Anything is worth a shot with how easy it is to access things online.”

As classes continue to move assignments, projects, class notes, and assessments online the integration for technology will be crucial for any study hall program that wishes to evolve with

the changing tide of technology. As it stands, the current study hall program's main computer hub is the communal computer lab where study hall, content tutor appointments, and independent study hall takes place. Many student-athlete and peer mentors commented that this was not the ideal location for study hall, instead choosing a smaller space that was isolated to the team alone with enough computers for each student, as well as a printer. The notion of providing iPads or tablets to student-athletes is interesting because it brings up the issue of access – does every student-athlete receive one, how will they be monitored, will students actually use them for academic purposes as opposed to games and social media activity?

B. Grouping individuals by major versus sport

- “Oh heck yeah, grouping by major would be sweet. Right now I'm a nutrition major and I know a lot of people in my study hall are undeclared or majoring in something I'm not so it's hard. But if it was grouped by major, we could really help each other...like it'd be sweet if I missed class I could have someone to talk to. Like I don't know people in my classes. Throughout the years you're going through the same courses and you get to know each other pretty well so it won't be like each you wouldn't have to find a different study group because you'd be with the same people.”
- “You'd definitely be taking the same classes so then you'd like know you have someone to work with on homework and that'd be easier. Especially with traveling you do miss classes and it's hard to catch up because I know I've missed a couple classes because of travel already and it's really, it's definitely hard to catch up even no matter how prepare you are, it just sucks getting behind.”
- “Grouping by major would be a lot easier on the mentors. If technically they do need help in their classes then it would actually benefit the students more because the mentors would know more about that subject. I mean obviously we can help in general how to, you know, maybe prepare notes or study for tests but if the student is really having a content issue then it's obviously good if the mentor knows the class.”

A student proposed this concept of grouping by major as opposed to sport during the initial interviews for this research project. It was subsequently included in all further interviews to gauge the reaction of whether this would be a feasible study hall model. Many reactions

included “Wow, I’ve never thought of that,” “It sounds like a logistical nightmare for planning on the side of the advisors,” and “I don’t really care because I work best when I’m by myself with no distractions.” There was also the concern of finding qualified peer mentors who fulfilled each of the content areas as the current peer mentor roster mostly contains social and behavioral science and business majors. Finding mentors with the necessary math and science content background would prove to be difficult since most of them were exclusively content tutors at the time.

C. Study hall on the road

- “I hate study hall on the road. I’m just so tired...but like a tutor on the road would be cool because I am so screwed when I’m doing math or chem on the road. I’m like guessing on everything and like it sucks. It’d be cool if I could Skype in with somebody to get help.”
- “I don’t like study hall on the road personally because when we’re on the road I like to focus on [my sport] and only [my sport]. I’d like to think about it afterwards when we get back but that’s our main time to spend with our families as a team and it kinda limits us when we have to do study hall after a game. I’d rather do two extra hours during the week before we travel than miss those two hours with my family.”

While much of the sentiment regarding study hall on the road included extreme dislike for its existence, the researcher thought that the above examples highlighted two areas that had yet to be addressed. One included the integration of technology on the road by instituting an online tutor that could work with those student-athletes who were away. Since peer mentors do not travel with teams on the road, the academic counselor who may not have the content expertise required for all assignments often organizes study hall while away from the University. The second example highlights this continual negotiation of study hall hours, but this time it was not for less hours. Rather it was for a redistribution of hours before travel so that time otherwise allocated to study hall on the road could be spent with family who were attending the away games, matches,

or meets. This notion of family was rarely mentioned until the question of study hall on the road was posed. The negotiation of study hall on the road would be a case by case basis that would most likely require both coach and academic counselor authorization.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Summary

Upon arriving on campus at the University, student-athletes are expected to successfully make the transition from high school student and athlete with the help of master students hired to be peer mentors. This research project was designed to look at the expert/novice continuum between incoming, Division I student-athletes and upperclassmen peer mentors. Interviews were conducted with 32 participants pooled from student-athletes in study hall, peer mentors, and academic support staff. What can be discerned from this research project is that a difference of opinion exists between expert peer mentors and academic support staff and novice student-athletes regarding the purpose of study hall and its long-term implications. The experiences of former student-athletes who are now employed as peer mentors as well as the voices of returning student-athletes and transfer students should be taken into account when analyzing the dialogue between expert and novice learners as well.

Limitations of Study

There were a number of limitations to this study. The research was limited to a sample of college freshmen, sophomore, and transfer student-athletes attending the same public university in the southwestern region of the United States. In addition, interview data were only collected during the fall semester and for many student-athletes who participated in spring sports, their competitive seasons had not started yet. This affected the ability to evaluate the role of study hall while during competition. Finally, the initial target population included 75 participants from a variety of sports teams, peer mentors, and professional academic support staff. However, due to lack of response from listserv and email messages, the number settled to a final count of 32 participants.

Implications for Future Research

Setting the Bar High From Day One. Several observations from participants stood out as noteworthy areas for further research. The first acknowledged that student-athletes were unaware of what the purpose of study hall was, as illustrated in the following comment from a peer mentor:

“The problem with study hall is I think one thing that might help the athletes is letting them know about what it actually does for them. I think a lot of them come here thinking it’s sort of like a detention and they resent it and I don’t think they realize or I don’t know how often they’re told exactly what it’s doing for them. And what’s to be expected within it. So a lot of them come in and they really don’t know what do or expect and for some it’s easier because they start in the summer but still it’s that sort of transition that I think could be facilitated if they had some sort of forehand knowledge about what to do in study hall.”

It could be argued that the entire lens of this research project would have been completely different if it was assumed that academic support staff, peer mentors, and student-athletes were on the same page about what the purpose of study hall is.

The second observation challenges that study hall should start on the first day of classes, not the second week of the semester, as illustrated in the commentary from an academic support staff member:

“I think that giving students two weeks sets a dangerous precedent that you don’t need to be studying for two weeks. I think things needs to be set up during the breaks so that everything runs smoothly from day one. That kind of philosophy I think needs to permeate [the department]. Day one you start. It’s like saying to someone ‘Oh by the way the season begins on 8/1 but your first practice isn’t until 9/1.’ It doesn’t work like that.”

The researcher completely agrees with this assessment, for it was noted by other academic support staff that there was a wish that peer mentors could spend more time focusing on basic study and time management skills. One academic support staff member noted “I wish we had more time to work on those foundation skills like note taking, how to prepare for different types

of exams, learning styles...but those get back burnered when the assignments start pouring in.” But by the time study hall starts in week two, students are already behind and so the peer mentors are diving right in to help with content-based problems as opposed to setting a strong foundation for the necessary study skills needed for the first year. Thus one recommendation would be to start study hall from the first day of the semester to ensure that enough time can be dedicated to the creation of a strong study skill foundation from the beginning of the school year.

Sophomore Year and Beyond. Conducting follow up interviews for all spring competitive season athletes as well as following student-athletes beyond the first year would have told a completely different story. Maybe by their sophomore or junior year in college, these student-athletes would have found a balance between their hyphenated existence between student and athlete. This area of research could benefit from a longitudinal qualitative study that follows participants from year to year to capture their evolution from novice learner to expert learner. How do these student-athletes become mentors and role models for younger members on the team? Will they acquire expertise in both student and athlete, and how will this expertise translate to life beyond college? Such findings would provide a much stronger voice for the student-athlete experience. Coupled with the voice of peer mentors who watch a full cohort of student-athletes grow into their degree programs of study and the voice of academic support staff who work to stay ahead of the student learning services curve, this study has the potential to impact how student-athletes are supported on collegiate campuses across the nation.

Assumption that Study Hall is Needed. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher noted that all participants seemed to understand that study hall was a given. No one seemed to question why study hall was there in place or why every single student was automatically enrolled in team study hall as a first year student, regardless of high school

performance. Looking back to Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the idea of student-athletes utilizing peer mentors as training wheels throughout the first year, no one expressed concern of hampering the growth of independent learners. If first year, student-athletes in study hall are constantly seeking feedback and validation from peer mentors, when will they learn to expand their ZPD and attempt to try things on their own? One academic counselor noted that "while we want students to be independent learners we can't wait until the second semester to learn that they aren't capable of doing things on their own." Further research could delve into this catch 22 of providing training wheel assistance while also promoting learner independence. What factors beyond gaining a 3.0 GPA while in study hall show that students are capable of being independent learners?

Conclusion

It is the hope of the researcher that this research project provides student learning services departments and athletic departments with a comprehensive review of study hall programs from the perspective of the student-athlete, peer mentor, and academic support staff member. Aiding incoming student-athletes with the transition to college is a task that all athletics departments face. Acknowledging the differentiation in thought across the expertise spectrum of study skills and purpose of study hall will enable athletic departments to ensure that their next freshman class is just as successful in the classroom as it is on the court, field, or pool deck.

APPENDIX A**STUDENT-ATHLETE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

1. What is the purpose of study hall?
2. Do you have a preference for independent study hall or peer mentor supervised study hall and why?
3. During a typical study hall, what types of tasks do you work on?
4. How do the types of tasks you work on differ between independent and peer mentor supervised study hall?
5. What are the desired qualities of a peer mentor?
6. What is the role of the peer mentor during study hall?
7. What types of tasks would you want your peer mentor to assist with?
8. What would be your ideal model of study hall?
9. What skills have you cultivated during study hall since arriving on campus?
10. What skills do you expect to have cultivated after the first year of study hall?
11. Are there any comments you wish to make or comments you wish to share?

APPENDIX B
PEER MENTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is the purpose of study hall?
2. What is the role of the peer mentor during study hall?
 - a) Do you work by yourself or does another mentor assist you?
 - b) Describe your typical routine during study hall.
3. What types of tasks do you assist with during study hall?
 - a) Which tasks do you find easier to work with and why?
 - b) Which tasks give you difficulty and why?
4. During study hall what types of issues prove to be your biggest concern?
 - a) What types of resources do you utilize when you have a question about study hall?
5. Describe the training that you had to prepare you to be a peer mentor.
 - a) Are there any other topics that you would like to receive training on?
6. Scenario: A student is struggling with time management and organization. How would you help this student, what kind of resources would you recommend?
7. What skills do you expect students to have cultivated after the first year of study hall?
8. Are there any comments you wish to make or comments you wish to share?

APPENDIX C**ACADEMIC SUPPORT STAFF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

1. What is the purpose of study hall?
 - a) What are your expected daily, weekly, semester, and annual study hall outcomes?
2. Do you have a preference for independent study hall or peer mentor supervised study hall and why?
3. What are the desired qualities of a peer mentor?
4. What types of tasks do you expect peer mentors to assist students with?
5. Following the first year of peer mentor supervised study hall, what expectations do you have for your students?
 - a) What skills do you expect students to have cultivated that will enable them to succeed in their subsequent years of school?
6. What would be your ideal model for study hall?
7. Are there any comments you wish to make or questions you wish to share?

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