AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FOOTBALL STUDENT-ATHLETE SPORT-TO-PROFESSION TRANSITION: SEARCHING FOR A COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT-ATHLETE CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

by

HEATHER STEPP MCCORMICK

(Under the Direction of Billy Hawkins)

ABSTRACT

Previous research on the topic of student-athlete career development has primarily focused on the measurement of career constructs utilizing quantitative assessment instruments. While previous research has established that student-athletes are lacking in various career constructs, previous research does not provide insight into the student-athlete’s career exploration, planning, and decision making processes which are leading to these deficiencies. This mixed methods study will retrospectively examine the personal experiences of a diverse group of graduated Division I football student-athletes in the career development process and the impact career development has had on the student-athletes transition into the professional world. The results will include specific career development programming recommendations for the student-athlete population.

INDEX WORDS: Student-Athlete, Football Student-Athlete, Sport-to-Profession Transition, Career, Career Development
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PROFESSION TRANSITION: SEARCHING FOR A COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT-
ATHLETE CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Michael and Carol Stepp. You have always supported me and been there for me in every aspect of my life. You taught me that a strong work ethic and self-discipline would take me far, no matter what my endeavor. In athletics, as well as life, those simple lessons have served me well. Without you both, this never would have been accomplished! I thank you for being devoted parents and I appreciate all that you have done and continue to do for me. I love you both very much and I hope that I always make you proud.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my family. Beginning with my husband, Matt, who has always encouraged me throughout all of my pursuits. I thank you for your constant support, and feedback. I appreciate the sacrifices you have made on my behalf and the many hours you entertained the boys when I needed to dedicate time to this project. We have certainly had quite a journey over the course of this project and I am glad to have you by my side. I am very grateful for my two boys, Shane and Wade, who bring joy to my life and challenge me to be a better person every day. I thank you for your encouragement throughout this project as well as your patience when I asked you to wait “just one more minute” when I had “just one more thought”. I also appreciate your understanding when I had to miss a sporting event or spend a weekend “writing my book” as you both like to say. I hope that you will remember this time of our family’s life and that it showed you how commitment and sacrifice can help you reach your goals. I also hope it has taught you the importance of education and to value the opportunities that come your way. “Attack the day with an enthusiasm unknown to mankind.” Matt, Shane and Wade, I love you to the moon and back. Nobody’s got it better than us!
Finally, this dissertation is for my coach, mentor, and friend, Suzanne Yoculan. As a student-athlete, you taught me to believe in myself and my abilities. You taught all of us, through your own accomplishments, that “no dream is too big”. I am very fortunate to have you in my life and I thank you for the many ways you have positively impacted me athletically, personally, and professionally. I will never be able to express my appreciation to you for the opportunity to attend the University of Georgia and for the experiences I had as a student-athlete. Those experiences have had a profound impact upon who I am today. I am so very fortunate to have you as a friend (and, on occasion, “life coach”). I love you dearly and thank you for always bringing out the best in me!
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1  INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher’s Narrative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Purpose</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for the Study</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete Identity</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Foreclosure</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Maturity</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Control &amp; Career Decision Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Collegiate Athletic Association Academic Legislation</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological &amp; Emotional Transitional Issues</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Literature Review</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  METHODS &amp; PROCEDURES</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Perspective</td>
<td>Introduction to Career Development Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 RESULTS & FINDINGS

Phase One Quantitative Results
Phase One Results by Factor
Phase Two Qualitative Results
Research Question #1: Examination of Themes
Research Question #1: Assertions
Research Question #2: Examination of Themes
Research Question #2: Assertions
Research Questions #3: Examination of Themes
Research Question #3: Assertions
Summary of Results

5 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations
Conclusion
Recommendations for Future Research

REFERENCES
APPENDIX

A PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM ................................................................. 221
B ON-LINE QUESTIONNAIRE ..................................................................... 223
C OPEN-ENDED SURVEY ........................................................................... 227
D INTERVIEW GUIDE ................................................................................. 229
E QUALITATIVE CODES ............................................................................. 231
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Phase One Initial Qualitative Data Categories & Themes...............................................54
Table 2: Phase Two Qualitative Categories & Themes Following Survey ........................................57
Table 3: Final Qualitative Categories & Themes ............................................................................60
Table 4: Phase 1 - Frequency & Relative Frequency Percentages Per Category ..............................68
Table 5: Phase 2 - Participant Pool Across Pre-Determined Factors .............................................70
Table 6: Research Question #1 Results & Assertions ....................................................................79
Table 7: Major Selection Themes Per Participant .........................................................................88
Table 8: Research Question #2 Results & Assertions .....................................................................113
Table 9: Career Preparedness Themes by Category Per Participant ................................................121
Table 10: Research Question #3 Results & Assertions ..................................................................128
Table 11: Summary of Recommendations for Student-Athlete Career Development Programming .................................................................................................................175
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Sequential Explanatory Design</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Sequential Explanatory Design - Phase 1 Quantitative Research (Questionnaire)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Sequential Explanatory Design - Phase 2 Qualitative Research (Survey)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Sequential Explanatory Design - Phase 3 Qualitative Research (Interview)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Sequential Explanatory Design - Phase 1 Quantitative Data Analysis</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Sequential Explanatory Design - Phase 2 Qualitative Data Analysis</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

As a former elite level athlete and Division I collegiate student-athlete, I experienced firsthand the often difficult and complex evolution from student-athlete to working professional transitioning into a life after sports. The introduction of this research study begins with the researcher’s story; a detailed re-construction and personal narrative of my life—career development as a gymnast, student-athlete and working professional. The narrative will provide an introduction to terminology that is pertinent to the research of student-athlete career development while also providing actual examples of the multitude of issues confronting student-athletes as they explore career alternatives. Themes within the qualitative narrative parallel a primarily quantitative body of existing research on the topic of student-athlete career development.

The Researcher’s Narrative

I began taking gymnastics classes at a private gymnastics facility at the age of seven after watching the sport on television. Less than a year later, I received an invitation to try out for the competitive team and won three blue 1st place ribbons and two 2nd place ribbons in my first competition. By the time I was twelve years old, I had garnered state, regional and national medals in my sport. I trained an average of six days per week for a minimum of four hours per day the majority of my childhood working toward “elite” or international competitive status in my sport. It is important to note that my parents did not push me into my athletic endeavors; rather I was intrinsically motivated with a maturity in drive and focus beyond my years. When
my schedule permitted, I participated in activities outside of gymnastics. However, the more accomplished I became, the more time and energy I devoted to gymnastics.

Ogilvie and Howe (1986) stated that athletes develop a “unidimensional” lifestyle which hinders psychosocial personal growth and does not allow an athlete’s self-concept to extend beyond the limits of sport. “Elite athletes who have been immersed in their sport to the exclusion of other activities will have a self-identity that is composed almost exclusively of their sports involvement” (McPherson, 1980, p. 129). Researchers have termed this the ‘athlete identity’, which is defined as an individual who has “commit[ted] exclusively to a single athletic role at the expense of meaningful exploration of other available roles” (Lally & Kerr, p. 276, 2005).

Researchers report that college and university student-athletes develop strong athletic identities (Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993) which result in athletes spending less “emotional, behavioral and cognitive” (Super, 1980, 1990) energies directed to other roles in life. An individual must actively engage in self-exploration and research career preferences and career options to develop mature career plans (Crites, 1978). The lack of self-exploration in other roles by athletes impacts their development of mature career plans. As a result, athletes may have difficulty at the completion of their sports career when transitioning into an alternative career (Baiile & Danish, 1992; Pearson & Petitipas, 1990).

As a teenager, I qualified and obtained elite level status as a gymnast. I was also an honors student and took my student role very seriously. My rigid schedule involved school, a two-hour round trip drive to practice each day, four hours of training and then homework. The public school system permitted my daily gymnastics training sessions at a private facility to fulfill my physical education course credit hours. I was also permitted to attend a class instead of attending my allotted lunch hour which allowed me to leave school two hours earlier than my
peers so I could attend gymnastics practice. While I did not reach my childhood dream of going to the Olympics, I did reach my goal of obtaining elite status and competing for a spot on the United States National Team. I was heavily recruited my senior year in high school by a variety of universities who offered me a full athletic scholarship to continue gymnastics at the college level.

My junior year in high school I took a career aptitude test as a class assignment. A career aptitude test is a quantitative closed ended questionnaire that asks the test taker a series of questions about their interests, style of working, and interaction with other people. The resulting score correlates to a listing of suggested careers. While an assessment test cannot guarantee the perfect career, its purpose is to narrow down an individual’s career choices and open up career options for exploration by researching the career or by exposure to a career through job shadowing, acquiring an internship and/or by gaining work experience in the field. Based upon my career aptitude score and my enjoyment of math courses throughout my primary education, I declared accounting as my major and considered college scholarship offers from universities that had reputable business schools as well as gymnastics programs. I did not research an accounting career any further. I assumed my college education would provide exposure to the field and prepare me for a career path in accounting.

Individuals who have not actively reviewed their choices and have instead relied upon childhood identifications to arrive at premature commitment are considered to be in the status of identity foreclosure (Marcia, 1966). Applying Marcia’s psychological identity development model to athletes, athlete identity foreclosure occurs when an athlete commits to a sport prematurely and without sufficient exploration of his or her needs and values. Athletes with foreclosed identities often have an identity crisis upon retirement. “Foreclosure can leave the person vulnerable to psychological distress at the point of transition (retirement) from the athletic
career, a career which has largely defined the athlete’s sense of self” (Kleiber & Brock, 1992, p. 15). While identity foreclosure can also occur within the non-athlete college student population, Petitpas (1980) found that college athletes are more foreclosed than non-athletes.

*During my third year of college, I began taking my major accounting courses. Struggling with the coursework, I was grateful to have been provided a tutor through the athletic association to assist me in succeeding academically. I had inquired about changing my major; however, NCAA academic legislation required “satisfactory progress” towards a degree (NCAA, 1991-1992, p. 117). I was under the impression that if I had changed my major I would have fallen below satisfactory progress requirements and would become athletically ineligible resulting in the loss of my scholarship. While the NCAA policy had been implemented to protect student-athletes by ensuring that student-athletes were making progress towards a degree, unable to change my major, I found myself pursuing a degree in a career area that was clearly not my calling. Despite anxiety over my major not leading me to a career post-graduation, I still did not engage in career exploration to develop realistic career expectations. My reasons included time constraints due to academic and athletic commitments, lack of direction in regards to career exploration activities, and the lack of efficient and effective access to career development services.*

Ogilvie & Howe (1982) found that the demands of training, traveling and competing in a sport competed with the time needed for adequate career preparation resulting in many student-athletes not being prepared for career and life decisions outside of sport. Brown, Glastetter-Fender & Shelton (2000) stated that “the extent to which college student-athletes perceive a sense of control over their lives and can express confidence in their ability to accomplish career decision-making tasks may be critical to their vocational planning and subsequent career pursuits” (p. 55). The extent to which individuals believe themselves to be in control of the
events that affect them is called locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Individuals with a high internal locus of control believe that their own behaviors and actions primarily control the outcome of an event whereas individuals with a high external locus of control believe that powerful authority figures or fate primarily control the outcome of an event (Rotter, 1966). In Taylor’s study (as cited in Brown, Glastetter-Fender & Shelton, 2000), “individuals perceiving an internal locus of control are more likely to exhibit personal responsibility for vocational decision-making activities as compared to externals who may believe that vocational planning is influenced by chance factors” (p. 55). Studies have shown that many student-athletes may own an external locus of control (Etzel, 1989; Toye, 1991). An external locus of control can lead to career indecision, less risk taking and lower levels of career maturity (Fuqua, Blum, & Hartman, 1988; Kornspan & Etzel, 2001).

Although NCAA legislation during the early 1990’s did not permit student-athletes to gain employment during the regular academic year, my inflexible academic and athletic time demands, combined with a competitive travel schedule, in addition to limited employment opportunities in a college town, did not allow me to build a resume (NCAA, 1992 – 1993). NCAA rules did permit student-athletes to obtain summer employment (NCAA, 1992 – 1993). However, I perceived the non-competitive season as an opportunity to enroll in my most challenging courses so that I could dedicate additional hours to studying and tutoring sessions. Summer practice hours were voluntary and I trained four to five days per week, approximately three hours per session, as my academic schedule permitted. Timing is essential in the sport of gymnastics and skills must be performed repetitively or the gymnast can easily lose her ability to perform the skill. Summer practices throughout my collegiate career were devoted to perfecting new skills, maintaining the timing needed to perform old skills and sustaining a level of physical fitness. The exception was the summer of my sophomore year when I underwent surgery and
extensive rehabilitation for what was thought to have been a career ending injury. Although I was injured, I put the same amount of time commitment into rehabilitating my injured elbow as I had into developing gymnastics skills. I was committed to the goals of my team as well as my personal athletic goals and participated in summer workouts voluntarily.

Career decision-making self-efficacy is an individual's belief that he or she can successfully complete tasks necessary to make career decisions (Taylor & Betz, 1983). It is a general term referring to an individual’s ability to make career choices and implement those career choices. Super’s (1990) theory of self-concept states that in making a vocational choice individuals are expressing their self-concept or their understanding of the self which has evolved over time. Therefore, people seek work roles in which they can express themselves and further implement and develop their self-concept. Career decision self-efficacy can be obtained by completing career developmental tasks such as an accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, career selection and career planning. These tasks build confidence because the individual is involved in making their own career decisions. Taylor and Betz (1983) found that levels of self-efficacy are predictive of levels of career indecision. Specifically, their research demonstrated that students who reported a lower belief in their ability to complete career decision-making tasks were more career undecided than those reporting higher levels of confidence in their ability (Taylor & Betz, 1983).

When my four years of athletic eligibility expired, I was provided a 5th year of grant-in-aid to complete my graduation requirements. Without athletic commitments, I was able to devote time to exploring a career. Fortunate to have a head coach who took a vested interest in her student-athletes beyond their athletic career, I confided in my coach about my anxieties and indecision about a career post-graduation. My coach counseled me on career choices and provided me networking contacts so that I could research a career and locate a graduate
assistantship. I attended graduate school to acquire a master’s degree in sport management while obtaining work experience in an athletic department business office with the career goal of working in athletic administration.

Career maturity is the readiness of an individual to make informed and age-appropriate decisions by performing and completing career developmental tasks (Savickas, 1984; Super, 1955). Career maturity can be measured quantitatively and is achieved by developing a maturity of attitudes and competencies to establish realistic career decisions. Research has suggested that student-athletes are less career-mature than non-athletes (Brown & Hartley, 1998; Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Smallman & Sowa, 1996) and student-athletes may leave college unprepared for a career outside of athletic competition (Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). Lally & Kerr (2005) state that the “negative relationship between career planning and athletic identity dissolves over time as college athletes’ identification with the athlete role declines” (p.282).

Upon graduation from the University of Georgia’s Terry College of Business, I became the first member of my family to acquire a four year college degree. This achievement was highlighted by individual and team Southeastern Conference titles and NCAA National Championship titles. Satisfied with my athletic accomplishments, I was actually looking forward to the culmination of a fifteen year athletic career and the beginning of what my teammates and I called a ‘normal life’ that would include a flexible, less structured schedule and a life that did not revolve around training and competing. I was ready for the opportunity to achieve in something other than sports and looked forward to other undefined accomplishments that allowed me to be known as someone other than a gymnast. Although I was looking forward to retiring and had a tentative professional career path before me, I still struggled with the emotional and psychological transition to a life after sports.
The transition was emotionally and mentally challenging. Initially, I had a difficult time adjusting to a less structured, slower paced lifestyle. The end of gymnastics left many voids. My social circle had predominantly consisted of my teammates who were always a very racially and culturally diverse group of individuals. Despite social heterogeneity, I had difficulty finding friendships with individuals that had common interests and I felt isolated. I struggled with a sense of purpose and self-worth. On a daily basis, I found it impossible to replicate the sense of personal achievement and self-satisfaction I received from practicing and competing in gymnastics. I had always assumed that my professional career would replicate these psychosocial emotions. After a few years of employment in athletic administration, I questioned my career interest as a choice that was made because of my comfort level in athletic circles. I left an athletic administrative position for a career in the corporate world only to return several years later to a career in the sport sector. Despite my success in corporate sales, I realized my passion and career interests were truly in an athletic administrative role. Over time, I began a self-discovery process where I was able to recognize my interests and talents outside of athletics. As I became confident and aware of my non-athletic skill sets, I was able to establish a new sense of self-concept and self-worth which allowed me to re-define what personal achievement looked and felt like in a world without gymnastics.

Transition from sport may signal loss or a threat that has personal, social, and emotional effects. “The retirement that most people face around age 65 is experienced in a variety of ways, and transition problems results from many different factors (e.g. attachment to previous roles, post-retirement opportunities, etc.) . . . the issues for retiring athletes are much the same” (Kleiber & Brock, 1992, p. 4). Taylor and Ogilvie (2001) found that some athletes experience psychological difficulties when faced with their retirement. Athletes who have limited their self-
concept and over-invested in the role of athlete can experience difficulties when making a transition to other roles or in finding satisfaction from roles outside of their athletic experiences (Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; McPherson, 1980).

In an effort to “support the student-athlete development initiatives of its member institutions and to enhance the quality of the student-athlete experience within the university setting,” the National Collegiate Athletic Association Foundation launched its Challenging Athletes Minds for Personal Success or CHAMPS/Life Skills program to NCAA member institutions in 1994 creating what is considered to be a total development program for student-athletes addressing some of the developmental issues mentioned in my personal narrative (NCAA, 1994, p. 4). The program’s framework is committed to assisting student-athletes in the areas of academic excellence, athletic excellence, personal development, career development and community service.

The NCAA provides member institutions with materials related to general career development issues, timelines and activities for each academic year, and alumni career network models. While the NCAA Educational Affairs staff that oversees the development of the Life Skills program offers services and programming support to participating institutions, the on-campus educational programming and curriculum at each membership institution is determined individually by each institution’s athletic administration and/or Life Skills coordinator. The suggested career development programming by the NCAA for the Life Skills career development component is information that was modified from successful college career development programs or shared by other Life Skill program coordinators. Although the NCAA provides uniform career development materials for every member institution that sponsors a Life Skills program, the methods and degrees to which the career development materials are utilized in programming with student-athletes are highly variable as evidenced by discussions with Life
Skills coordinators around the nation. According to the NCAA, a successful Life Skills program “reflects the nature and personality of the campus environment, its department of athletics, and the unique needs of its student-athletes” (NCAA, 1994, p. 6). Thus, programming and the extent of programming in each area of student-athlete development varies from institution to institution as does the level of participation and time. Although the NCAA and University athletic administrators addressed a need for student-athlete career development by including it as a component of Life Skills programming, the NCAA and its member institutions have not implemented a uniform, comprehensive structured curriculum that has proved to identify and address the specific career development competencies of student-athletes in career preparedness upon graduation.

The issues confronting student-athletes in regards to career development are multifaceted. The limited research that has been conducted on the topic of student-athlete career development has primarily focused on the quantitative measurement of career constructs providing evidence that, in general, student-athletes are lacking in the area of career preparedness. According to Brown, Glastetter-Fender & Shelton (2000), the research focusing on student-athlete career development has had a quantitative emphasis with a “complete reliance on paper-and-pencil assessments and may restrict a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional and complex aspects of the career and identity development processes” (p. 60). “Although a large literature describes factors that influence career exploration, planning, and decision making, there have been few empirical examinations of these variables as they relate to collegiate student-athletes” (Brown, Glastetter-Fender & Shelton, 2000, p. 53). Bubany, Krieshok, Black & McKay (2008) suggest that “due to the growth of qualitative and mixed methods research in terms of rigor and acceptance in counseling psychology and career assessment research, it appears that the field is poised to benefit from research that examines the
perspective of the decision makers themselves” (p. 178). Phillips (1997) noted that the rational and intuitive ways people tend to make career decisions has rarely been addressed from the decision-makers’ perspective.

Previous research has substantiated that student-athletes lack development in a variety of career constructs negatively impacting a student-athlete’s career development process (Sandstedt, Cox, Martens, Ward, Webber & Ivey, 2004; Kornspa & Etzel, 2001 Brown et al, 2000; Naidoo, 1998; Petitpas, Brewer & VanRaalte, 1996; Smallman & Sowa, 1996; Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte & Maher, 1994; Rojewski, 1994). Focusing on remedies to improve student-athlete career development programming, research is needed that is aimed at acquiring the student-athlete’s perspective of their personal career development experiences. A descriptive account of what types of traditional career development activities the student-athlete engaged in as well as the extent of the student-athlete’s involvement is needed to provide a better understanding of the construct results previously obtained and interpreted by researchers. Studies on student-athlete career preparedness and the transition following college graduation are few because researchers have primarily focused on the retirement and career transition of athletes from the professional levels (Harrison & Lawrence, 2003). A retrospective study allowing the student-athlete alumni to recall their career development experiences and perceptions of those experiences as they transitioned into a career following graduation would provide an in-depth exploration of the student-athlete career development process. A breadth and depth of understanding of the student-athlete’s career development and post-graduation experience in relation to the student-athlete’s current level of career satisfaction may provide insight on how to best address this issue from an athletic administrative and programming standpoint.

“Mixed methods studies are those that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study or multiphased study” (Teddle &
Tashakkori, 1998, p. 17-18). The use of quantitative and qualitative methods develops a better understanding of complex phenomena (Greene, Benjamin, & Goodyear, 2001). All methods of data collection have limitations; however, the use of multiple methods can neutralize or cancel out some of the disadvantages of certain methods (Creswell, Plano, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003), p. 211). Thus, there is a wide consensus that mixing different types of methods can strengthen a study (Creswell et al, 2003; Greene & Caracelli, 1997). As discussed, the issue of student-athlete career development is a multi-faceted topic. While a purely qualitative study would fill the research gap noted by Brown, Glastetter-Fender and Shelton (2000), it is apparent that different kinds of methods are needed to best understand the complexities of student-athlete career development.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study will be to examine the personal experiences of a diverse group of football student-athletes in career development and the impact career development has had on their transition into the adult professional world. The research study will examine the frequency and depth of participation by the graduated football student-athlete in traditional career development activities (researching a career, internship, externship, work experience, resume preparation, mock interview, networking, career search plan) across a set of demographic variables. It will also provide the opportunity to hear the voices of the graduated football student-athletes in regards to their career development experiences including their thoughts and perceptions of their career preparedness upon entering the job market and its impact upon their current career path. The result will be an understanding of the career development experiences of student-athletes in relation to the impact these experiences had on the student-athlete’s transition into a career following graduation so recommendations can be made for a comprehensive student-athlete career development program.
Need for the Study

The limited research that has been conducted on student-athlete career development has primarily focused on the measurement of career constructs. These studies have established the student-athlete career construct deficiencies providing an understanding of the factors that influence and hinder career exploration, planning, and decision making in this population. There do not appear to be any studies that focus on student-athlete vocational experiences including the career development activities that student-athletes are currently participating or are not participating in to arrive at the reported levels of vocational growth. In addition, there do not appear to be any retrospective studies focusing on the career development experiences of student-athletes in relation to the student-athlete’s post-graduate career satisfaction.

To improve career development programming for student-athletes, research involving a diverse population of student-athletes focusing on the engagement of student-athletes in career development activities and the resulting impact of these experiences on the student-athlete’s life after sports journey is needed. Once there is an understanding of what career development activities the student-athlete is benefitting from and/or lacking, recommendations can be made for the establishment of a comprehensive career development program that addresses the unique challenges and needs of the student-athlete population. This study retrospectively examines the detailed personal experiences of Division I graduated football student-athletes in career exploration and career preparedness following their transition into the professional world.

The sport of football was selected for several reasons. First, due to participation numbers and the size of a football team as well as access to the sport of football in an athlete’s formative years, there is a diverse student-athlete population participating in football. Second, the sport of football has professional playing opportunities as a viable career option, which has been noted in previous research to hinder student-athlete career development. Finally, college football is a
highly visible sport whereby intense societal and cultural factors cultivate a strong athlete identity that is known to impact the career development process. For the talented young football player, the college recruiting media frenzy can begin as early as 14 years of age. Local, state and national media coverage follows the high school football player throughout a college recruitment process that most often results in a verbal scholarship offer prior to the high school athlete having the academic credentials needed for a college application furthering the dominance of athletics in the life of the young athlete. Due to athletic scholarship time demands and obligations, once admitted, the student-athlete is provided support in a variety of areas to assist him in academic as well as athletic success perhaps at the detriment of personal development. While student-athletes of other sports have similar socio-cultural experiences, the researcher believes that the football student-athlete experience is on the extreme end of the continuum providing for insightful exploration. If comprehensive student-athlete career development recommendations can be made for the football student-athlete population and can be shown to be effective, considerations for a comprehensive student-athlete career development program for all sports may more likely be considered.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What is the football student-athletes’ involvement in traditional career development activities (researching a career, internship, externship, work experience, resume preparation, mock interview, networking, career search plan) across a diverse set of demographic variables (ethnicity, past and current socioeconomic status, academic degree, playing time at the participant’s academic institution, current employment status, professional career area of employment, level of job satisfaction)?
The research question will offer insight into what specific traditional career development activities the football student-athlete participated and did not participate in and what factors are promoting or hindering his involvement.

2. What are the graduated football student-athlete’s thoughts and perceptions of their career preparedness upon graduation and its impact upon the graduated student-athlete’s transition into a life after sports?

The research question will provide insight into the construction of the student-athlete’s mindset in regards to his perceived overall career preparedness upon entering the workforce including its effects on their transition into a traditional career (not a professional sports career) and their post-graduation career path.

3. What are the graduated and career seeking or employed football student-athlete’s perceptions of what should be provided by University/athletic programs for student-athlete career development?

The research question will provide a reflective answer to the football student-athlete’s career development experience and an assessment of competencies that need to be addressed during a student-athlete’s years of academic study.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms included in this study are defined below:

1. *Athlete Identity* – The degree of importance, strength and exclusivity an individual attaches to the athletic role at the expense of exploring other life roles (Lally & Kerr, 2005).

2. *Career Construct* – Form the content of an individual’s career decision and include an individual’s interests/needs, values and abilities (Swanson & D’Achiardi, 2005) which are revealed through personal reflection, exploration and evaluation. Two additional constructs important to career decision are process-oriented constructs, which deal with how individuals
make career decisions and outcome constructs, which focus on the results of an individual’s career decision after narrowing options during career exploration (Swanson & D’Achiardi, 2005). The limited research that has been conducted on the topic of student-athlete career development has focused on standardized measurements of career construct categories which include athlete identity, identity foreclosure, career maturity, locus of control and career decision self-efficacy.

3. Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy – An individual’s belief that he or she can successfully complete tasks necessary to make career decisions (Taylor & Betz, 1983).

4. Career Development - The degree to which individuals establish realistic coherent career plans by investigating and experiencing the world of work (Super, 1957). Career development has occurred when mature and realistic career plans are formed based upon a personal assessment of an individual’s own career goals, interests and abilities as well as the acquisition of knowledge and consideration of the specific vocational opportunities and requirements of an occupation (Crites, 1978).

5. Career Development Activities - Activities or experiences that an individual traditionally participates to gain knowledge about a specific career as well as an individual’s own interests and abilities. Career development activities include, but are not limited, to those listed below. For this research study, career development activities are those commonly recommended by a University career services office.

**Researching a Career:** Acquiring information about a career utilizing print resources, personal experiences and conversations with family, working professionals, academic and/or career advisors, trusted individuals, etc. to learn about a career.

**Internship:** A supervised working experience which can be salaried or for course credit that exposes an individual to a profession of interest allowing the individual to gain work experience.
**Externship**: Shadowing or observing a professional in a career area of interest to acquire an understanding of the day-to-day activities and skill sets needed to work in a particular career and/or work environment.

**Work Experience**: Employment in a part-time or full-time paid position that requires the utilization of a specific set of skills while gaining work experience and knowledge of new skill sets.

**Resume**: A document that is compiled by a job seeker with or without the outside assistance of others, which may include a career development professional. The written document primarily provides an overview of one’s education, working experience, skills and abilities, and personal achievements.

**Interview Preparation**: Rehearsing or practicing responses to interview questions routinely asked in a formal interview for a specific career area of interest. Interview preparation may include a mock interview with a business professional, career counselor or other individual.

**Networking**: Actively attending networking events, meetings, or information interviews with individuals already employed in one’s career area of interest for the purposes of tracking down job leads.

**Creating/Developing a Job Search Plan**: Formulating a well-thought out plan or process to find a job in specific career area of interest.

6. **Career Planning** - The degree to which individuals establish realistic coherent career plans through investigation and experiences in the world of work (Super, 1957).

7. **Career Maturity** – The readiness of an individual to make an informed and age-appropriate career decision by performing and completing career developmental tasks (Savickas, 1984; Super, 1955).

8. **Football Student-Athlete Alumnus** – A participant of a NCAA Division I university-sponsored football program who completed all degree program requirements earning an undergraduate degree.


10. **Locus of Control** – The extent to which individual believe themselves to be in control of the events that affect them (Rotter, 1966). Individuals with a high internal locus of control believe
that their abilities and skills primarily control the outcome of an event (Luzzo & Jenkins-Smith, 1998). Conversely, individuals with an external locus of control tend to attribute the causes of events to chance, powerful others, or uncontrollable life events (Etzel, 1989; Rotter, 1966).
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

College student-athletes are a unique population on college campuses and require special attention (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 1996). Research has documented that a student-athlete’s collegiate experience significantly differs from that of the non-athlete (Ferrante & Etzel, 1991; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lottes, 1991; Martinelli, 2000). The time demands of playing, training and traveling do not leave adequate time for career preparation, resulting in many student-athletes’ being unprepared for career and life choices outside of sports (Ogilvie & Howe, 1982). Because of the student-athlete’s extensive time demands, which predominantly occur during career development center office hours, student-athletes who desire to engage in career development activities might not have the ability to do so (Martinelli, 2000). “Generally, student-oriented services such as counseling, workshops, and other programs are conducted during times when student-athletes are involved in practice or conditioning and therefore have difficulty using these services” (Jordan & Denson, 1990, p. 95). Student-athletes, particularly those in revenue-producing sports, have been found to lag behind their non-athlete student peers in terms of career planning (Blann, 1985; Kennedy & Dmick, 1987; Sowa & Gressard, 1983).

“Current research has shown that the need for career planning and placement assistance among college students has become extremely comprehensive and intense” (Ornodorff & Herr, 1996, p. 632). While students state that their primary purpose for attending college is to prepare for a career, students are saying they need professional help to be prepared (Astin, Korn & Riggs, 1993; Weissberg, Berentsen, Cote, Carvey, & Health, 1982). The career needs of college students reportedly range from selecting a major to choosing a career which includes gaining
work experience in an employment area of interest, learning how to prepare for a specific career and establishing networking contacts to locate employment opportunities upon graduation (McBride & Muffo, 1994; Weissberg, Berentsen, Cote, Carvey & Health, 1982). Many students have developmentally based needs such as anxiety due to career indecision, a lack of confidence about the career exploration process, limited self-knowledge and limited occupational information (Mauer & Gysbers, 1990). Career development has occurred when an individual has formed a mature and realistic career plan grounded in a personal assessment of an individual’s own career goals, interests and abilities while being aware of specific vocational opportunities and requirements (Crites, 1978). While professional career development services are an increasing need for the general student population, a specific student population on college campuses, the student-athlete, has its own set of increasing needs and unique challenges in regards to career development.

Much of the research of student-athlete career development has focused on quantifiable evidence determining the student-athlete’s level of career preparedness. This research has focused on career constructs. Traditionally, assessment in career development begins with subjective standardized measures of the “Big Three” constructs of career development, which include interest/needs, values and abilities (Swanson & D’Achiardi, 2005). These three constructs form the content of an individual’s career decision (Savickas, 2000). Additional constructs important to career decision that should be established during the career exploration phase or adolescent/early adult years of an individual’s life span (Super, 1980) are process constructs and outcome constructs. Process-oriented constructs deal with how individuals make career decisions whereas outcome constructs focus on the results of an individual’s career decision after narrowing career options during career exploration (Swanson & D’Achiardi, 2005). The limited research that has been conducted on the topic of student-athlete career
development has focused on standardized measurements of these career construct categories which include athlete identity, identity foreclosure, career maturity, locus of control and career decision self-efficacy.

A common practice among career development practitioners is to administer a career assessment tool that measures aptitudes and/or an individual career construct. There are a variety of quantitative instruments a practitioner may use to evaluate specific career constructs. The result of the assessment identifies areas that the student needs to develop further so the individual can establish a realistic and informed decision about a career. Working with a career counselor or career practitioner, the student develops the ‘need’ area through exploration and discovery of themselves and possible career options. The career professional may counsel in a narrative format further assessing the student qualitatively.

The majority of the research dedicated to student-athlete career development focuses on the quantitative measurement of career constructs. Researchers of student-athlete career development have focused their research efforts on administering a quantitative assessment tool and interpreting the results comparatively to the measurement results of a non-athlete student population or among student-athlete sub-groups such as specific sport teams or genders. Some studies have focused on the results of a variety of career construct assessment tool results to examine potential causal relationship between the constructs being investigated. Additional research focused on student-athlete career development has sought the creation of quantitative career construct assessment tools specifically designed for the student-athlete population. Building on the research that created the student-athlete career construct assessment instrument(s), researchers have also performed studies that sought to prove the validity and credibility of these instruments.
Donald E. Super is the author of one the most prominent and well-respected career development theories that is widely recognized by career development professionals. Initially formulated in the early 1950’s, Super’s theory has been very influential in the area of career development and his work has been widely tested, expanded, revised and refined until the present day. Super’s theory provides a basis for the understanding of the construct of career concerns along the continuum of the various stages of development of a person’s life. Concepts from Super’s (1990) “loosely unified set of theories”, which is the basis for the theoretical framework of this research study, will be introduced in conjunction with the review of previous research findings on student-athlete career constructs (p. 199).

**Athlete Identity**

Super’s Life-Span Life-Space (1980, 1990) approach theorized that an individual’s life career is composed of a series or combination of roles occupied over the life span. According to Super (1980), these roles included but were not limited to the roles of child, student, leisurite, citizen, parent, spouse, home-maker, worker and pensioner or annuitant. The importance or significance an individual places on a life role has been termed role salience (Super, 1980, 1990). According to Super (1980), the salience of a particular role is measured by the levels of behaviors (amount of time spent in the role), the emotions (the effective commitment to one’s role), and cognitions (experience as acquired by participation) associated with the role. The most salient roles are the roles that the individual directs the most energy towards and has the greatest impact upon the individual’s identity (Super & Neville, 1984).

“The degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role” is defined as athlete identity (Brewer, VanRaalte & Linder, 1993, p. 237) and the “identification with this label begins as soon as [athletic] participation begins” (Baillie & Danish, p. 78, 1992). The early accomplishment of development tasks brought on by an early participation in sports can lead a
young athlete to a heightened sense of self or self-concept. Self-concept is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to an individual's perception of "self" in relation to any number of life-roles. The self-concept is composed of self-assessments such as personality attributes, knowledge of one's skills and abilities, one's occupation and hobbies, and awareness of one's physical attributes. As the individual’s athletic career progresses, those with a strong athletic identity begin to base their self-worth on athletic performance and tend to support their self-esteem through athletic performance and their athlete identity. The continuing prominence of the athletic identity life role causes other life roles to become strained and eventually less significant. Therefore, athletes tend to not engage actively in other life roles such as student, worker, family, etc. Career development practitioners utilize a variety of instruments to measure identity such as the Student Identity Scale, the Vocational Identity Scale, and Ethnic Identity Scales. Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) developed the Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), a measurement tool reflecting both the strength and the exclusivity of identification within the athletic role. Since the early development of the AIMS, researchers have focused on studies directed towards the validation and statistical improvement of this instrument.

Ogilvie and Howe (1986) stated that athletes develop a “unidimensional” lifestyle which hinders psychosocial personal growth and does not allow an athlete’s self-concept to grow beyond the realm of sports. “Elite athletes who have been immersed in their sport to the exclusion of other activities will have a self-identity that is composed almost exclusively of their sports involvement” (McPherson, 1980, p. 129). Unique issues arise for athletes in their transition to a life after sports due to the intensity of their involvement in sports and the commitment of identity that athletes make to achieve success in their sports (Baillie, 1993, p. 408).
Role and/or identity exploration is an important factor in the career development process. Identity development requires the exploration of possible adult roles and behaviors, followed by a commitment to the occupational and ideological options that are most consistent with an individual’s values, needs, interests, and skills (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer & Orlofsky, 1993). Super (1963) theorized that an individual’s self-concept is a major contributor to that individual’s career choice. He suggested that an individual expresses their self-concept, or understanding of their self, when making a vocational choice. Thus, if a student-athlete has not explored other roles outside that of athlete and has not self-assessed individual value, needs interests and abilities, the self-concept has not developed, making it difficult to select a career.

Much of the research linking career development and identity formation has been conducted on college students (Wallace-Broscious, Serafica & Osipow, 1994; Blustein, Devenis & Kidney, 1989; Savickas, 1984) and suggested that successful development of individual’s identity or self-concept is associated with higher levels of career maturity and with clearer vocational goals and abilities (Savickas, 1985). Athletes who strongly identify with their athletic role tend to be less likely to explore career, educational and lifestyle options outside of their sport (Brown, Glastetter-Fender & Shelton, 2000; Murphy, Petitpas & Brewer, 1996), resulting in difficulties when encountering athletic career transitions (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Research has suggested that college athletes who overemphasize their athletic identities exhibit delayed career development, lower career maturity, and delayed career decisions (Murphy, Petitpas & Brewer, 1996; Cornelius, 1995; Petitpas & Champagne, 1988). However, several studies have conflicting evidence regarding athlete identity and its impact on student-athlete career development. Martens and Cox (2000) found no evidence that athletic identity and sport commitment are inversely related to career development. Other research studies have failed to find a relationship between athlete identity and career maturity and suggest
that the student-athletes ‘student identity’ may serve as a moderator between their athlete identity and career maturity (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, and Shelton, 2000; Brown & Hartley, 1988; Martens & Cox, 2000).

**Identity Foreclosure**

Crystallization is the ability to specify current and future life-role goals (Super, 1990). According to Super (1990), when an individual crystallizes they have completed a cognitive process of formulating a general vocational goal through awareness of resources, contingencies, interests, values, and are engaged in the planning of a preferred occupation. Individuals who have not actively reviewed their choices and have instead relied upon childhood identifications to arrive at premature commitment are at the opposite end of the spectrum and are considered to be in the status of identity foreclosure (Marcia, 1966). “Identity foreclosure is a construct used to describe people who have committed to an occupation or an ideology without first engaging in exploratory behavior” (Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte, & Mahar, 1993, p.2). This construct can be measured with an assessment tool such as the Foreclosure Scale (Adams, Shea, & Fitch, 1979). Researchers focused on student-athlete career development have revealed that the commitment, demands and dedication of college athletics interferes with the student-athlete’s opportunity to participate in exploratory behaviors and can lead to identity foreclosure (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Nelson, 1983; Petitpas & Champagne, 1988). Good et al (1993) found “that identity foreclosure and athletic identity increased with the level of sport participation” (p.1). Also, Murphy, Petitpas & Brewer’s (1996) study indicated that intercollegiate athletes experienced strong identity foreclosure resulting in a delay in career development, especially among varsity and revenue sport athletes.
Career Maturity

Career maturity is the readiness of an individual to make informed and age-appropriate decisions by performing and completing career developmental tasks (Savickas, 1984; Super, 1955). According to Super (1983), career maturity is a developmental process consisting of five dimensions: planfulness, exploration, information gathering, decision making and reality orientation. In practice, career counselors use a variety of assessment instruments to measure career maturity. The quantitative instrument identifies an individual’s readiness to make career decisions and identifies areas that an individual needs to develop further so that the individual can establish a realistic and informed decision about a career. Instruments used to measure career maturity include: Adult Career Concerns Inventory, Assessment of Career Decision-Making, Career Beliefs Inventory, Career Decision Scale, Career Development Inventory and the Career Maturity Inventory.

Student-athlete career development research focused on the career maturity construct has suggested that college athletes may have delayed career maturity, planning, and goals when compared to their non-athlete peers (Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Smallman & Sowa, 1996; Martens & Cox, 2000). Studies have shown that student-athletes are less career-mature than non-athletes (Brown & Hartley, 1998; Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Smallman & Sowa, 1996) and student-athletes may leave college unprepared for a career outside of athletic competition (Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). Male college athletes, specifically male college athletes in revenue sports (Harrison & Lawrence, 2003) have also been found to have lower career maturity than non-athletes (Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996).

Naidoo (1998) suggested that career maturity is influenced by other demographic factors including age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, work salience, and gender. There does not appear to be research specifically focusing on demographic factors and their impact on student-
athlete career development. Although the research was focused on a general student population, Rojewski (1994) stated that adolescents from low-income backgrounds score lower on career maturity measures due to a lack of access to occupational information, role models, and the perceived lack of employment opportunities. In regards to gender, male college athletes have also been shown to lag behind female athletes on developmental tasks, graduation rates (NCAA Research Staff, 2009), and career planning (Blann, 1985). And, when reviewing other factors related to the student-athlete population and the career maturity construct, sport and year in school may also be important factors in student-athlete development. Kennedy & Dimick (1987) found that male football and basketball players have lower career maturity levels than other athletes. In a study of Division I and III college athletes, Blann (1985) found that freshman and sophomore athletes scored lower on career planning than their non-athlete peers, but the levels of career planning had equalized by the student-athlete’s junior and senior years. These findings are in agreement with Lally and Kerr’s (2005) qualitative interview findings in regards to athletic identity and career maturity that “(w)hat initially appears as a contradiction may actually reflect a negative relationship between career planning and athletic identity that dissolves over time as college athletes’ identification with the athlete role declines” (p. 282).

**Locus of Control & Career Decision Self-Efficacy**

Two psychological factors that influence career maturity are locus of control and career decision self-efficacy. Rotter (1966) defined locus of control as the extent to which individuals believe themselves to be in control of the events that affect them. In reference to student-athletes, Sandstedt, Cox, Martens, Ward, Webber & Ivey (2004) defined locus of control “as the degree to which a student-athlete feels that he or she has the power to make decisions regarding his or her career development” (p. 91). This construct can be measured with an instrument such as the Career Locus of Control Scale (Trice, Haire, & Elliott, 1989). Individuals with a high internal
locus of control believe that their abilities and skills primarily control the outcome of an event (Luzzo & Jenkins-Smith, 1998). Conversely, individuals with an external locus of control tend to attribute the causes of events to chance, powerful others, or uncontrollable life events (Etzel, 1989; Rotter, 1966). In Taylor’s study (as cited in Brown, Glastetter-Fender & Shelton, 2000), “individuals perceiving an internal locus of control are more likely to exhibit personal responsibility for vocational decision-making activities as compared to externals who may believe that vocational planning is influenced by chance factors” (p. 55). An external locus of control can lead to career indecision, less risk taking, and lower levels of career maturity (Fuqua, Blum, & Hartman, 1988; Kornspan & Etzel, 2001). Studies have shown that many student-athletes may own an external locus of control (Etzel, 1989; Toye, 1991), which could contribute to lower career maturity levels. “Thus the extent to which college student-athletes perceive a sense of control over their lives and can express confidence in their ability to accomplish career decision-making tasks may be critical to their vocational planning and subsequent career pursuits” (Brown, Glastetter-Fender & Shelton, 2000, p. 55).

“Career decision self-efficacy refers to confidence in one’s ability to make career decisions” (Brown, Glastetter-Fender & Shelton, 2000, p. 54-55) and can be measured with an assessment tool such as the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale-Short Form (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996). Career decision self-efficacy is linked with athlete identity and athlete identity foreclosure in that failure to explore roles outside of being an athlete results in lower self-efficacy for career decision-making (Brown, Glastetter-Fender & Shelton, 2000, p. 54 - 55). Blustein and Phillips (1990) found that identity foreclosure leads to a dependency upon others for decision-making in non-athlete college students. Individuals who are foreclosed do not make decisions autonomously but prefer to seek out others to make important decisions on their behalf.
Riffe & Alexander (1991) stated that student-athletes are unable or unsure of how the decision process works because so many decisions are made for them by powerful others such as parents, coaches, administrators, etc.

**National Collegiate Athletic Association Academic Legislation**

An often overlooked factor in the career development process of student-athlete career exploration, planning, and decision making is the student-athlete’s required adherence to NCAA academic eligibility requirements. NCAA academic legislation has evolved over the years, therefore, only a discussion of current NCAA academic legislation affecting today’s student-athlete will be discussed. In February 2005, the NCAA implemented an academic reform package called the Academic Progress Rate (APR). With the overall goal of increasing the academic success of student-athletes (i.e. graduation rates), APR’s were implemented to force schools to accept only well-prepared student-athletes as well as expanded academic programs. In 2008, it was reported that “the graduation success rate has gone up by 5% since 2004, the year before the implementation of the APR” (Lapchick, 2008, p. 30). In 2009, the NCAA reported that the APR went up another point to 79%, resulting in student-athletes graduating at a higher rate than the general student population (NCAA, 2009). The NCAA reported in 2010 that student-athletes were continuing to graduate at a higher rate than the general student population (NCAA, 2010). In 2012, the NCAA declared that “academic reform is a success” with the “majority” of Division I sports teams meeting APR requirements (NCAA, 2012). It has been argued that tougher academic requirements have created an environment where athletes “have pursued – or have been steered to – degree programs that helped keep them eligible for sports but didn’t prepare them for post-sports careers” (Steeg, Upton, Bohn and Berkowitz, 2008, p. C1). A high concentration of student-athletes directed towards a particular major for the purpose of maintaining eligibility is called clustering. “Although clustering is common among Division I
schools, it's still unclear if it has increased since the NCAA rule change, making further studies necessary” (Steeg, et al., 2008, p. C1). Previous research has been conducted on the topic of clustering; however, no research has been published at this time on the potential impact of APR’s on student-athlete career development, career preparedness or how clustering might impact a graduated student-athletes transition into a professional career.

**Psychological & Emotional Transitional Issues**

There are real psychological and emotional issues involved with career development and the athletic retirement of a student-athlete as the individual transitions into a career and life after sports. Anxiety over career indecision and indecisiveness has an impact on the actual career choice process (Fuqua, Seaworth & Newman, 1987). Saunders, Peterson, Sampson & Reardon (2002) found a significant positive relationship between depression and career indecision and between depression and dysfunctional career thoughts in a college student population. Their study results also showed significant negative correlation between depression and vocational identity. Kates, Greiff & Hagen have argued (as cited by Hinkelman & Luzzo, 2007, p. 144) that “psychological distress may exacerbate underlying career/vocational symptoms (e.g. career indecision) and may lead to more serious psychiatric syndromes and/or vocational issues if ignored or ineffectively addressed in counseling.”

In addition to the emotional and psychological issues of career development, student-athletes might experience emotional and psychological issues related to the athletic retirement process. The end of an athletic career was originally seen as a singular event; however, researchers have re-evaluated the termination of the athletic career as a transitional process more directed toward a life-span perspective (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2003). While career transition is traditionally a topic associated with the elderly population, “increased attention is being paid to the issues surrounding a special example of retirement, that of athletes who are
concluding their active participation in sports” (Baillie & Danish, 1992, p. 77). Retirement is a point of transition away from an activity that has been a commitment of time and energy as well as a transition away from a specific role identification that has been prominent in an individual’s life. “The retirement that most people face around age 65 is experienced in a variety of ways, and transition problems results from many differ factors (e.g. attachment to previous roles, post-retirement opportunities, etc.) . . . the issues for retiring athletes are much the same” (Kleiber & Brock, 1992, p. 4). Baillie and Danish (1992) stated that “within this [the athlete] population, career transition may be an especially difficult and disruptive process due to the age, income and ego involvement of the individual athletes” (p. 77).

While some researchers have paralleled retirement to the end of an athletic career, others have paralleled athletic retirement to the stages of death or grief. It has been proposed that the athletic termination process begins with shock, followed by denial, anger and resentment, depression and then resolution (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004). Ogilvie & Howe (1982) argued that “the more closely identified the athlete is with his or her sport, the more traumatic will be the crisis of identity upon termination” (p. 174).

For student-athletes the emotional and psychological impact of career indecision may be compounded by the emotional and psychological impact of the life-span athletic retirement process. Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee (2004) stated (citing Lavallee, Wylleman & Sinclair, 2000) that an extensive literature search on the topic of career transitions in sport generated over 220 references – a number which was ten times higher than the references available in 1980. Athletic career transition and/or athletic retirement is a growing area of research that has ties with and implications to student-athlete career development. While it is relevant to discuss this topic in conjunction with student-athlete career development, this discussion is not comprehensive.
Summary of the Literature Review

In conclusion, research has indicated that the student-athlete population has unique needs and hurdles to overcome in regards to career preparedness upon graduation. Research has provided an explanation of the issues that hinder career development, ranging from time constraints related to the student-athlete lifestyle to the access of career development resources. Previous research has primarily focused on the quantitative measurement of career constructs utilizing assessment tools routinely used in career counseling practice. The predominantly quantitative research has focused on career constructs providing evidence that the student-athlete population is generally lacking in career development and how various career construct measures compare to the general student population, among different sports, different genders and if the constructs measured have causal relationships. A few studies have utilized qualitative methods to complement quantitative construct findings. Researchers have suggested that qualitative research might provide a breadth and depth of understanding into the multi-faceted issues concerning the topic of student-athlete career development.

Research giving qualitative methodologies priority is extremely limited. Harrison & Lawrence (2003), who developed the Life After Sports Scale (LASS), a quantitative and qualitative assessment instrument “based upon on relevant literature and previous instruments that investigated athletic identity issues in sport psychology and sport sociology,” conducted a study on the qualitative domain of their instrument (p. 377). Utilizing a qualitative visual and narrative representation of a student-athlete’s transition, the two researchers acquired African American student-athletes perceptions’ regarding the career transition process. Several themes emerged from the research including academic and athletic success leading to a smooth transition to a life after sports. The researchers encouraged athletic department personnel to
enable African American student-athletes to engage in preparation for their athletic career
transition prior to graduation and recommended a career development programming approach
that was individualized for each athlete.

Lally & Kerr (2005) used in-depth interviews with college student-athletes to examine
their athletic identities, student identities and levels of career planning. This study focused on
acquiring career construct data qualitatively. While other research on student-athlete career
development examined athletic identity and career maturity, Lally & Kerr’s (2005) study brought
a new dimension to the results by including the student identity. The qualitative findings
suggested that college athletes could identify with both their student and athlete roles
simultaneously, but that identifying with the student role allowed for greater career exploration
in non-sport areas. The researcher’s results also found that the salience of the identities changed
over time, as Super’s (1963) theory suggests. Lally & Kerr (2005) stated that the athletes who
delayed attention to their student identities also established unrealistic career goals.

Researchers have suggested that the multi-faceted topic of student-athlete career
development might better be understood through predominantly qualitative methodologies
focusing on the career decision maker, the student-athlete. The research of student-athlete career
development would benefit from a retrospective study examining the actual career development
experiences of student-athletes in relation to their current level of career satisfaction providing
recommendations to improve programming resulting in increased levels of student-athlete career
preparedness upon graduation.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS & PROCEDURES

Theoretical Perspective

“All social inquiry is conducted from within the inquirer’s particular way of seeing, hearing and understanding the world” (Greene, 2007, p. 67). This particular way of thinking, known as a paradigm or mental model, determines the practical decisions involved in planning and conducting social inquiry. As a pragmatist, the researcher of this study believes “that it is the natural limitations and opportunities of a given context that matter when making mixed methods decisions, rather than a consideration for the philosophical compatibility of different inquiry traditions” (Greene, Benjamin & Goodyear, 2001, p. 28). Pragmatists reject the forced choice between post-positivism quantitative research and constructivism-qualitative methods, instead embracing each point of view or a position between the two opposing viewpoints (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 21 & 30). Therefore, methodological decisions are made based upon context rather than paradigm. A “what works” approach allows the researcher to address questions that do not fit firmly in a quantitative or qualitative design. The design for this research study was developed pragmatically allowing the research questions to dictate the methodology (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 31). A mixed methods design was utilized with priority given to qualitative methodologies.

In considering the approach to the qualitative component of this study, the philosophy of John Dewey, one of the founding fathers of pragmatism, was applied. Dewey believed that the important interactions were those between a living human organism and its environment. He established two concepts: transactional realism and practical intersubjectivity. Transactional
realism asserts that “reality only ‘reveals’ itself as a result of the activities – the ‘doings’ – of the organism” (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 227). Dewey’s transactional realism “is also a ‘transactional constructivism’” because it can be argued that our knowledge is at the very same time a construction and based on reality” (Biesta, & Burbules, 2003, p. 227). Dewey felt that communication was not the transfer of information from one person to another, but the “practical coordination and reconstruction of individual patterns of action which result in the creation of a shared, intersubjective world” (Biesta, & Burbules, 2003, p. 227). While transactional realism and the idea of communication as a practical intersubjectivity are not epistemologies, each of these concepts fall under Dewey’s philosophy of what today is considered pragmatism. These key concepts guided the career development theoretical perspective for the qualitative component of this research study.

**Introduction to Career Development Theory**

Historically, vocational and career psychology have been split between two major theoretical schools of thought. “Anyone who is familiar with the history and recent development of theories in vocational career psychology may be well aware of the reality that there is a line of division between the two major theoretical camps” (Chen, 2003, p. 204). Savickas (2000) named the two majors schools of thought constructivist and objectivist. The first theoretical perspective, constructivist, is based upon the meaning making experience which holds that multiple truths are linked to and dependent upon context, culture and history (Blustein, Schultheiss & Flum, 2004). The constructivist perspective “views career as a socially constructed process . . . that reflects the person’s subjective interpretation of situations and events, as well as the particular contexts within which these situations and events occur” (Chen, 2003, p. 204 & 205). Because reality is constructed in social and cultural contexts, this perspective holds that traditional scientific methods are not appropriate (Blustein et al, 2004; Gergen, 1999; Stead, 2004). The social
constructivist believes that language is the primary method of communicating meanings and understandings. Therefore, career planning and development along the constructivist school of thought includes the use of interviews and biographical narratives which provide insight into the individual’s career experiences in their own words.

The second theoretical perspective, rooted primarily in positivistic and objectivist beliefs, takes the stance that the world adheres to underlying laws that can account for how and why certain events occur (Blustein, Kenna, Murphy, DeVoy & DeWine, 2005). Applied to the topic of career, the positivistic perspective believes that scientific observation and methods can uncover what is thought to be objective truths about human behavior. Therefore, “vocational behavior is generally identified by a scientific and logical match between a person’s traits and the demands of the work environment” (Chen, 2003, p. 204). The key variables in career choice and planning are considered to be objective observation, measurement, and reasoning. The positivistic and objectivist perspective takes the approach that career can reasonably be predicted and achieved by a match through the use of a scientific tool such as an assessment instrument. In professional practice, career development professionals utilize a range of assessment tools to measure career aptitudes and career constructs to determine a career match. Research focused on the student-athlete population has utilized pencil and paper assessments such as the Student Identity Scale, the Vocational Identity Scale, Ethnic Identity Scales, Assessment of Career Decision-Making, Career Beliefs Inventory, Career Decision Scale, Career Development Inventory, Career Maturity Inventory, and Career Locus of Control.

A theoretical perspective that has become a frequent topic in career literature is that of integrating or converging theoretical career development perspectives and theory (Chen, 2003; Osipow, 1990; Savickas, 1995; Sharf, 1997; Zunker, 2002). The integration of career development theories “within the same school of thinking as well as across schools of thinking . .
can ultimately widen the scope of theoretical options, extend professionals’ vision toward potentiality for comprehensiveness, and moreover, it can lead to the development of new dimensions for research and facilitate creativity and refinement in practice” (Chen, 2003, p. 206).

This research study integrated the social constructivist-based career construction theory and the positivistic-based Donald Super’s integrated series of career theory with emphasis on the Life-Span Life-Space approach to expand and enrich the examination of the career development experiences of graduated football student-athletes (Super, 1980, 1990).

**Career Construction Theory**

Career construction theory takes the position that careers do not simply unfold, but that careers are constructed as individuals “construct their own personal meanings and that these personal meanings are reflected in past and present experiences in a variety of life roles” (Brott, 2005). “Simply stated, [career construction theory] asserts that individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behavior and occupational experiences” (Brown and Lent, 2005). This theory views the career development process as a complex and ever-evolving process. The constructivist approach to career planning and development utilizes an individual’s subjective narrative in an effort to construct and de-construct the individual’s worker role, life roles and occupational decision making (Brott, 2005). This theory is similar to Dewey’s assertions of transactional realism and practical intersubjectivity.

**Super’s Life-Span Life-Space Theory**

Considered to have been influenced from the positivistic school of thinking, Donald E. Super established the Life-Span Life-Space approach to career development. Super’s approach is based upon a conceptual model of the life span and is called the Life Career Rainbow (LCR) (Super, 1980 & 1990). The LCR also consists of a two-dimensional graphic depiction of the life roles that are played out in different theaters as one progresses through the developmental stages of
life. A main concept of this approach is the objectivist notion of self or self-concept as an objective self which includes an individual’s personality, abilities, and aptitudes. However, in Super’s Life-Span Life-Space approach Super theorized that self-concept changed over time and developed as a result of experience which is also a constructivist way of thinking. Super determined that people seek career satisfaction through work roles which allow an individual to express themselves while also allowing the individual to implement and develop their individual self-concepts.

Super’s (1980, 1990 & 1994) archway of career determinants model, which also comprises the Life-Span Life-Space approach, recognizes that career patterns are influenced by biographical-geographical, psychological and socioeconomic components. In Super’s model, an architectural arch is envisioned with the base of the structure constituting a biographical-geographical foundation established by human experience. The left pillar represents personal characteristics such as intelligence, aptitudes, interests, values, and needs which are constructs that combine to establish an individual’s personality. The right pillar represents societal characteristics such as community, family, peer groups, the economy, society and the labor market. The arch which rests on top of the pillars represents the bridging of the two pillars as well as the bridging of personal and societal characteristics. Personal and societal characteristics include an individual’s development, which are the roles the individual has developed as well as the individual’s self-concept while engaging in these roles. All of these developments create the self, which represents the individual’s current identity.

According to Super’s Life-Span Life-Space approach, an individual passes through different life stages of the LCR during career decision making. These five life stages include: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline or disengagement (Super 1980; Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). The growth stage (birth to 14 years of age) includes the development of self-concept, the beginnings of the formation of self-worth and the initial discovery of
interests, talents, and abilities. During this stage, an individual may try out a career through coursework, work experience, or hobbies. The exploration stage (ages 15 - 24) is when individuals start learning about careers and what is required to be successful in these careers. During exploration, the more an individual learns, the more committed the individual becomes to a few career choices and narrows the fields of career areas of interest. At the conclusion of the exploration stage, an individual has analyzed their career options in conjunction with their personal skills, talents and interests. In addition, the individual has weighed career expectations such as salary, hours, benefits, and opportunities for advancement. The establishment stage (age 25 – 44) begins as individuals settle into their chosen career and become productive members of society. This stage is marked by increased responsibility and personal satisfaction from work and career. The maintenance stage (age 45 – 64) is marked by a continual adjustment process to improve career position. The final stage, the decline stage (65 and up), is when an individual’s output is reduced and the individual prepares for retirement. In essence, these five stages of the life-span realm of the LCR correspond to the development phases of adolescence, adulthood, middle age and old age. However, it is important to note that the LCR stages are not necessarily age-related and an individual may go through a stage multiple times, which reflects the on-going dynamic process of vocational development.

The life-space component of Super’s (1980) theory focused on nine roles or behaviors that individuals participate in throughout their life span and include child, student, leisurite, citizen, parent, spouse, home-maker, worker and pensioner or annuitant. Super noted that this list of roles is not exhaustive and that individuals take on other roles based upon their interests and beliefs. The roles or behaviors that individuals participate in throughout their life span are played out in four theaters: home, school, workplace and community. The LCR is the depiction of these roles along the life span continuum. A life role can be carried out in multiple theaters and an
individual will prioritize time and commitments based upon the importance the individual puts on specific life roles, which are influenced by the individual’s value structure. Role salience is defined as the importance of each role to an individual and those roles that are more important to an individual have a greater impact on the individual’s identity (Super & Neville, 1984). Super (1980) referred to this as understanding one’s life-role salience, which guides the planning of one’s future behavior. An individual must be knowledgeable about the life roles that are important in the present as well as those life roles that are important in the future for life-role satisfaction. The ability to specify current and future life-role goals is what Super called crystallizing.

For this research study, career construction theory and Super’s Life-Span, Life-Space approach were selected for integration because of the possibilities these two different schools of thought may provide in enhancing the understanding of student-athlete career development. This integrated approach acknowledges that the career development process is a meaning-making journey through an individual’s understanding of his objective self which includes his personality, abilities, and aptitudes as well as an understanding of the individual’s subjective self which is constructed through career development experiences within a social context. In practice, career counselors utilizing the objectivist approach to Super’s Life-Span Life-Space theory may use standardized tools of assessment to measure aptitudes, interests, and values such as the Salience Inventory, Values Inventory, and the Career Development Assessment and Counseling model (Super & Neville, 1986). This research study took the career construction approach utilizing the student-athletes own voice in the form of a written and spoken narrative. The football student-athlete told his career development story in his own voice, sharing his personal experiences with traditional career development activities and providing a construction and de-construction of his actions, perceptions, and feelings about his career development journey. The
graduated football student-athlete’s career development experiences were cross-referenced with Super’s LCR continuum focusing on the growth, exploration and establishment stages of career development, paying attention to the football student-athlete’s acknowledgement of various life roles and self-concept to gauge the football student-athlete’s career preparedness or crystallization process and its impact on the football student-athlete’s current state of career satisfaction.

**Research Design & Instruments**

The purpose of this “two phased, sequential explanatory mixed methods study” (Figure 1) was to examine the personal career development experiences of graduated football student-athletes across demographic variables so recommendations can be made for the implementation of a comprehensive structured career development curriculum (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutman & Hanson, 2003, p. 227). “Mixed methods research involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomena” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006, p. 474). A sequential design does not measure the same phenomena at the same time, but uses “findings of one methodology to inform the issues to be addressed in the subsequent evaluation” (Moran, 1987, p. 623-624). While this study gave priority to qualitative research, it integrated quantitative and qualitative research within various stages of inquiry: data analysis and data interpretation.

The “initial quantitative phase of the study was used to characterize individuals along certain traits of interest related to the research questions” to ensure a diverse group of participants (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003, p. 227). In the first phase of the study (Figure 2), a quantitative questionnaire (Appendix B) collected demographic information and data related to the participant’s involvement in career development activities prior to graduation. The quantitative results were then used to guide the purposeful sampling of participants of a primarily qualitative study (Creswell et al, 2003, p. 227).
Figure 1: Sequential Explanatory Design. This is based on Creswell, Plano, Clark, Gutmann & Hanson (2003)
Questionnaire
- E-Mailed to 125 Potential Participants

Data Acquired Includes
- Demographic Information
- Career Development Participation Information

Purposeful Sampling
- Maximum Variation Sampling
- Frequency Percentages

Data Transformation
- Quantitative Data Converted to Qualitative Codes

Findings
- Purposeful Sample Consisting of 12 Participants
- Development of Initial Qualitative Codes

*Figure 2:* Sequential Explanatory Design - Phase 1 Quantitative Research (Questionnaire). This is based upon Diagramming of Creswell, Plano, Clark, Gutmann & Hanson (2003)
In the second phase, a qualitative open-ended survey (Appendix C) was used to acquire insight into the thoughts and perceptions of the graduated football student-athlete’s career development process and transition into the professional world. The qualitative survey information (Figure 3) along with the quantitative career development information from the first phase of the study were analyzed and then explored further in a one-hour qualitative interview. An interview offers a unique means of understanding complex human behavior. Because the method is not limited to a predetermined classification of responses, the result is the generation of substantial amounts of valuable data obtained from a free flowing communication process (Punch, 1998).

The interview (Figure 4) provided in-depth information about the graduated football student-athlete’s career development experiences prior to and following graduation. In addition, the data from the initial quantitative questionnaire and the qualitative survey were further explored in the interview, providing the opportunity to hear the voice of the graduated football student-athlete as well as his thoughts and perceptions on the topic of career development and the transition to a life after sports. The data was mixed at the data analysis and interpretation phases of the study.

The main purpose for using a mixed-methods design was for complementarity. Complementarity allows the researcher to “tap into different facets or dimensions of the same complex phenomena” providing a “broader, deeper, and more comprehensive social understanding . . . of the overall interpretations and inferences from the study” (Greene, 2007, p. 101). The quantitative and qualitative methods and progression of the methods in this study were chosen based upon their respective fit for studying the phenomena in question. The methods used measured overlapping but also different facets of the complex topic of student-athlete career
Open-Ended Survey
- Completed by 12 Participants

Text Analysis
- Data Coded and Categorized

Findings
- Development of Codes and Categories
- Probing Questions for One Hour Interview

Figure 3: Sequential Explanatory Design - Phase 2 Qualitative Research (Survey). This is based upon Diagramming of Creswell, Plano, Clark, Gutmann & Hanson (2003)
One Hour Interview
- Completed by 12 Participants

Text Analysis
- Using the Constant Comparative Method, Data is Coded and Categorized

Quantitize Data
- Frequency of Themes are Counted and Converted to a Percentage

Findings
- Development of Codes and Categories into Overall Themes
- Frequency Rate of Theme

Figure 4: Sequential Explanatory Design - Phase 2 Qualitative Research (Interview). This is based upon Diagramming of Creswell, Plano, Clark, Gutmann & Hanson (2003)
development, “yielding an enriched, elaborated understanding of the phenomena being studied” (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989, p. 258). The quantitative questionnaire provided demographic and background data (past and current socioeconomic status, degree of study, playing time at the participant’s academic institution, current employment status, professional career area of employment, level of job satisfaction) as well as basic information on the involvement of the participant in various traditional career development activities (researching a career, internship, externship, work experience, resume preparation, mock interview, networking, career search plan). This data was analyzed across eleven pre-set factors (1. Institution Attended, 2. Degree of Study, 3. Year of Graduation, 4. Ethnic Identification, 5 & 6. Past and Current Socioeconomic Status, 7. Playing Time at the Participant’s Academic Institution, 8. Participation in a Professional Sports Career, 9. Current Professional Career Area of Employment, 10. Current Level of Job Satisfaction, and 11. Participation in Career Development Activities Prior to Graduation) to ensure a diverse participant pool for the qualitative phase of the study. The qualitative open-ended survey provided additional background information on the participant’s academic background, perceptions on his initial job search following graduation, and perceptions of his current employment status, adding a layer of depth to the information already acquired while also establishing insight into the participant’s experiences, which were probed further in the interview phase of the study. The in-depth interview explored the aforementioned topics further providing a descriptive and detailed account of the lived experience of the football student-athletes career development process and transition into the professional world.

The second reason for using mixed methods was for development. The results of the quantitative analysis identified a diverse participant pool for further qualitative study. In addition, the quantitative results provided information regarding the career development
activities performed (as well as the open-ended qualitative survey results) which assisted in the development of probing questions for the qualitative interview.

The third purpose for using mixed methods was the potential for initiation. The career development topics in the quantitative questionnaire were explored further in the qualitative open-ended survey as well as the interview. As the study developed, the data converged and triangulated, increasing the confidence in inquiry inferences (Greene, 2007, p. 100). When an unexplainable divergence or “empirical puzzle” presented itself, mixed methods provided the opportunity to further examine probe and analyze the divergence (Cook, 1979).

**Data Collection Strategies**

Football student-athletes who graduated from a Division I university were recruited to participate in this study. The researcher chose to focus on the sport of football for several reasons. First, due to participation numbers and the size of a football team as well as access to the sport of football in an athlete’s formative years, there is a diverse student-athlete population participating in football. Second, the development of the athlete identity begins at a young age and appears to be at its pinnacle during the student-athlete’s college career as he envisions professional playing opportunities as a viable career option which has been noted to hinder career exploration outside of a professional football career. Finally, college football is a highly visible sport whereby intense societal and cultural factors cultivate a strong athlete identity that is known to impact the career development process. If student-athlete career development programming can be shown to impact this sector of the student-athlete population, career development programming might be more widely adopted by university athletic programs.

Football student-athletes who participated and graduated from six different NCAA Division I universities in the southeastern region of the United States were recruited via an e-
mail that was forwarded to the prospective participant either by an athletic administrator from their respective institution or a former teammate, or was post mailed to them directly by the researcher. The recruitment e-mail was distributed to 125 graduated football student-athletes who were no less than three and no more than seven years post-graduation at the time the introductory email was received by the participant. This time span was selected to increase the clarity of the participant’s retrospective career development account and to increase the probability that the participants had secured employment post-graduation and were striving towards a particular career path. In addition, the time span could also include the graduated football student-athlete who played professional football and completed an average National Football League (NFL) career which is estimated at three and half seasons or approximately three years (National Football League Players Association, n.d.). During the course of this study, the National Football League reported amid much controversy that the average career length for a professional player (who makes a club’s opening-day roster, which includes the team’s active roster, inactive roster or injured reserve roster in his rookie season) to be 6 years (NFL Communications, 2011). While there is a discrepancy between the National Football League Players Association and the National Football League’s average career span statistics, this study’s three to seven year post-graduation requirement appears to cover both organizations’ average professional career playing times.

Of the 125 prospective participants, 30 Division I graduated football student-athletes responded to the email by completing an on-line participant consent form for a 24% (30/125) response rate (Appendix A). Upon receiving the participant’s consent form, a link was emailed to the prospective participant requesting the completion of an on-line questionnaire (Appendix B), which acquired demographic information and data related to the participant’s involvement in
traditional career development activities prior to graduation. At the completion of the questionnaire, the participant had the option to continue on with the second phase of the study. Of the 30 prospective participants who were emailed the phase one questionnaire, 22 prospective participants responded for a 73% (22/30) response rate. Of the 22 responders, 3 participants responded that they did not want to continue with the study for a 14% attrition rate.

After an analysis of the initial questionnaire’s data utilizing relative frequency percentages across predetermined data categories and across participant’s responses, a purposeful sample utilizing maximum variation sampling was selected consisting of 12 participants. Upon selection as a continuing participant, the graduated football student-athletes were notified of their selection and were emailed a link to complete an on-line open-ended survey. The second phase survey consisted of questions related to the individual’s career development experience (Appendix C). Upon completion of the on-line survey, a face-to-face or telephone interview was scheduled. For the interviews, an interview guide (Appendix D) consisting of open-ended questions was utilized. Probing questions were based upon the quantitative transformed data and the qualitative coded data that was reviewed prior to the participant’s interview for complementarity, triangulation and/or initiation purposes. When needed, additional questions were emailed to the participant for clarification of data or for purposes of initiation. Each interview was audio-taped, transcribed and coded for patterns.

**Data Analysis Strategies**

Mixed-methods data analysis is a comprehensive means of legitimating findings “by allowing analysts to assess information from both data types [qualitative and quantitative]” (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003, p. 355). In a sequential mixed-model study, where quantitative and qualitative approaches have been utilized for data collection, analysis, and inference, data
analysis begins before all of the data is collected. “Moreover . . . the data collection, data analysis and data interpretation stages are iterative” (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003, p. 352). For these three elements of this mixed methods research study, the research process is recursive and nonlinear in nature.

For the initial phase of this study (Figure 5), the on-line questionnaire produced quantitative data that was presented as relative frequency percentages for the analysis and selection of a purposeful sample using maximum variation sampling. “The logic and power in purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases . . . yielding insight and in-depth understanding rather than generalizations” (Patton, 1990, p. 230). Maximum variation sampling seeks to include a wide range of extremes. Therefore, the researcher purposively and non-randomly tries to select a small set of participants which exhibit maximal differences on specific variables of interest. By selecting a heterogeneous sample, commonalities of the graduated football student-athletes career development experiences can be observed. The goal of this study was to provide recommendations for a comprehensive student-athlete career program aimed at serving a diverse student-population. Therefore, a diverse set of participants was needed for this research study.

Patton (1990) suggests constructing diverse criterion across a wide range of characteristics of interest when utilizing maximum variation sampling. The participant pool was selected for its diversity across the following factors: 1.) Institution Attended, 2.) Degree of Study, 3.) Year of Graduation, 4.) Ethnic Identification, 5 & 6.) Past and Current Socioeconomic Status, 7.) Playing Time at the Participant’s Academic Institution, 8.) Participation in a Professional Sports Career, 9.) Current Professional Career Area of Employment, 10.) Ranges of Current Job Satisfaction and 11.) Participation in Career Development Activities Prior to
Figure 5: Sequential Explanatory Design – Phase 1 Quantitative Data Analysis. This is based upon Diagramming of Creswell, Plano, Clark, Gutmann & Hanson (2003)
Graduation (researching a career, internship, externship, work experience, resume, interview preparation, networking, creating/developing a job search plan).

To achieve maximum variation sampling, relative frequency percentages were first calculated for each of the eleven categorical factors. Patton (1990) calls for “introspection” to extract the similar responses so the dissimilar responses can be isolated. The outliers, or the relative frequency percentages that were observed to be numerically distant from the rest of the data, were highlighted in the categorical factor analysis so preferential consideration could be given to the outliers for inclusion into the participant pool (Grubbs, 1969). An analysis of the outlier categories as well as the frequency of outliers each prospective participant displayed was considered in selecting the purposeful sample to fulfill maximum variation requirements. Based upon the participant’s responses and the variation requirement for each of the eleven factors, the phase two participants were deductively determined. Full disclosure of the researcher’s selection process was documented in a memo. A peer review of the maximum variation sample analysis and the sample selection process was conducted.

While maximum variation sampling cannot be generalized to all people in all groups, every effort was made to utilize a sample that represented a relatively heterogeneous football student-athlete population across the eleven factors. Once the participant pool was established, the quantitative information from the questionnaire was transformed into qualitative codes (Table 1). “The primary purpose of importing . . . categorical information into a qualitative database is to allow for comparative analysis for the responses of subgroups . . . with respect to themes, concepts or issues raised in the qualitative material” (Greene, 2007, p. 148).

The second phase of the study was primarily qualitative and consisted of an on-line open-ended survey and a one hour interview (Figure 6). The on-line open ended survey responses were
Table 1

**Phase One Initial Qualitative Data Categories & Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Did Research a Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Research a Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externship</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Plan</td>
<td>Had Plan Prior to Graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Have Plan Prior to Graduation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6: Sequential Explanatory Design – Phase 2 Qualitative Data Analysis. This is based upon Diagramming of Creswell, Plano, Clark, Gutmann & Hanson (2003)
coded and added to the qualitative database as the surveys were received (Table 2). The survey was intended to acquire detailed data to complement the existing qualitative data codes established by the phase one questionnaire. Following the coding of the on-line open-ended survey, the qualitative database included qualitative survey data codes and the transformed quantitative data codes. The data was then analyzed across the data categories and within each participant’s data set prior to each participant’s interview. “Interactive analyses should include planned stopping points at which the inquirer intentionally looks for ways in which one analysis could inform another” (Greene, 2007, p. 144). Analyzing the database prior to the interviews allowed for the discovery of emerging themes or divergent themes, which were probed further in subsequent interviews.

Prior to each participant’s interview, the participant’s individual quantitative and qualitative data was also reviewed in an iterative process with the overall qualitative analysis. This process provided an overview of the participant’s career development experience as told by the data in relation to the overall themes that had been established at that particular stopping point in the research process. It also assisted with the creation of follow up interview questions. Although the quantitative questionnaire, qualitative survey and interview covered the same career development topics, the interview provided the opportunity to acquire elaborate details in the graduated student-athletes own voice of his individual career development experiences. Probing questions developed from the coded data allowed for further investigation of diverging themes for initiation of new data categories as well as converging themes to increase confidence in inquiry inferences of existing categories. “Triangulation is referred to as ‘the use of multiple methods . . . [to] partially overcome the deficiencies that flow from one investigation or one method’” (Denzin, 1989, p. 236). “Triangulation . . . can enhance the credibility of a research
Table 2

Phase Two Qualitative Categories & Themes Following Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Preferred Area of Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Preferred Area of Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Did Research a Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Research a Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externship</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Plan</td>
<td>Had Plan Prior to Graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Have Plan Prior to Graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Preparedness Upon Graduation</td>
<td>Feelings of Preparedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of Unpreparedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Ladder Post-Graduation</td>
<td>First Job In Career Area of Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Job Not in Career Area of Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positions Held Post-Graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Career</td>
<td>Career Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Unsatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Related to Degree Area of Study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
account by providing an additional way of generating evidence in support of key claims” (Seale, 1999, p. 61).

Each recorded interview was transcribed and the interview transcripts were forwarded to each participant for member checking to ensure factual accuracy of the participant’s responses. Member checking is the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” and is a process in which collected data is reviewed by the participant to check for perceived accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 227-230). None of the participants made corrections to the transcripts and only one participant elaborated on his comments.

Following member checking, the transcripts were coded into existing and new categories utilizing the constant comparative method and Microsoft Word processing software. The constant comparative method is an inductive data coding process used for categorizing and comparing qualitative data for analysis purposes (Glaser & Strauss, 1964). “It is usually associated with the methodology of grounded theory, although it is widely used with other research and evaluation frameworks as well” (Freeman, 2005). When utilizing the constant comparative method, the data is coded systematically and explicitly. An important feature of the constant comparative method is that data is analyzed as it is collected and compared to previously collected and analyzed data. This follows the iterative process used throughout the sequential mixed-methods data analysis process, enhancing representation and legitimation of the interpretation of the data.

Basic word processing software was utilized to manage, organize and manipulate the data. As Ruona states, Microsoft Word “allowed me to manage data efficiently and effectively so that I could ultimately “see” and interact with it better” (p. 250). Word processing software provided the opportunity to view different data sets by opening several windows at once while
also permitting individual case data analysis and permitting the merging of data for analysis across cases (Ruona, 2005). Interview data codes were chosen word-by-word, line-by-line and incident-by-incident, depending upon the data. Throughout the analysis of interview themes, memo writing was conducted to document the thought processes in the creation of data codes and categories.

Throughout data analysis, the iterative process included comparing emerging codes with existing codes that had been created during the initial quantitative stage of the study and during the analysis of the qualitative open-ended survey. The coded qualitative interview data was either added to existing codes or resulted in the development of new codes which were easily entered into the database and recoded utilizing the word processing software. The Microsoft Word “sort” and “search” features were utilized to ensure the validity of the codes by identifying key words and themes by category as well as by participant (Ruona, 2005). The entire database was analyzed for emerging concepts or themes. Upon completion of the coding for the qualitative interview utilizing the constant comparative method (Table 3 & Appendix E), themes within the qualitative data were counted and the frequency of these themes were converted to a relative frequency percentage. Not only did the counting of themes prevent the “overweighting” or “underweighting” of emergent themes in the study’s final results, but quantitizing the data provide numerical representations that “more fully describe or interpret a target phenomenon” (Sandelowski, 2001, p. 231 & 234).

Overall, data correlation and comparison were conducted to investigate patterns of relationships in the quantitative and qualitative data. Convergence, consistency, and corroboration were looked for; however, “the interactive mixed methods analyst looks just as keenly for instances of divergence and dissonance, as they may represent important nodes for
Table 3

**Final Qualitative Categories & Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for Selecting Institution</td>
<td>Academics Prominent in Decision-Making Process</td>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athletics Prominent in Decision-Making Process</td>
<td>NFL/Professional Football Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Preferred Area of Study</td>
<td>Career Goals Related To Major</td>
<td>Career Goals Not Related to Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Preferred Area of Study</td>
<td>Career Goals Related to Major</td>
<td>Career Goals Not Related to Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major Changes During Academic Career (#)</td>
<td>Reasons for Major Changes</td>
<td>Influence(s) for Major Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clustering</td>
<td>Experienced Clustering</td>
<td>Witnessed Clustering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Did Research a Career</td>
<td>Activities Performed</td>
<td>Resources Utilized for Major/Career Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Research a Career</td>
<td>Reasons for Not Researching a Career</td>
<td>Lack of Understanding of Interests/Values/Etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externship</td>
<td>Participated</td>
<td>Influence(s) in Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
<td>Reasons for Not Participating/Time Conundrum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>Participated</td>
<td>Influence(s) in Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
<td>Reasons for Not Participating/Time Conundrum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Participated</td>
<td>Not Exploratory Work Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
<td>Reasons for Not Participating/Time Conundrum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Participated</td>
<td>Resources Utilized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
<td>Reasons for Not Participating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Participated</td>
<td>Resources Utilized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Participate</td>
<td>Reasons for Not Participating</td>
<td>Feelings of Regret/Lost Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Plan</td>
<td>Had Plan Prior to Graduation</td>
<td>Influence(s) in Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Have Plan Prior to Graduation</td>
<td>Reasons for Not Participating/Time Conundrum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Preparedness Upon Graduation</td>
<td>Feelings of Preparedness</td>
<td>Reasons for Preparedness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of Unpreparedness</td>
<td>Post-Graduation Career Confusion</td>
<td>Entitlement/Unrealistic Career Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Ladder Post-Graduation</td>
<td>First Job In Career Area of Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Job Not in Career Area of Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with First Job Post-Graduation</td>
<td>Number of Jobs/Years Post-Graduation</td>
<td>Types of Job Post-Grad/Lack of Career Ladder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Career</td>
<td>Career Satisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Unsatisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Related to Degree Area of Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Programming</td>
<td>Need for Student-Athlete Career Development</td>
<td>Mandatory Programming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive Programming</td>
<td>Early Career Development Programming</td>
<td>Programming as Athlete ID Naturally Decreases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggested Content</td>
<td>Establish a Value for Degree</td>
<td>Understand Skill Sets &amp; Relation to Career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish Realistic Career/Salary Expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need for Experiential Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Leverage D-1 Status &amp; Mentoring Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Address First Generation College Student Needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Graduation Career Development Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to a Life After Sports</td>
<td>Student-Athlete to Civilian Life Transition</td>
<td>Independent Life Skills (Time Management)</td>
<td>Loss of Support Team/Handlers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional &amp; Psychological Issues</td>
<td>Loss of Athlete Identity</td>
<td>Career Confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stages of Grief</td>
<td>Career Confusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
further and highly generative analytic work” (Greene, 2007, p. 149). While divergence and dissonance were sought and discovered, the data resulted in triangulation, and additional interviews were not needed to further evaluate the dissonance phenomena.

After reviewing the frequency of themes and analyzing the data themes in relation to one another, a set of credible assertions were inductively and intuitively derived. Each assertion was aligned with evidence from the data confirming or disconfirming the evidence. At the completion of the analysis phase, recommendations were established to enhance student-athlete career development programming at the collegiate level.

**Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations of this study. First and foremost was the limitation of the participant pool in regards to number of participants for selection of a maximum variation sample. Due to athletic departments’ not having current contact records, potential student-athlete participants received the introductory email via athletic administrators, athletic academic counselors and/or through a former teammate or Division I college football player acquaintance. Those participants who responded to the research participant request may have included only those individuals who considered themselves successful in their chosen profession and/or who had mostly positive commentary on their student-athlete experience. Graduated student-athletes who had negative commentary about their student-athlete experience and/or were hesitant to speak about their current employment situation may not have been included in the research study. Every effort was made by the researcher for the final participant pool to be a diverse representation of graduated Division I football student-athletes.

Another limitation of this study was generalizability. The participant pool consisted of only Division I football student-athletes. Division I student-athletes most likely have a higher
athletic skill level and a greater chance of participating at the professional level of their sport than an athlete from a Division II or III school. The career development needs of a Division I student-athlete may differ from those of a Division II or III student-athlete. While a pilot study involving student-athletes from various men’s and women’s Division I sports was conducted on this topic by the researcher with similar results, the football student-athlete focus of this study might hinder the generalizability of the results in some readers’ eyes to the general student-athlete population.

A third limitation of this study was that it is retrospective and requires graduated football student-athletes to recall and reflect upon their career development experiences. While the participant pool consisted of graduated student-athletes who were three to seven years post-graduation at the time of the introductory email, details of the student-athletes’ experiences retrospectively may not have been concise and/or objective. The participant’s current level of career and life satisfaction may have blurred the lens through which he saw and interpreted his past events. From the researcher’s perspective, examining this topic retrospectively did allow for a comprehensive understanding of the participant’s career construction process beginning with selecting an institution to attend, to picking a major through to graduation and into the transitional years from student-athlete into working professional.

A final limitation of the research study was inherent to the mixed-methods design. While transformation of the data from quantitative to qualitative or qualitative to quantitative increases the representation and legitimacy of the data, the researcher’s inexperience with quantitative data analysis and the transformation process may have impacted the interpretation of the data.
**Researcher’s Subjectivity Statement**

Vellenas states that a researcher can be an insider and outsider to a particular community of research participants at many different levels and at very different times (1996). As a researcher I have an understanding of the topic of student-athlete career development as an insider and an outsider from a variety of roles which include student-athlete, athletic administrator and student-athlete career development consultant. These various lenses provide a multi-dimensional understanding of the topic of student-athlete career development. Because of these many perspectives, I am very cognizant of my subjectivities in relation to this topic. The various perspectives allowed me to continuously step back and question what I saw and heard from the multitude of lenses through which I view this topic. I believe these multiple lenses assisted in bringing a non-biased approach to the research of student-athlete career development.

As a researcher of student-athlete career development, I have various insider and outsider perspectives, at different levels, and at different times (Vellenas, 1996). My student-athlete identity provided an “insider” perspective of the mindset of a student-athlete making the transition from the playing field to the professional world. I know firsthand the time commitment and the multi-faceted obligations required of the student-athlete, which often inhibit their ability to consider their future. However, my student-athlete experience and career transitional period was very different from today’s student-athlete. My student-athlete experience was over a decade ago, thus “taming my subjectivity” with this identity (Peshkin, 1988).

In addition, I have an “insider” and an “outsider” perspective of athletic administration. Previously employed in athletic administration, I have an understanding of the administrative efforts put forth in developing the student-athlete for a life after sports. I was employed in the business sector/fundraising department within an athletic administration during the piloting of
the NCAA Life Skills program. However, I have never been employed within an athletic department’s student-athlete services department. I spent five years as a corporate career consultant who worked as an “outsider” to athletic administrators in developing and implementing career development programming, yet worked as an insider interacting with student-athletes in the career development process. My personal interest in this topic began with my own experience as a student-athlete and was deepened during my interaction with today’s student-athlete in a career development and corporate recruiting capacity. While much has changed in college athletics since my participation as a student-athlete and employment in athletic administration, many of the student-athletes I worked with during my five years in a career consulting role related many of the same career development challenges I faced so many years ago. These personal and professional experiences led me to research in this area. As Peshkin states, striking back and reforming may be worthwhile endeavors, but they are at odds with the intentions of a research project (1988). This subjectivity is the one I found most challenging to tame.

All researchers bring a certain level of bias to a study. I believe my personal and professional experiences provide a multi-dimensional perspective and understanding of the topic of student-athlete career development. The intention of this research is to be a conduit for the student-athletes so their unique personal career development experiences can be heard, deconstructed, and analyzed to provide a non-biased interpretation for recommendations that lead to a comprehensive curriculum for student-athlete career development programming.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS & FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the personal experiences of a diverse group of football student-athletes in career development and the impact career development has had on the football student-athlete’s transition into a profession and a life after sports. The research study examined the frequency and depth of participation by the graduated football student-athlete in traditional career development activities (researching a career, internship, externship, work experience, resume preparation, mock interview, networking, career search plan) across a set of demographic variables. It also provided the opportunity to hear the voices of the graduated football student-athletes in regards to their career development experiences, including their thoughts and perceptions of their career preparedness upon entering the job market and its impact upon their current career path. The results of this study provide an understanding of the student-athlete career development experience in relation to the impact these experiences had on the student-athlete’s transition into a career following graduation so recommendations can be made for a comprehensive student-athlete career development program.

This study answered the following research questions:

1. What is the football student-athlete’s involvement in traditional career development activities (researching a career, internship, externship, work experience, resume preparation, mock interview, networking, career search plan) across a diverse set of demographic variables (ethnicity, past and current socioeconomic status, academic
degree, playing time at the participant’s academic institution, current employment status, professional career area of employment, level of job satisfaction)/authentication granted.

2. What are the graduated football student-athlete’s thoughts and perceptions of his career preparedness upon graduation and its impact upon the graduated student-athlete’s transition into a life after sports?

3. What are the graduated and career seeking or employed football student-athlete’s perceptions of what should be provided by University/athletic programs for student-athlete career development?

The results of this mixed methods study will be revealed by phases of the study. Phase one quantitative results provide a detailed overview of the demographic and baseline career development data that was collected for the purpose of establishing a diverse participant pool for the second phase of this study. Data analysis was conducted for each the eleven pre-set factors that were outlined in the initial research questions. These included: 1.) Institution Attended, 2.) Degree of Study, 3.) Year of Graduation, 4.) Ethnic Identification, 5 & 6.) Past and Current Socioeconomic Status, 7.) Playing Time at the Participant’s Academic Institution, 8.) Participation in a Professional Sports Career, 9.) Current Professional Career Area of Employment, 10.) Ranges of Current Job Satisfaction, and 11.) Participation in Career Development Activities Prior to Graduation (researching a career, internship, externship, work experience, resume, interview preparation, networking, creating/developing a job search plan).

The data collected in phase one will be displayed along with a description of the purposeful sample of participants who were selected to continue on to phase two of this study.

The data that was analyzed in phase two consisted of transformed quantitative data from phase one along with the qualitative data that was collected in phase two. The significant data
themes that emerged in response to each research question will be presented qualitatively as well as quantitatively. A set of assertions that were inductively and intuitively derived will be presented following the presentation of data for each research question.

**Phase One Quantitative Results**

Of the 125 prospective graduated football student-athletes who were three to seven years post-graduation at the time of the introductory email, 30 prospective participants representing institutions in the southeastern region of the United Stated signed consent forms for a 24% (30/125) response rate. Of the 30 prospective participants who received the initial questionnaire, 22 completed the phase one questionnaire for a 73% (22/30) response rate. Of the 22 responders, 3 individuals stated they did not want to continue on with the study for a 14% (3/22) attrition rate.

To begin the purposeful sampling process, relative frequency and frequency percentages were calculated for each of the eleven pre-set factors (Table 4). Maximum variation sampling deliberately seeks to include a wide range of extremes, or outliers, to represent diverse responses. Therefore, the aggregate answers can be close to the whole populations (List, 2004). Outliers for each factor were identified and analyzed in relation to the qualitative characteristics across the data sets. Then, the factor outliers by responder were charted and the participant’s overall frequency of outlier responses were calculated. These results were analyzed per participant. Finally, relative frequency per factor and relative frequency across the factors per participant were evaluated for maximum variation sampling purposes. During the sampling process, quantitative relative frequencies were analyzed simultaneously with the qualitative characteristics of the individual factors. Initially, ten participants were selected for the phase two participant pool. When contacted, five of these individuals did not respond to communications.
Table 4

**Phase 1: Frequency & Relative Frequency Percentages Per Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHNICITY</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>REL FREQ</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>YEAR OF GRADUATION</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>REL FREQ</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.474/47.4%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.157/15.8%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.157/15.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.421/42.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.105/10.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Black &amp; White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.053/5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>211/21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Asian &amp; White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.053/5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>211/21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.105/10.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.053/5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY INCOME</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>REL FREQ</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>CURRENT INCOME</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>REL FREQ</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $25,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.053/5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Under $25,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.105/10.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.263/26.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.368/36.8%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $75,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.105/10.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$50,000 - $75,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.263/26.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.421/42.1%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$75,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.053/5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 - $125,000*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.157/15.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$100,000 - $125,000*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.053/5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$150,000 +**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.105/10.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.053/5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAYING TIME</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>REL FREQ</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>PRO SPORTS CAREER</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>REL FREQ</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Starter</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.211/21.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Never Employed Professionally</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.737/73.7%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Playing Rotation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.421/42.1%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Currently Employed Professionally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.053/5.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starter &amp; In Playing Rotation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.105/10.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Previously Employed Professionally</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.211/21.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Reserve</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.263/26.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Hardship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th>FREQ</th>
<th>REL FREQ</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>CAREER DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>REL FREQ</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Business Owner/Self-Employ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.048/4.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.579/58%</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>.048/4.8%</td>
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<td>Internship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.211/21.1%</td>
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<td>Externship</td>
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<td>.158/15.8%</td>
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<td>Lower Management</td>
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<td>Work Experience</td>
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<td>.316/31.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Resume</td>
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<td>.789/78.9%</td>
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<td>.579/57.9%</td>
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<td>Trained Professional</td>
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<td>.238/23.8%</td>
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<td>Networking</td>
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<td>.526/52.6%</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Job Search Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporary Employee</td>
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<td>.048/4.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other: Entry Level</td>
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<td>.048/4.8%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Development Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.048/4.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other: Offensive Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.048/4.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Associate Attorney</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.048/4.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Sales Force</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.048/4.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOB SATISFACTION</th>
<th>FREQ</th>
<th>REL FREQ</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.368/36.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Satisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.157/15.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.263/26.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.048/4.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unsatisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.105/10.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.048/4.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for continuation into the second phase of the study for a 26% (5/19) attrition rate. After re-analyzing the data across the eleven factors, additional participants were selected. The final phase two participant pool consisted of 12 Division I graduated football student-athletes who displayed diversity across all pre-determined factors (Table 5). For purposes of confidentiality, the names of the participants have been changed and the names of the participant’s institutions will not be disclosed. In addition, degree title and the specific major cited were generalized to preserve the confidentiality of the institution. The following is a discussion of the phase one results including the attributes of the purposeful sample based upon maximum variation sampling for phase two of this study.

**Phase One Results by Factor**

**University Attended**

Initial responders to the quantitative questionnaire attended six different institutions located in the southeastern region of the United States. Two of the initial responders were the only representatives of their institution and they opted out of phase two. Therefore, the final participant pool included each of the 5 institutions represented in the phase one data pool. One particular institution had a high response rate which resulted in that institution having a higher percentage of participants in the phase two participant pool (67%; 8/12). Upon final review of the purposeful sample, the researcher felt that if the topic of clustering (student-athletes being placed in a particular major for the purpose of maintaining NCAA academic eligibility requirements) emerged from the data, having a higher percentage of participants from at least one of the institutions would increase credibility of the research results.
## Table 5

**Phase 2 – Participant Pool Across Pre-Determined Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>Bachelor of Consumer Economics</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Black/White</td>
<td>$50,000 - $75,000</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>In the Playing Rotation</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Landscape Contractor/ Business Owner</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td></td>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Consumer Economics</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$75,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>Under $25,000</td>
<td>A Starter</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sales/ Temp Intern</td>
<td>Unsatisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$75,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>A Reserve</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Higher Education/ Administrative Staff</td>
<td>Very Unsatisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>$150,000 +</td>
<td>In the Playing Rotation</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Associate Attorney/ Other</td>
<td>Partially Satisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wade</td>
<td>Bachelor of Consumer Economics</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$75,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>In the Playing Rotation</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Driver/ Entry Level</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJ</td>
<td>Bachelor of Consumer Science</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>In the Playing Rotation</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Appraiser/ Trained Professional</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>A Starter/Playing Rotation</td>
<td>Previously: 1 Year</td>
<td>Police Officer/ Trained Professional</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold</td>
<td>Bachelor of Business Administration</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$75,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>$100,000 - $125,000</td>
<td>A Starter</td>
<td>Previously: 6 Year</td>
<td>Finance Manager/ Middle Management</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Bachelor of Consumer Science</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>In the Playing Rotation</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Special Ed Teacher &amp; Football Coach/ Trained Professional</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Networking</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Bachelor of Consumer Science</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>$150,000 +</td>
<td>A Starter/Playing Rotation</td>
<td>Currently: 5 Year</td>
<td>Pro Athlete/ Trained Professional</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Networking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Under $25,000</td>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>In the Playing Rotation</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Case Manager - Job Coach/ Lower Management</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Bachelor of Business Administration</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>$75,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>$50,000 - $75,000</td>
<td>In the Playing Rotation</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Development Officer/ Other</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Research a Career</td>
<td>Esternship</td>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>Interview Preparation</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Degree of Study

The questionnaire responders represented 5 different areas of study and 14 different majors overall. Due to the diversity of academic study among the responders, the data for this factor had relatively low frequency percentages. The final participant pool represented 5 of the 5 different degree areas of study and included 9 out of the 14 different majors reported for a 100% (5/5) and 65% (9/14) inclusion rate respectively. The participants from the institution that had the highest participant rate all graduated with the same degree but were divided equally between two different majors.

Year of Graduation

The responders for this factor set spanned the graduation years 2004 – 2010. Participants were considered eligible to participate in this research study if the individual was 3 - 7 years post-graduation at the time of receipt of the introductory email. The phase one data collection process spanned from late December 2011 through to early 2013. The establishment of the 3 to 7 year post-graduation requirement was to ensure that participants had transitioned into a career and were not too far removed from graduation to impact recall of the student-athlete experience and career development process. The researcher did not feel that the variation of the 3 to 7 year graduation time span impacted the results of this study. The only year not represented in the phase two participant pool was the year 2006. The two responders for this graduation year did not meet maximum variation sampling across all factors to be included in the study. The omission of this graduation year is not believed to have impacted the results of this study.
Ethnic Identification

The 19 responders of phase one identified themselves as African American (47%; 9/19), White (42%; 8/19), Black/White (5%; 1/19) and Asian/White (5%; 1/19). Based upon factor analysis of all categories for maximum variation sampling, the final participant pool was 75% (9/12) African American, 17% (2/12) White, and 8% (1/12) Black/White. Due to diversity across all factors, only one of the two ethnicity outliers is represented. While the initial response rates for African American and White ethnicities were very similar, due to maximum variation sampling across all factors and attrition, the final participant pool included a larger number of African American participants. The higher percentage of participants representing this ethnicity is reflective of current Division I football programs which report that 51.6% of Division I football student-athletes are African American (Lapchick, Agusta, Kinkopf & McPhee, 2012).

Past & Current Socioeconomic Status

Initial responders spanned the income level options provided for past (family income prior to attending college) and current socioeconomic status. Overall, maximum variation sampling provided a span of past and current income levels within the participant pool for this factor. For the factor “Past Socioeconomic Status”, category income level $100,000 - $125,000, there were 3 overall responders for a 15% (3/19) response rate. In an effort to include this high income category, each of the responders was contacted to continue on with the research study. One of the prospective participants was currently enrolled as a graduate student and had yet to enter the workforce, thus, not meeting the research study criteria. The other two prospective participants did not return communications in regards to moving on to the next phase of the study. Although this previous family income category was not represented in this research study, the researcher does not feel that the omission impacted the results of this study.
Playing Time at the Participant’s Academic Institution

Responders of the questionnaire described their football career by denoting if they were a Starter (21%; 4/19), In the Playing Rotation (42%; 8/19), Starter & In the Playing Rotation (11%; 2/19), A Reserve (26%; 5/19) or Medical Hardship (0%; 0/19). After analysis and deductive reasoning of these sub-factors, the selected participant pool had the following characteristics when describing playing time providing a diverse representation of this factor: Starter (17%; 2/12), In the Playing Rotation (58%; 7/12), Starter & In the Playing Rotation (17%; 2/12), A Reserve (8%; 1/12).

Participation in a Professional Sports Career

Of the 19 responders, 14 (74%; 14/19) stated that they had not played professional football, 1 (5%; 1/19) stated he was currently playing professional football and 4 (21%; 4/19) stated they had previously played professional football. Based upon diversity of all factors, the 12 final participants included 9 (75%; 9/12) who had never played professional football, 1 (8%; 1/12) participant who was currently employed in the NFL and 2 (17%; 2/12) who had been employed as a professional football player. The 1 participant who was currently employed in the NFL was in the process of transitioning to a professional career and had been with five different NFL teams over his five year NFL career. The two participants who stated they had played in the NFL included a student-athlete alumnus whose career was less than one season in the NFL as he incurred a career ending injury before his rookie season started and a NFL veteran whose career spanned five seasons and included two Super Bowl Championships.

Current Professional Career Area of Employment

Ten choices which included “Other” were provided for the responder to describe their area of employment. The option “Other” provided the opportunity for four responders to write in
their area of employment. The final participation pool represented 9 out of the initial 14 (64%; 9/14) categories with a diverse qualitative range consisting of CEO, business owner, manager, skilled professional to entry level personnel.

**Ranges of Current Job Satisfaction**

Each of the five categories for this factor which ranged from “Very Satisfied” to “Very Unsatisfied” were included in the phase two participant pool. Maximum variation sampling distributed the participants as follows: Very Satisfied (42%; 5/12), Partially Satisfied (8%; 1/12), Satisfied (33%; 4/12), Unsatisfied (8%; 1/12) and Very Unsatisfied (8%; 1/12).

**Participation in Career Development Activities Prior to Graduation**

**Researching a Career.** Eleven (58%; 11/19) of the initial responders reported that they had researched a career while 8 (42%; 8/19) responded they had not researched a career. After purposeful sampling across all factors, the participant pool consisted of 7 (58%; 7/12) participants who reported researching a career and 5 (42%; 5/12) who did not research a career, establishing a diverse participant pool that also mirrored the initial participant pool.

**Experiential Opportunities (Externship, Internship & Work Experience).** For this factor, it was important to not only include a range of experiential factors for diversity, but it was also important to represent those who did and did not participate in a respective experiential opportunity. The final participant pool included 6 participants (50%; 6/12) who had engaged in at least one of the experiential opportunities. Of the 12 phase two participants, 2 (17%; 2/12) performed an externship and 5 (42%; 5/12) had work experience. While every effort was made to include a participant who had experienced an internship as a student-athlete, 3 of the 4 responders in this sub-factor did not return communications for inclusion in phase two of this study and 1 out of the 4 did not meet other criteria for study-wide factor variance. It would be
revealed in the qualitative phase of the study that two of the participants had performed
internships prior to graduation, but had improperly responded on the quantitative questionnaire.
Therefore, the sub-factor internship was represented in the final participant pool.

**Resume Creation.** Initial responders reported that 79% (15/19) had created a resume
prior to graduation while 21% (4/19) of the participants reported they had not created a resume
prior to graduation. The phase two participant pool consisted of 10 participants (83%; 10/12)
who had engaged in resume creation prior to graduation and 2 participants (17%; 2/12) who did
not, establishing a participant pool that was diverse and representative of the original participant
pool.

**Interview Preparation.** For this factor, 58% (11/19) of the initial responders reported
they had participated in interview preparation compared to 42% (8/19) who did not participate in
this sub-factor. The purposeful sample for phase two consists of 8 (67%; 8/12) participants who
engaged in interview preparation or a mock interview prior to graduation and 4 (33%; 4/12)
participants who did not engage in this activity.

**Networking.** The initial participants were almost equally split (53%; 10/19) reported
networking versus 47% (9/19) reported not networking) in their responses for the factor of
networking. After maximum variation sampling, the participant pool was equally distributed
with a 50% (6/12) factor variance of those who networked and those who did not network.

**Career Search Plan.** Of the 3 (16%; 3/19) initial responders who reported they had
established a career search plan, one did not meet maximum variation sampling requirements
across all factors and the other two responders did not return communications to advance onto
the qualitative portion of this study. Therefore, this factor was not represented in the final
participant pool. The researcher does not believe that the omission of this factor in the phase two participant pool impacted results as it was revealed in the qualitative interview that this factor was represented.

Overall, the twelve phase two participants across the factor career development activities included: 7 (58%; 7/12) participants who had researched a career prior to graduation; 6 (50%; 6/12) participants who involved themselves in an experiential opportunity which included an internship, externship, or work experience during their student-athlete experience; 10 (83%; 10/12) who had created a resume prior to graduation; 8 (67%; 8/12) who had prepared themselves for interviewing; 6 (50%; 6/12) who reported having networked; and 0 (0%; 0/12) having had a career search plan prior to graduation.

**Phase Two Qualitative Results**

Initially, the quantitative data from phase one was converted to qualitative themes beginning the data collection process for phase two. In addition to increasing the confidence of inquiry inferences, mixed methods were utilized in this study for the following purposes: 1.) complementarity to obtain a depth of information, 2.) development to establish probing questions for the qualitative interview and 3.) initiation to reveal paradoxes. Throughout phase two, qualitative data was obtained and analyzed utilizing the constant comparative method. Data collected was either added to pre-existing themes or added to newly-created themes. Overall, the qualitative data was analyzed within each participant’s data set and across each of the research participant’s data sets to evaluate themes and sub-themes pertaining to each research question. Relative frequencies were then calculated for each theme to prevent the underweighing or overweighing of emergent themes (Sandelowski, 2001). The following is a presentation of the
qualitative data themes that emerged from the data by research question including assertions that were inductively and intuitively derived from the data.

**Research Question #1: Examination of Themes**

RQ1: What is the football student-athlete’s involvement in traditional career development activities (researching a career, internship, externship, work experience, resume preparation, mock interview, networking, career search plan) across a diverse set of demographic variables (ethnicity, past and current socioeconomic status, academic degree, playing time at the participant’s academic institution, current employment status, professional career area of employment, level of job satisfaction)?

A summary of findings for RQ1 is summarized in Table 6. The following is a discussion of the qualitative categories and themes providing a response to RQ1 as well as an explanation of these results.

**Lack of Involvement with Researching a Career**

Researching a career generally involves developing an understanding of personal interests and skill sets and acquiring an understanding of how those interests and skill sets may relate to a particular major of study and/or career. The majority of the graduated football student-athletes (67%; 8/12) did not research a career prior to graduation. Comparing phase two results with phase one responses (42%; 8/19), a variance was noted. While the quantitative and qualitative data appeared to diverge, the qualitative interview data displayed a convergence of data leading to corroboration of both data sets. In phase one of the study, the participants simply responded “yes” or “no” to a question asking if they had researched a career. In phase two, the graduated student-athlete was asked to provide a detailed description of the tasks he performed to research a career in regards to establishing personal career interests, establishing a major and
ultimately developing a career area of interest. The following sub-themes emerged, which provide insight into the overall lack of engagement by football student-athletes, with this career development activity and the impact on the graduated football student-athletes career development process.

**Limited Knowledge of Personal Interests & Skill Sets.** Two (17%; 2/12) of the twelve participants formally evaluated their personal interests and skill sets utilizing a formal evaluation tool such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or the Strong Inventory during their academic career. One of the graduated student-athletes recalled his participation with this development activity as having been required by his institution while the other graduated student-athlete voluntarily sought the service through his institution’s career services office to assist him in career preparedness.

Each student [at University of X] before they actually go through graduation have to take a computer based assessment and that also kind of helped point me in the right direction as far as career-wise. I kind of did a self-assessment [through University Career Services] . . . I took an inventory of my personality and what I was interested in and kind of applied to the jobs [pause] . . . opportunities I might have an interest in.

Langley, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Marketing & Recruitment Officer

We had the same [career] resources as all the other students but it wasn’t really pushed . . . I talked with my professors and got some advice and I went to the [University] Career Center and did all of that . . . I think I might have taken some of the tests [career aptitude tests, personality inventory, etc.].

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer


Table 6

**Research Question #1 Results & Assertions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Frequency %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Involvement in Researching a Career</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Knowledge of Interests and Skill Sets</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Use of Resources to Obtain Major &amp; Career Information</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Athlete Time Conundrum Impacts Major Selection</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCAA Academic Reform May Impact the Major Selection Process *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking in Externship Opportunities</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking in Internship Opportunities</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Athlete Time Conundrum Impacts Ability to Perform</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking in Exploratory Work Experiences</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experiences Not Furthering the Career Development Process</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Athlete Time Conundrum Impacts Ability to Perform</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume Preparation is Occurring Prior to Graduation</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Preparation is Occurring Prior to Graduation</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Effective Networking</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking a Career Search Plan Prior to Graduation</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based upon quantitative data which includes the number of times a student-athlete changed his major during the student-athletes academic career & the number of years it took the student-athlete to graduate compared to national average statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assertions</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Lack of Involvement &amp; Depth of Involvement in Career Development Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Knowledge of Self-Concept and Vocational Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing Limited Resources to Research a Major &amp; Career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominantly Relying Upon Athletic Academic Counselor for Major and Career Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCAA Academic Reform (APR's &amp; GSR's) May Negatively Impact the Career Development Process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer Major Changes Versus the General Student Population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hastened Rate of Graduation Versus the General Student Population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to Determine If Clustering Is Occurring &amp; It's Impact on Career Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Conundrum Impacts Involvement in Experiential Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Resume &amp; Basic Interview Skills Upon Graduation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking in Networking Skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Utilizing Networking Opportunities as a Student-Athlete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to Career Development Deficiencies, Lacking a Career Search Plan Upon Graduation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of the football student-athletes (83%; 10/12) did not engage in a formal interest and skill set evaluation. Instead, the football student-athletes appeared to rely upon personal interests discovered in childhood or adolescence without discovery of how those interests specifically relate to a major or career.

When I was in like middle school, one of my teachers said, ‘You really should come enter a math competition and be on the math competition team’ . . . And, so I kind of did math competitions all throughout high school . . . I took like 18 classes in math . . . Going to X University, I knew I was going to go into some form of an engineering major.

Tom, Bachelor of Science, Lawyer

I love computers, dealing with the internet, things like that . . . My first thought was that I wanted be a computer science major . . . The classes with that particular major kind of deterred me from doing it.

Larry, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Mortgage Loan Originator

I was young. I have a cousin who is in the Secret Service and we were at a family event one day and that’s what he was talking about and it kind of struck me at that point. I was like twelve or thirteen and ever since then that’s what I wanted to do . . . But it was like an early on thing . . . it was not that when I got to college I figured it out. But one thing that I wish for to happen in college is that I . . . figured out a career path that would be more suited for that.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer
The results display that the majority of the football student-athletes did not engage in a formal evaluation of their personal interest and skill sets. Only two of the student-athletes utilized a formal evaluation tool to further their self-concept with the majority of the football student-athletes relying upon personal interests discovered in early childhood or adolescence to determine their major and/or future career aspirations.

**Limited Use of Resources to Obtain Major & Career Information.** The football student-athletes tended to rely upon advice from others within their close-knit circle to evaluate a major and/or research a career. The football student-athletes’ predominant source of information for selecting and researching a major was a discussion with the athletic academic counselor/advisor (67%; 8/12).

And then my athletic academic advisor she was like, ‘Well, you can pretty much do anything you want to do with a degree as long as you’ve got a degree’ . . . I’m a big history buff so, ‘I’ll take the history’ and I ended up getting my degree in history . . . my athletic academic advisor was a big help because she’s like, ‘Well, we don’t get a lot of football players who want to do history’ but since we practiced in the morning and the classes actually worked around all of the history classes really well. So, she was in love with the fact that I wanted to do history and she’d call me into her office just to talk because she was like, ‘So, how are you liking the history program?’ and I loved it, so . . . [trails off].

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit
I spoke to the [athletic] academic counselors, I guess most of my peers . . . Really, they were the same age as I was, really. So, I guess my [athletic] academic counselors [provided the most information regarding major selection].

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

Through my counselor. Athletic academic counselor . . . I went to him and we sat down and discussed classes in a different major.

Larry, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Mortgage Loan Originator

Participants also reported that discussions with family members (33%; 4/12), teammates (17%; 2/12), high school counselor (17%; 2/12), university academic counselors (8%; 1/12), and a career professional (8%; 1/12) assisted with their primary choice of major.

Uh, yes to a certain extent [I researched a major and a career]. I guess I kind of researched, called around. Ah, so . . . you know a friend of the family she is a loan officer. I called and talked to her. And, um, I talked to my cousin, he is an appraiser. So, um, so I asked those guys what they thought about it. You know, was it a good way to go, you know, stuff like that.

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

I remember my sophomore year actually being on campus and getting my hand on a pamphlet that showed you how a major is translated into jobs and at that point . . . two of
the highest . . . not necessarily salaries but career . . . like you found a career faster, like immediately . . . in the first six months was finance and economics. And therefore at that point I was making C’s in finance and I had a solid A/B in my micro/macro econ classes. It was like ‘Okay, maybe I might want to go ahead and swing in this direction’ and I was always interested in how it played in socio/economic status, how economy was always ever present.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

And it took me maybe a year or two to get my feet wet and figure out which of those I wanted to pursue. I ended up picking X . . . it was, sufficiently difficult and it was like one of those degrees that was one of the more lucrative . . . some people can graduate just with an undergraduate degree and actually practice it. Not like a lot of other degrees . . . [It] was the type of degree that allowed you to get started right when you got out. I think that is how I fell into it.

Tom, Bachelor of Science, Lawyer

Other sources of assistance in the major selection and career process include personal discovery (33%; 4/12), coursework (17%; 2/12), and extracurricular activities in high school (8%; 1/12).

I had absolutely no idea of what I wanted to major in when I first got to school. And they give that grace period where you just take all core academics so I did that, took my core academics and just tried to figure out what exactly I’d like to do after graduation. Just
talked really with a lot of my teammates. So I talked with my teammates and talked with their professors and I just tried to figure out, you know, a path for me and that’s why I ended up choosing that major.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

I was working with an academic counselor [in the schoool/college I had an interest]. I would talk with a lot of teachers. I was really close with my political science teacher so she would help me out a lot and just point me in the right direction. It was a good balance [of working with my athletic academic counselor and individuals within the school/college] . . . I kept all of them in the loop of what I was doing and wanted to do.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

Like when I came to University of X one of the first people that I met was [name of head athletic trainer] and I was like totally engulfed of ‘When I’m done playing, I’m going to be an athletic trainer” and he was like very, very helpful with that process with me saying ‘You ought study exercise science’ . . . My strong suit was mathematics and so therefore when I got to school and got into classes my first semester, I was a C student a couple of different areas and I was making all A’s in math. And so then that kind of swung me about my sophomore year and I said, ‘Well, I probably need to choose a major in some form of business or accounting/finance or economics’.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail
The football student-athletes lack of involvement in researching a career appears to be inhibited by the use of limited resources to obtain major and career information. The majority of the participants reported that their predominant source of information for major and career exploration was the athletic academic counselor. While participants noted additional resources that were within their close knit circle of family, friends and academic circles, outside resources such as on-line research, attending a career fair and/or informational interviews with business professionals was not noted.

**Student-Athlete Time Conundrum Impacts Major Selection.** Due to a football student-athlete’s athletic responsibilities, the major selection and career development process can be impacted. Three of the participants (25%; 3/12) reported that major course times and internship requirements deterred or impacted their choice of major/coursework. Due to the football student-athlete’s reliance on the athletic academic counselor/advisor for major direction, this theme may be underrepresented in that the student-athlete may have only been presented major options that fit the student-athlete’s practice schedule and time demands:

To fit in all of your classes into a window from eight [a.m.] to about . . . you have to be out by one o’clock because they have to free up enough time to get from class to practice or a meeting by two-thirty every day, that’s a bit of task, too, because the classes run all the way to like eight o’clock at night. And regular students have seven hours in a day that they can space their classes out and if that class is only available between one and eight
o’clock, you’d have to wait summer or the next semester to take it. So, I mean, that’s a little bit of juggling act as well . . . because they have to put you in classes that fit in the schedule.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

I was trying to balance me [academics, athletics and a social life] . . . I didn’t do as well as I wanted to my first year . . . [in regards to grades]. And so I changed [my major] to criminal justice and probably my sophomore or junior year you have to have an internship with criminal justice and I realized that I don’t think I’m going to be able to do that because I can’t take a whole summer off [from football] to do an internship or a whole year off. So, that’s why I changed it to sociology because I didn’t have to have an internship, I still took all the classes.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

[I was told] ‘Well, we don’t get a lot of football players who want to do history’ but since we practiced in the morning and the practices actually worked around all of the history classes really well.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

Overall, the theme “time conundrum” was cited by 100% (12/12) of the participants when discussing their involvement with traditional career development activities. While this theme in relation to selecting a major does not appear to have a high frequency percentage, the football student-athletes athletic time commitments do appear to have an impact on the selection
of a major and the career development process. Based upon the qualitative data which displays that the student-athlete predominantly relies upon the athletic academic advisor for major counseling, this theme could be understated in that the athletic academic advisor may provide a limited number of major options to prevent scheduling conflicts.

**NCAA Academic Requirements May Impact the Major Selection Process.**

Institutions and student-athletes are held to NCAA academic requirements known as Academic Progress Rates (APR’s) and Graduation Success Rates (GSR’s). An APR is an academic term-by-term measuring tool utilized to determine if a student-athlete is making progress toward a degree. A GSR is designed to show the proportion of athletes who graduate on any given team. Athletes are not eligible for athletic participation if they do not meet the NCAA’s APR requirements, and individual sport teams that do not meet the GSR requirement are penalized by the loss of individual scholarships. Qualitative data was obtained that resulted in quantitative results which were evaluated to determine if student-athletes are fast tracked to graduate to ensure GSR’s and to evaluate if student-athletes are deterred or limited to major changes to ensure APR’s. The hastened graduation pace could negatively impact the student-athlete’s ability to research a career ultimately impacting the student-athlete’s career development process.

In this study, 8% (1/12) of the student-athletes graduated in three and a half years, 50% (6/12) graduated in four years, and 42% (5/12) graduated in five years. “On average, only about 41 percent of undergrads graduate in four years, according to data reported by 1,207 ranked colleges and universities in an annual *U.S. News & World Report* survey” (Sheehy, 2013). The data also revealed that 42% (5/12) of the graduated student-athlete participants declared one major, 50% (6/12) declared two majors and 8% (1/12) declared three majors (Table 7).
Table 7

Major Selection Themes Per Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># OF MAJORS/MAJOR CHANGES</th>
<th>REASON FOR MAJOR CHANGE</th>
<th>DEGREE IN MAJOR OF INTEREST</th>
<th>INFLUENCES IN MAJOR CHANGE</th>
<th>RESEARCHED MAJOR</th>
<th>EVIDENCE OF CLUSTERING</th>
<th># OF YEARS TO GRADUATE</th>
<th>CAREER GOALS RELATED TO MAJOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Older Brother &amp; Athletic Academic Counselor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GPA &amp; Lack of Knowledge of University Major Process</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Athletic Academic Counselor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Considered Major Since High School</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High School Teachers &amp; University Academic Counselor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Considered Major Since High School</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Parents, High School Teachers &amp; Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Majored in NFL &amp; Getting a Degree/Any Degree</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Athletic Academic Counselor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 (Double Major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Athletic Academic Counselor, Teammates &amp; Family</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>GPA, Internship Requirement, Trying to Balance Academics &amp; Athletics</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Childhood Interest, Family &amp; Balancing Academics &amp; Athletics</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coursework Interest, Personal Research</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Athletic Academic Counselor &amp; Personal Discovery</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>After taking a few classes, did not see himself in career area</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Athletic Academic Counselors, Teammates &amp; Personal Discovery</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Athletic Academic Counselor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enjoyed subject in high school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Athletic Academic Counselor</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GPA &amp; Coursework exposed him to secondary major of interest</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Coursework/ Personal Discovery</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“About 80 percent of students in the United States end up changing their major at least once, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. On average, college students change their major at least three times over the course of their college career” (Ramos, 2013).

Of the 7 (58%; 7/12) participants who changed their major, 1 (14%; 1/7) reported disinterest in their initial major after taking a major course and 6 (86%; 6/7) revealed that their grade point average (GPA) was the predominant reason for the major change:

And I started out as a Business Education major . . . I started out as that, ‘Things will play out for me, I’m going to be a teacher and coach football’. Got into it and decided ‘Nah, I don’t see myself as a teacher’.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

When I first came to University of X, I thought finance . . . As I came in, my first year and my first semester, it was all wrong, my first semester was just terrible. I had a terrible GPA . . . I didn’t have a lot of time. I lost focus of the goal [obtaining a finance degree].

Brian, Bachelor of Consumer Science, University Athletic Academic Counselor

So, I started out pre-med but that didn’t last very long at all. Took biology and I think I made like a C+ but it was . . . first semester of freshman year. And I took some other business classes that semester also like an economics class or something and really
enjoyed that and I don’t know if you had to declare your major that early anyway . . . but it was evident after the first semester that I was going to try to business instead of pre-med.

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

I finished high school early and I tried to go right to college after high school and it kind of was overwhelming for me to go to college at that point. So I didn’t do so well my freshman year into my sophomore year. And so my grades, I did want to get into University of X’s business school . . . By summer I realized that I couldn’t get into University of X’s business school anymore. I tried to look at alternatives.

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

Each of the 6 participants who changed their major as a result of their GPA reported that a discussion with their athletic academic counselor prompted and directed them into their second major of study. Clustering, directing a student-athlete to a particular major for maintaining eligibility, was a theme in this study with 42% (5/12) of the graduated student-athletes stating they either experienced or witnessed clustering. Each of the football student-athletes who cited clustering attended the same institution. Of the 5 individuals who cited clustering, 3 (60%; 3/5) graduated with the “clustered” degree. The other 2 individuals who mentioned clustering did not report they they had been clustered, but reported that they had witnessed clustering. It’s important to note that the 3 other graduated student-athletes from the same institution who also reported a major change due to their GPA and obtained degrees within the “clustered” major, did not report that they were clustered.
It was clustering because it was a lot of other athletes that were in the same thing but they didn’t really like that major, they were doing it just to maintain eligibility.

Larry, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Pro Athlete/Job Seeking

It was the athletic counselors. They pretty much thought [the major] would be the best fit for me for where I was at. I was on pace to graduate at a certain time [3.5 years] so I went that route. And a lot of athletes went that route, and I think mainly, because they kind of, they kind of sort of sucker you into doing it . . . So, that’s kind of how I got into my major . . . I’d say I was clustered . . . I had no idea [there were other business major options on campus available in other school/colleges].

Brian, Bachelor of Consumer Science, University Athletic Academic Counselor

I feel definitely [there was clustering] . . . [Harold lists three majors that he feels football student-athletes are clustered into at the University of X] I do feel that way and I felt like, too, I was involved in that circumstance until . . . I mean, I did take over my schedule at a point. I took over my schedule and I went to my respective college of study and then I told them, ‘Tell me exactly what classes that I need to take to graduate’ and then I brought that information to the academic athletic counselor and said, ‘Make my schedule to where I can be at practice on time’.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

Harold, who states he was not clustered but witnessed clustering, provided a possible explanation. He explains: “To fit in all of your classes into a window from eight to about . . . you
have to be out by one o’clock because they have to free up enough time to get from class to practice or a meeting by two-thirty every day, that’s a bit of task, too, because the classes run all the way to like eight o’clock at night. And regular students have seven hours in a day that they can space their classes out and if that class is only available between one and eight o’clock, you’d have to wait summer or the next semester to take it. So, I mean, that’s a little bit of juggling act as well. So, I’m not going to make it seem . . . to make it as easy as ‘Put these people in the right classes’ because they have to put you in classes that fit in the schedule as well.”

After displaying the qualitative data in a quantitative format and comparing it to national statistics, it was noted that the football student-athlete had a lower number of major changes and faster rate of matriculation to reach graduation implying that NCAA Academic Reform (APR’s and GPR’s) may be negatively impacting the student-athlete career development process. While clustering was cited by the participants in this study, the analysis of the qualitative data did not overwhelmingly justify those claims.

Overall, the graduated football student-athletes did not participate in extensive career development activities that resulted in an understanding of personal interests and skill sets as well as vocational opportunities that related to those interests and skill sets. A limited use of resources to obtain major and career information hindered the major and career research process. It appears NCAA academic reform may be inhibiting the career development process by expediting graduation and limiting the number of major changes a student-athlete may explore.

**Experiential Opportunities – Externship, Internship & Work Experience**

Summarizing the results of this factor, the data shows that football student-athletes are not engaged in quality experiential opportunities that assist the student-athlete in understanding how his individual interests and skill sets relate to a career for the development of realistic career
expectations. The qualitative data for experiential opportunities showed a 50% (6/12) participation rate by football student-athletes in at least one of the experiential career development activities. However, the qualitative evidence displays a lack of quality experiences that would have furthered the student-athletes career development process.

**Lacking in Externship Experiences.** Of the 12 participants, 2 (17%) revealed that they had experienced an externship during their academic careers. Harris and Mark attended the same institution and their participation in the externship was required by their athletic program, which had hired an outside career consulting/recruiting firm to assist the student-athletes in the career development process.

Yeah, I [was required by team administrator/athletic academic advisor] to come meet the career consulting firm and it was just kind of one of those things where you know you probably should do it but it’s like you only get like an hour or two each day just to have to myself . . . I didn’t want to go do an externship . . . I got a lot out of it. I felt like being out with Sandy [a pharmaceutical sales representative] was really good and that’s when I kind of realized I really didn’t want to do sales. I wasn’t really a big sales person.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

[The externship] was actually in the area of housing . . . It was with a guy, he actually worked in public housing. I job shadowed with him . . . A lot of times that’s wonderful experience you can put on a resume.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach
The results display that the football student-athlete is lacking in externship participation. Those that participated in the experiential opportunity reported that they found the experience valuable, but were not motivated to participate. The athletic department requiring the participants to perform an externship and facilitating the opportunity resulted in the football student-athletes participation and the student-athlete furthering his career development.

**Lacking in Internship Experiences.** For the internship category, quantitative data displayed a 0% (0/12) participation rate, while the qualitative data displayed a 17% (2/12) participation rate. The variation for this factor was the result of two participants’ improperly classifying their experiential opportunity on the quantitative instrument in phase one of this study. The use of mixed methods allowed for the elaboration and corroboration of data, adding credibility to the results of this study.

The two student-athletes, Ben and Tom, who participated in a summer internship were internally motivated to obtain the positions for experience/resume purposes (not course credit). The internship was a valuable learning opportunity that provided exposure to a specific career providing insights for their future career choices.

I knew I needed an internship [so I had work experience on my resume] before I graduated. My internship was only in the summer but it was challenging because it was in [a major city located over an hour from my school] and I was a senior team leader and so I had to be at workouts throughout the morning and then I had to be at whatever, pads/skeleton in the afternoons and so, yeah, that summer was tough. And I wouldn’t
have had to do it but . . . you know, it was kind of the balance of wanting to get a job and wanting a meaningful experience but also being a captain on the team and being there to help lead things.

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, Development Officer

So, I mean, I guess I got a first time exposure in the practice of engineering to see if I’d like it. But it [the internship was in civil engineering, it] wasn’t close enough to my study in school that I would know what it would be like as an electrical engineer. But I feared, you know, that it can’t get much better than this! . . . It was a small company, the guy who was the business manager . . . I learned a lot from him about how a business was run . . . [The internship experience] made me realize that I didn’t want to do [engineering] . . . Basically, I just knew I didn’t want to do it. [I then researched, applied and made plans to attend law school prior to his graduation from X University].

Tom, Bachelor of Science, Lawyer

While the value of experiencing an internship in the career development process is evident from Ben and Tom’s comments, as an internship participant Ben cites the time conundrum theme which was the predominant theme as to why the majority of the participants did not participate in an internship.

*Time Conundrum Impacts Ability to Perform an Internship.* The majority of the student-athletes (83%; 10/12) did not participate in an internship. Those student-athletes who elaborated on their lack of internship participation suggest that athletic time commitments inhibited their ability to participate.
No time. I went to school year round and so it was football, school, and then in the summertime it was football, school and so I was always busy. I don’t see how normal people do, you know . . . other students just go to class and then have a job for something to do because they don’t realize that playing football is a job because you’re there twenty hours a week and then that’s what the NCAA lets you do and then you want to go in there and watch film by yourself so it’s [pause] . . . a lot of time in there [the football complex] doing stuff.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

I didn’t do an internship. What I think it all boils down to is I probably could have done one. I think I was just more focused on football. It would’ve taken a lot more time but I think now, it would have been worth it, but then I didn’t see the light. I didn’t see the doors that an internship could have opened up.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

The results of this study show that the football student-athlete is lacking in internship experience. While the time conundrum is noted as the predominant reason for the football student-athletes lack of participation, the participants retrospectively see the value in having performed an internship. The strong athlete identity and salience to the athlete role prevents the student-athlete from finding the time to engage in this experiential opportunity.

**Lack of Exploratory Work Experience.** Half of the football student-athletes (50%; 6/12) in this study did obtain employment at some point during their academic career. The work experiences primarily occurred during summer semester. The qualitative results revealed that
33% (2/6) obtained employment that was related to a career area of interest resulting in 83% (10/12) of the participants not having exploratory work experience. Those participants who did obtain exploratory work experience included Tom, who obtained an internship directly related to his major that later led to an annual summer job, and DJ, who obtained employment during his fifth academic year. DJ waived his senior year of eligibility and obtained employment while completing his degree. The position resulted in a full-time employment offer post-graduation.

I actually started working for my employer about halfway through my last semester in college . . . I was kind of being groomed for that position [Project Manager] so that when I graduated, I was almost ready to go full speed, graduating and then kind of going to like a whole training program.

DJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Landscaping Contractor/Business Owner

The results of this study show that the football student-athlete is lacking in work experience upon graduation. The two participants who reported having exploratory work experience had extenuating circumstances which provided time for an experiential opportunity compared to the other participants in this study. Tom’s individualized position on the team as a kicker allowed for individual summer workouts off-campus resulting in time and location to find exploratory work. D.J. gave up his final year of athletic eligibility and utilized a fifth academic year without athletic time commitments to locate valuable work experience. The individual circumstances for both of these participants freed up time that the other participants were not privy to providing the both of them the opportunity to gain relevant work experience for their resume.
**Work Experiences Not Furthering Career Development Process.** The majority of the student-athletes who worked (67%; 4/6) discussed summer employment experiences that were short term, low skilled positions to earn money. These positions were not major or career specific and usually took place during the summer until official practice commenced. The exception was Mark, who worked spring and summer semesters to support his family while being a student-athlete, only taking off fall semester due to the rigor of the football season.

I did [have some work experience] . . . I picked up jobs during the summer and worked for people who were around the campus but they weren’t necessarily gaining some level of experience.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

Did some work in the summers I picked up jobs not related to major or career area of interest.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

It was one summer when I got a little job on campus that I did during the summer . . . It was tough but I mean, I just worked out in the afternoon and at that time I did not have to take class . . . but once June came around to take classes it got kind of tough. So I don’t think I finished the summer up working there because it was just too demanding with athletics.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver
I ended up working part time at [a hospital near campus]. I worked during the off season in the early morning before class, before anything. So, I’d go into work from six to ten, my first class would start at eleven and then my day would start from there . . . And at this time, actually me and my wife were married and we’d just had my daughter [second child]. And so financially, things were tight and so I had to have a job so I could put food on the table for the family. So, just squeeze in a few hours here, a few hours there, try to make ends meet . . . Then film, study, weight training, none of that stopped, okay . . . it was just one more thing that was on my plate that I had to deal with. It was necessary.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

The qualitative data reveals that some of the football student-athletes who were motivated to find a job were able to carve out a small amount of time to obtain employment. However, due to time constraints, the results show that the work experience the football student-athlete is acquiring does not necessarily further the career development process.

*Time Conundrum Impacts Work Experience.* Of the 50% (6/12) of football student-athletes who did not work resulting in a lack of relevant work experience on their resume, the student-athlete time commitment conundrum is cited.

No time. I went to school year round and so it was football, school, and then in the summertime it was football, school and so I was always busy. I don’t see how normal people do, you know . . . I see, you know, other students just go to class and then have a job for something to do because they don’t realize that playing football is a job because
you’re there twenty hours a week and then that’s what the NCAA lets you do and then you want to go in there [the football complex] and watch a film by yourself and so it’s . . . a lot of time in there doing stuff.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

I went to summer school every summer. And, um, just conflict of interest [referring to a job while balancing academics and athletics]. You know . . . I guess if it was a night job maybe, because we still had class every day during the day. And we still had written workout times at like at 3:00 p.m., maybe or 4:00 p.m. [laughs]. Oh man . . . and that was like every day during the summer so [trails off].

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

The qualitative themes display that the football student-athlete is not engaging in exploratory work experience furthering the career development process. While many of the participants were able to obtain employment for a short period of time, the work experiences did not assist with growing the football student-athletes self-concept nor did it assist the student-athlete in developing an understanding of future vocational opportunities. Overall, the football student-athlete is lacking in experiential opportunities. It is apparent that personal motivation as well as academic and athletic time commitments make it a challenge for the football student-athlete to carve out time to participate in experiential career development activities.

**Resume Preparation is Occurring Prior to Graduation.** The results showed that 75% (9/12) of the graduated student-athletes had created a resume prior to graduation. Of the twelve student-athletes, 4 (33%; 4/12) stated taking a career class at their institution which reviewed
resume creation, 3 (25%; 3/12) reported utilizing the services of a career development/recruiting firm their athletic department had hired to assist student-athletes during a seminar, 2 (17%; 2/12) mentioned utilizing their institutions’ career services office and 1 (8%; 1/12) stated he developed his resume on his own.

One of the best classes I could take . . . it was [a] Career Development course . . . it’s a class that actually prepares like your resume . . . It was an elective that we had [during my last semester when I had already graduated and was completing my final year of eligibility] . . . and that’s where I actually learned to do my resume and interview skills.

   Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

We’d get help to put the resumes together, [a career consulting firm/recruiting firm hired by the athletic department], they’d review our resumes and stuff like that.

   Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

Got some help with my resume [at the University Career Services].

   Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

This study shows that graduated football student-athletes appear to have a resume prepared prior to graduation. The participants in this study utilized various resources to obtain the knowledge to assemble a resume.

**Interview Preparation Occurring Prior to Graduation.** Of the 12 participants, 8 (67%; 8/12) mentioned that they had engaged in interview preparation. The most popular choices for
interview preparation among the student-athletes included the career center (25%; 3/12), a career class at their institution (25%; 3/12) and the utilization of services through a career development/corporate recruiting firm hired by the student-athletes athletic department (25%; 3/12). Other ways the student-athlete prepared for a job interview prior to graduation included on-line resources (17%; 2/12), practicing alone (17%; 2/12), and family (8%; 1/12).

It was my last semester and I had an open space . . . I was in the Career Center and they said they had a class that prepared you for job searching . . . we actually videotaped interviews . . . we talked about if it was a phone interview, what information you gave over the phone and what you didn’t . . . And I thought that class was very valuable . . . I mean seven years later I still remember it . . . it enlightened you.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

Just kind of practicing questions and anticipating what they might ask me myself. I don’t think I did any mock interviews . . . [I acquired] information from the Career Center and stuff on-line and advice from my mom as well.

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

The only interviewing process thing that we did have was with the football team, you know. And it was about saying the right thing to the media, you know, to keep ourselves on the team. It wasn’t necessarily about finding a job.

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser
The results of this study found that football student-athletes are interview prepared prior to graduation. The participants utilized a variety of resources to obtain the knowledge to interview with many feeling that their involvement with the media as a student-athlete assisted them with being comfortable in the interviewee role.

**Lacking Effective Networking Prior to Graduation.** The qualitative data revealed that 4 of the 12 (33%) graduated football student-athletes engaged in networking prior to graduation. When compared to the initial quantitative data, which reported 53% (10/19) of the participants having networked, a variance was noted. The variance for this factor is largely attributed to the timing of the student-athletes’ networking. This research study was focused on the career development activities the student-athlete was engaging prior to graduation. Mixed methods provided an opportunity for discovery. Through initiation the theme that student-athletes are not networking until post-graduation was observed.

The data revealed that 67% (8/12) of the football student-athletes did not network prior to graduation. Typically, the graduated student-athlete has regret for not effectively utilizing networking opportunities that were available to the student-athlete and/or not having leveraged one’s status as a student-athlete for career networking opportunities prior to graduation.

I always kind of regret not networking to the level that I probably should have at the [football and athletic] banquet events . . . There were definitely guys that could have helped me get jobs and I knew them but maybe didn’t really push hard enough to really develop a deep enough relationship where they’d want to advocate for me.

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer
What I didn’t do was network. I didn’t use my resources as a student-athlete. You know everyone looks up to you. ‘I’m a player at the University of X’ or that ‘I started at the University of X’. That’s huge. I know you have to follow NCAA rules. You can’t go out to eat with somebody or let them pay for lunch, but just a simple handshake or say ‘hello.’

Brian, Bachelor of Consumer Science, University Athletic Academic Counselor

The football student-athlete is lacking in networking participation prior to graduation. Many expressed regret over not having utilized their status as a football player to meet key people that could have assisted them with career post-graduation. While there were opportunities for the football student-athlete to network for purposes of career development, the student-athlete did not take advantage of those situations. The football student-athlete was either unaware of how to effectively utilize the events for career advancement or due to their lack of personal interests and understanding of vocational opportunities were simply unable to network.

**Limited Networking Contacts.** Football student-athlete graduates who described having networked prior to graduation stated they did so with hometown contacts (25%; 3/12), family members (8%; 1/12), career fair contacts (8%; 1/12) and a career consulting firm/recruiting firm (8%; 1/12). These contacts were either members of the student-athlete’s inner circle or were brought in by the athletic department for intentional career development interactions.

Then I decided I would look into banking and I had an interview in [another state near X University] for like a Management Associate in their training program . . . a lot of my decision was trying to get back to my [hometown] to be close to my family . . . [The
mother] of a mutual friend from high school who was in [bank management training] kind of got [an interview] set up for me. I got the job at Z Bank [located in hometown] in the management training program [through my friend’s mother].

Brian, Bachelor of Consumer Science, University Athletic Academic Counselor

Everything was up in the air and I went through, and I think it was a week before I was to graduate we had a [student-athlete] job fair at the athletic department and that’s when I got interviewed for X Company [restaurant retail] . . . And that’s when I did X Company . . . I was in the management program [for] . . . about seven months.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

This study notes that the football student-athlete utilized a limited inner circle of contacts for networking purposes. During the student-athlete’s academic career it appears he does not utilize his football status nor the events he attends to establish relationships for his future job search. The lack of networking is either a result of not knowing how to effectively network or not having an understanding of one’s self-concept and/or career to leverage the meeting opportunity for future professional use.

**Lacking a Career Search Plan.** This study found that 92% (11/12) of the research participants did not have a career search plan upon graduation.
As an undergrad, I wasn’t 100% clear on the career path I wanted to follow. There is minimal correlation to what I studied in college to my current role, aside from effective communication skills.

Langley, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Marketing & Recruitment Officer

I just wasn’t really sure about, you know, the whole job search thing. You know I never really had to work, so . . . I was just lost about that . . . Uh, lost because I didn’t know which, you know, which way to go.

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

After review of the qualitative data, only one participant (8%; 1/12), Tom had established a career search plan prior to graduation. It is important to point out that Tom had become career prepared through his involvement in researching a career, involving himself in experiential opportunities related to his degree area of study, and networking with contacts outside his inner circle during college to obtain an internship which led to major related work experience. The work experience exposed Tom to his career area of interest allowing him to deductively reason prior to graduation that his specific major of study and intended career area of interest was not the fit he thought it would be allowing him to evaluate other career options. Tom did not have a strong athlete identity and relied predominantly on childhood involvement in extracurricular activities that provided him an understanding of his skill sets and interests. He pointed out how his family and teachers fostered his math and communication skills and, ultimately, cultivated his student identity. Based upon Tom’s academic interests he focused on pursuing a specialized major that led him to his institution primarily to obtain a degree, although a Division I football
program was also a consideration. It should be noted that Tom did not speak to the coaches at his institution until he arrived as a freshman and that Tom tried out his first three seasons at X University before earning a spot on the team. Unlike other participants in this study, Tom was not recruited and was not heavily immersed in the student-athlete lifestyle his first two years at his institution. Tom’s strong student identity, moderate to low athlete identity and lesser time commitments as a student-athlete earlier in his academic career are an interesting contrast to the other participants in this research study. Tom’s knowledge of his academic interests, his understanding of how those interests related to a career and his focused involvement in an internship and work experience that related to his major assisted Tom in having a mature career plan upon graduation. Through experiential opportunities, Tom realized his major was not his ultimate career area of interest prior to graduation leaving Tom ample time to research a Plan B, which involved applying to law school to become a lawyer.

For the football student-athlete, the lack of personal knowledge regarding personal interests and skill sets outside of sport as well as a lack of major and vocational research is negatively impacting the career development process. Either a lack of access to or limited utilization of career development resources tends to limit the football student-athletes depth of participation in researching a major and/or career. Athletic and academic time commitments limit the football student-athletes engagement in experiential opportunities.

**Research Question 1: Assertions**

While the football student-athletes in this study were equipped with a resume and had prepared for the interview process, they did not engage in career development activities with a depth of involvement. Across a diverse set of demographic variables, this research study reveals that the majority of student-athletes do not engage in career development activities to the extent
that they have established a personal understanding of their individual interests and skill sets, nor have an understanding of how their interests and skill sets relate to a major and/or career, resulting in a lack of direction for their job search post-graduation.

Super’s Life-Span Life-Space approach holds that the self-concept, what we believe about ourselves and our personal attributes, influences our career choices over our life span (Super, 1980). This study shows that the football student-athlete has a limited knowledge of his self-concept or is lacking in an understanding of his personal interests, needs, values and skill sets. Football student-athletes are relying upon personal interests discovered in childhood or adolescence on which to base their major and/or career decisions. While three (25%; 3/12) of the participants explicitly mentioned visiting their institutions’ career services office, only two of the three were involved in a formal evaluation of their interests and skill sets. Career construction theory does not embrace formal assessments, but like Super’s Theory it maintains that individuals must having a growing awareness, information- seek, and actively manage new life roles (Savickas, 1985).

Football student-athletes are utilizing limited sources to research a career and/or major. Although none (0%; 0/12) of the student-athletes reported their Life Skills programming having a career development component, the student-athletes’ predominant source of major and career information was the athletic academic counselor. The athletic academic counselor appears to have a strong influence on the student-athlete’s major selection and career development process. Other resources utilized for major and/or career information were not statistically significant and were mostly contacts within the student-athletes close circle of associates.

Although the small population in this research study does not allow for the generalization of results across the student-athlete population, the data revealed that football student-athletes
have fewer major changes during their academic career than the general student population. Career theories embrace the trying out of majors to further an individual’s self-concept as this process facilitates the construction of career. NCAA academic requirements regarding Academic Progress Rates (APR’s) and Graduation Success Rate’s (GSR’s) are perhaps negatively impacting the student-athlete’s ability to explore major possibilities and personally develop through the “trying out” of different majors. While graduation pace also appears to be abbreviated for the student-athlete, this research study does not provide strong enough evidence to deductively state that NCAA APR’s and GSR’s are creating an environment where student-athletes are limited to the number of majors they can declare and are being pushed through to graduate at a hastened pace. Further research should be conducted in this area to determine if NCAA APR’s and GSR’s are creating an academic environment whereby student-athletes are urged to expedite their major selection process, thus hastening the pace to graduation, negatively impacting the student-athlete’s ability to research a career.

While clustering was noted in this study, the qualitative data produced does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the student-athlete’s academic standing to deduce a positive assertion of clustering and its impact on the student-athlete career development process. To fairly evaluate the topic of clustering and its impact on the student-athlete career development process, it would be necessary to have a complete understanding of the student-athlete’s academic interests as well as his standing upon acceptance into his institution, his academic standing leading up to the declaration of his major, as well as his motivational level towards earning a degree. In addition, the academic admission credentials for the institution’s individual schools/colleges would also need to be evaluated at the time the student-athlete applied to determine what majors the student-athlete had as realistic options for his degree pursuits. Finally,
class schedule by major would also need to be reviewed to determine if major course requirements fit within the student-athlete’s athletic scholarship time commitments. Although the student-athletes in this study state that they were clustered, this study’s data is limited in regards to the topic of clustering as it only provides the student-athlete’s opinion on the topic, not actual grade documentation nor school/college GPA requirements. Without speaking to the athletic academic advisor who advised the student-athlete regarding their major, it is difficult to determine if the student-athlete was clustered for the sole purpose of maintaining eligibility or if the student-athlete was directed toward a major that provided him the greatest opportunity to earn a college degree based upon his academic abilities. The data from this study does reveal that the football student-athlete relies almost entirely on the guidance and direction of the athletic academic counselor for his major selection, resulting in a lack of personal exploration and career understanding.

Student-athlete engagement in career development activities is hindered by the student-athlete time conundrum. The time conundrum is the difficult decision making process student-athletes incur as they determine how to divide their time among the competing wants and needs of their academic commitments, athletic commitments and personal interests outside of academics and athletics. Previously, researchers have noted that athletes who strongly identify with their athletic role tend to be less likely to explore career, educational and lifestyle options outside of their sport (Brown, Glastetter-Fender and Shelton, 2000; Murphy, Petitipas & Brewer, 1996). While the qualitative data in this study also displays the football student-athlete’s strong identification with the athlete role and the negative impact this identification has on the career development process, it is also noted that the student-athletes daily life is dictated first and foremost by athletic time commitments, which is scheduled predominantly by coaches and
academic athletic counselors. Harold explains, “We do have a priority to the university to play athletics because that’s what they’re giving us our scholarship for.”

A football student-athlete’s lack of involvement in experiential opportunities such as internship and externship opportunities as well as meaningful work experiences prevent the football student-athlete from understanding and/or developing skill sets that translate to a career. Super’s Life-Span Life-Space Theory believes that “as experiences become broader in relation to awareness of world of work, the more sophisticated vocational self-concept is formed” (Zunker, p. 30, 1994). Further promoting the importance of experiential opportunities in the career development process, career construction theory maintains that individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their interaction with vocational behaviors and occupational experiences (Brown & Lent, 2005). The student-athletes in this study appeared to understand, only after graduation, the importance of externships, internships and/or exploratory work experience in relation to preparing them for a career post-graduation. The primary reason cited for a lack of participation in experiential opportunities is the student-athlete time conundrum. While the majority of the student-athletes did engage in summer work experiences, the employment opportunities were mostly low-skilled positions that lasted for a limited time during a break in academic and/or athletic commitments. Although the student-athlete noted a time conundrum regarding internship and long-term employment options, the football student-athlete was able to engage in short-term employment, revealing that externship involvement could be a realistic option during the student-athlete’s summer semesters.

Student-athletes do not appear to be networking prior to graduation or developing impactful relationships that can aid them in their understanding of vocational opportunities and career search. For the constructivist, networking is an individual’s active attempt at making
meaning out of career. Through communications with individuals who had similar experiences or interacting with a working professional, a student-athlete can impose personal meaning on past memories, present experiences and future aspirations. Networking can assist with what Super calls crystallizing, the ability to specify current and future life-role goals. It can be deducted that because the student-athlete is not engaging in career development activities and connecting with individuals outside their close circle, they do not understand the importance of networking or how to effectively network. A primary networking constraint for the student-athlete is a lack of knowledge in regards to personal interests and/or a career field of interest. Without a basic knowledge of career, the student-athlete cannot effectively connect with the appropriate individuals to obtain specific vocational information or job search assistance. Super finds that career maturity consists of planning, exploration, information gathering decision making and reality orientation (Super, 1983). As a result of the football student-athlete’s lack of engagement in career development activities, the football student-athlete does not crystallize or have mature career plans upon graduation. As a result, the student-athlete is not prepared for a purposeful job search post-graduation.

**Research Question #2: Examination of Themes**

RQ 2: What are the graduated football student-athletes thoughts and perceptions of their career preparedness upon graduation and its impact upon the graduated student-athletes transition into a life after sports?

A summary of findings for RQ2 is summarized in Table 8. The following is a discussion of the qualitative categories and themes providing a response to RQ2 as well as an explanation of these results.
Table 8

Research Question #2 Results & Assertions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Frequency %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Feel Career Prepared</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Post-Graduation Career Confusion</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Entitlement Versus Unrealistic Career Expectations</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Dissatisfaction with First Job Post-Graduation</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assertions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assertions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Feel Career Prepared Upon Graduation Due to Lack of Career Development Resulting in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Graduation Career Confusion &amp; Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic Career Expectations &amp; a Sense of Entitlement Due to Lack of Self-Concept &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A High Level of Initial Job Dissatisfaction &amp; Job Changes Post-Graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a Career Ladder Post-Graduation May Impact Earnings &amp; Future Potential Earnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football Student-Athlete Career Development Process Appears to Predominantly Occur Post-Graduation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do Not Feel Career Prepared

The data reported that 83% (10/12) of the Division I graduated football student-athletes in this study did not feel prepared to enter the workforce and transition into a life after sports.

Well, first of all, I didn’t know that I wasn’t ready [laughs]. And then when I started sending out resumes on top of resumes and I didn’t have any experience what so ever at anything . . . It’s hard to say what you want to do for the rest of your life without doing anything.

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

Well, the biggest thing I just feel like . . . a lot of student-athletes are unprepared for a life after football. Life after graduation. Because I think, for the most part, we start to understand, ‘Alright, football is not going to last forever’. Okay, we know that. But we don’t necessarily understand how to like transition from playing football to being a working professional.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

To evaluate the results of this study in comparison to the general student population, a research study conducted by Rutgers University’s John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development was reviewed. The Rutger’s study utilized a national database of college graduates from the class of 2006 – 2011 to obtain 444 participants. The post-graduation time span for this study and the Rutgers study overlapped. The purpose of the Rutgers University study was to explore the experiences of recent college graduates who had entered the workforce during a
difficult labor market caused by the Great Recession. In that study, the general student population described as a national representation of college graduates reported that “just over half [of the students] were either extremely [prepared] (16%) or pretty well prepared (37%) to get a job” with 24% saying “they were not at all prepared” or “not very well prepared (24%) to look for a full-time job upon leaving college” (Stone, Van Horn, Zukin, p. 15, 2012).

The results of this study display that the graduated football student-athlete does not feel prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation. The participants expressed their focus on the sport of football as a result of their unpreparedness. Comparing the results of this study which focuses exclusively on the football student-athlete population to a study which was a national representation of the general student population, it appears the football student-athlete feels more career unprepared upon graduation than the general student.

**Post-Graduation Career Confusion**

Of the 10 participants who were career unprepared, 6 (60%; 6/10) experienced career confusion as they job searched for their initial job post-graduation. Career confusion is the inability of the student-athlete to initiate or sustain the career decision making process perhaps due to a lack of understanding about the career decision making process itself (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon & Saunders, 1999). As a result, the student-athlete is unable to make a commitment to a specific career choice. Career confusion is accompanied by a generalized anxiety about the outcome of the decision making process which appears to perpetuate the indecision (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon & Saunders, 1999).
I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do with [my degree]. Really didn’t know like back when I graduated. Wish I had a better idea . . . There are all these possibilities out in front of you, it’s kind of like ‘What do I do now?’ You know?

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

[I felt] really anxious because I was the first one to graduate college [in my family] and so it was like, ‘Okay, now what do I do?’ It’s like everybody is looking at me, ‘Okay, you graduated from college, now what are you going to do?’

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

There was a lot of confusion [upon my job search following a NFL career that concluded only several months after graduation]. There was a lot of confusion. I was calling everybody, ‘What do you think I should do? Where do you think I should go from here?’ . . . I think that sounds bad but I was used to being on a set schedule and somebody was telling me where to be. And then I had everything was going five different ways.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

A sub-theme of not feeling career prepared upon graduation is career confusion. The results of this study showed that the football student-athletes career unpreparedness created feelings of confusion. The high levels of anxiety interfered with the football student-athletes career decision-making abilities.
Sense of Entitlement as a Result of Unrealistic Career Expectations (or Vice Versa)

Six out of the ten participants (60%; 6/10) reported a sense of entitlement and/or unrealistic career expectations displaying a lack of career preparedness.

All along I had people telling me, ‘Oh, you’re going to this great school, you’re playing football and you’re in a leadership position on the team, people are going to be lining up to hire you and I just didn’t find that to be the case . . . I kind of thought I deserved this high paying job because I had this good degree and had a good resume for a college student and it was kind of a slap in the face. But, looking back on it, like it’s kind of what I needed because I had a little bit of a sense of entitlement, I think.

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

I was ‘I’m so sharp, I’m such a good salesperson, I’m bringing this amount of money, I should be making fifty, sixty thousand , I’m not appreicated enough’ and so I was like ‘I’m going to look for anther opportunity’. And so I will say that I didn’t have, and I don’t know that it’s something that should have been, well, like given to you in college or like have more realistic expectations of what we should see out there in the job market, you know? I don’t know whose fault that should have been. Partially my own arrogance. But it was a lot of ignorance in the job market.

DJ, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Landscaping Contractor/Business Owner
I think [I was not prepared for a career] because it was a little bit of the fact that, you know, we didn’t get a lot of you know, you start at the entry level and work your way up even with a college degree. We didn’t get that.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

I think that they think since they’re a football player and once they end football they can just get any job they want.

Larry, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Mortgage Loan Originator

Once he graduated, he did a little time in the NFL, but he got hurt. People can only help you so much. His name speaks for itself and because of his name he should have been able to get a job just about anywhere but I think he wanted something to be given to him instead of going to get it. And the reason why I say that, to me, I was talking to him and he said, ‘How many people that graduated with us or played with us are making six figures now that are not playing ball?’ I’m like ‘Dude, we just graduated. You don’t come out of college and start making that kind of money. Not right out of the bat. You got to work up to that. Dude, you’re not making sense’.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

The results of study show that the graduated football student-athlete does not have a realistic perspective of his value in the job market nor does he have realistic expectations in
regards to career ladder and salary. A lack of knowledge regarding skill sets required for specific vocational opportunities and a lack of expected earnings were evident upon graduation and entering the job market.

**Dissatisfaction with First Job Post-Graduation**

Of the 10 participants that were career unprepared, 9 (90%; 9/10) reported that they were dissatisfied with their first job post-graduation.

I felt like I was [prepared to enter the job market], but obviously, I wasn’t. I did tons of interviews. . . And so I went unemployed for probably a year and a half before I found a job. And when I did find a job, it was in my major. I was a leasing manager. So, I did that for about a year and a half. It did not take me long to realize that’s not what I wanted to do. Financially, it didn’t pay the bills like I wanted it to and it just wasn’t fulfilling enough for me. That’s how I found me an alternative plan of action.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

So, once I graduated I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I was kind of just . . . everything was up in the air and I went through, and I think it was a week before I was to graduate we had a [student-athlete] job fair at the athletic department and that’s when I got interviewed for X Company [restaurant retail] and that pretty much was a life lesson. Never look at the dollar sign . . . It didn’t turn out very good.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

I was like, ‘What am I going to do with a history degree? Am I going to go back to school and become a teacher or go into law school?’ and [I thought] I’ll just figure it out .
I ended up selling cars for the first year out of school because I just didn’t know what I wanted to do with my degree . . . so it was like extremely frustrating, hated going to work.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

I got picked up by [names the NFL team]. Ended up getting cut after the first month and I think that’s when reality kind of set in. And, ‘Wow, I might not be doing this for the rest of my life’. And then I got picked up by [name of another NFL team] and then everything was great, I was training, I was making money . . . and then I tore all the ligaments in my ankle . . . I just kind of took a job . . . I just took the first thing that was offered. I was miserable every day.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

According to the results of this study, the football student-athletes feelings of career unpreparedness post-graduation are a result of unrealistic career expectations culminating in an initially high rate of job dissatisfaction. Comparing the rate of initial job dissatisfaction among graduated football student-athletes (90%) to a national representation of the general student population (23%) during nearly the same graduation time span, it is evident there is a disparity between the two populations (Stone, Van Horn, Zukin, 2012).

Lack of Career Direction Post-Graduation

Upon reviewing the data on the topic of career preparedness (Table 9), the research notes that the majority of the student-athletes held 3, 4, or 5 jobs post-graduation, often within a 4 or 5 year post-graduation time span as noted by the qualitative data below:
Table 9

Career Preparedness Themes by Category Per Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAREER PREPAREDNESS UPON GRADUATION</th>
<th>FIRST JOB POST-GRADUATION</th>
<th>CURRENT JOB</th>
<th>CAREER SATISFIED</th>
<th>NUMBER OF JOB/YEARS POST-GRADUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Landscaping Contractor (manual labor and sales)</td>
<td>Landscaping Contractor (business owner)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td>Intern (Sports Industry)</td>
<td>University Athletic Academic Counselor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Academic Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Recruitment Officer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wade</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Management Trainee (Food Retail)</td>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJ</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Intern (Sports Industry)</td>
<td>Commercial Real Estate Appraiser</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Professional Athlete (NFL)</td>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Professional Athlete (NFL)</td>
<td>Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management Trainee</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Leasing Manger</td>
<td>Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Professional Athlete (NFL)</td>
<td>Mortgage Loan Originator</td>
<td>Just Started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Car Salesman</td>
<td>Case Manager for Non-Profit</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Bank Management Trainee</td>
<td>University Development Officer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So, once I graduated I didn’t know what I wanted to do . . . Everything was up in the air . . . And that’s when I did W Company [restaurant retail]. It didn’t turn out very good. I was in the management program about seven months. From W Company, I went to X Company [exterminating company]. I think I was there five or six months . . . That was really something, that was something to keep the cash flow because I had bills, it wasn’t something that I wanted to make a career out of. When I left there I went to Y Company [cell phone company]. I would say May of last year ‘til . . . the fall. I found out very quickly that a hundred percent commission is not [my thing] . . . I didn’t want to go into what my degree was in, you know . . . that just wasn’t something I really saw as something I wanted to do . . . I really wanted to do law enforcement . . . But then I had some things that kind of changed my mind. [Currently], I am with Z Company [industrial technology company]. At this time, right now, I’m a driver. And so what I do is, I drive to these companies and deliver stuff and pick up things from different companies or whatever, pick up stuff from the warehouse.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

I was going to get ready to get back to doing what I know [professional football] and he said, ‘You don’t want to play anymore, you can do this . . .’ So, I got engulfed with being a mortgage/loan originator and I went and I took the test and I passed the first one and I actually failed the second one. I had to wait for a six month period and you talk about really bummmed out. I really was really distraught about that one. And I’d also scheduled to take the GACE to become a teacher because I was also thinking about going into coaching . . . I decided with my father in management in the automotive industry . . . ‘I
do know how to do this’ . . . They said, ‘Harold, we’re going to train you to be the
general manager’ . . . I took the opportunity, jumped in head first. You know, being that I
still had three months up on my time to be a mortgage/loan originator, I said, ‘Okay, I’ll
do this for a little while and then I’ll transition out of it’. Still went in and took the test
three months later, I studied for it, went in and passed it and decided that I wanted to stay
in the business that I was in because I was hitting it out of the park [sold 175 cars in a
calendar year] . . . That’s just how I ended up doing what I do now.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail
Management

One of my advisors in the University of X Business Department kind of started talking to
me about banking and how it was a career that can open a lot of doors . . . I was making
twenty-seven thousand dollars starting out at Z Bank as a Manager Associate . . . Once I
took the job my outlook, ‘Alright, just do something for two years to get the experience
that you need so that you can get your MBA and then hopefully by that point you’ll kind
of have a better feel for what you want to do’.

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

[After graduation], I trained for three or four months, for Pro Day. All focused on
football. No work. I did take the GRE within that time . . . I just took it because
somebody told me I should . . . I got picked up by [names the NFL team]. Ended up
getting cut after the first month and I think that’s when reality kind of set in. And, ‘Wow,
I might not be doing this for the rest of my life.’ And then I got picked up by [name of
another NFL team] and then everything was great, I was training, I was making money . .
. and then I tore all the ligaments in my ankle . . . I was calling everybody, ‘What do you think I should do? Where do you think I should go from here?’ I think I even contacted [a recruiter] at one point asking for a job . . . I just kind of took a job . . . I was miserable . . . My mom was like, ‘What do you want to do to be happy? . . . You’re just going to have to sit down and just take a step back and stop thinking about what everybody else possibly wants you to do and do what you want to do.’ And I just sat down and I was searching for it, searching for it . . . I came back to the point where I’ve always wanted to go into law enforcement, that’s just something I’ve always wanted to do.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

In contrast to this study’s data that is focused on the football student-athlete population, the Rutgers University study was focused on a national representation of the general student population. The Rutgers study reported that “many graduates stayed at their first job for awhile” with “thirty-four percent report[ing] that they still work for their first employer and over a quarter work[ing] there for two years or more” (Stone, Van Horn & Sukin, p. 5, 2012). Overall, it appears the high level of career unpreparedness upon graduation for the student-athlete population leads to unrealistic career expectations as well as career confusion. Unable to make effective career decisions, the disillusioned football student-athlete quickly becomes dissatisfied with his employment choice(s) making career decisions that do not establish a career ladder.

Research Question #2: Assertions

Football student-athletes feel unprepared for a career upon graduation as they transition to a life after sports. Post-graduation, the football student-athlete is experiencing career confusion and anxiety due to a lack of personal knowledge regarding self-concept and career. As
a result, the graduated student-athlete is unable to initiate or sustain the career decision making process due to unmanageable emotions interfering with the decision process and an overall lack of understanding about how to qualify career decisions (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Lenz, 1999).

According to Super, the life roles that individuals play out and their role salience, the prominence of a particular life role at any given time, make up an individual’s career and influences their career choices. Due to the dominance of the athlete role and insufficient role exploration beyond that of athlete, the graduated football student-athlete lacks an understanding of his self-concept or individual interests, needs, values and skill sets outside of sport. As a result, the football student-athlete has limited involvement in career exploration. Consequently, upon entering the job market, post-graduate football student-athlete encounters unrealistic career expectations and must come to terms with his own sense of entitlement. Due to a lack of research and use of limited career development resources, the graduated football student-athlete does not have realistic expectations in regards to a career ladder or salary. It can be deducted that unrealistic career expectations lead to a high rate of initial job dissatisfaction following graduation as well as what appears to be a high rate of job changes as the student-athletes struggles to establish a career path upon entering the workforce. Comparing the results of this study with that of a national representation of the general student population, the football student-athlete appears to have a higher rate of initial job dissatisfaction as well as an increased number of job changes. This information corroborates the football student-athletes’ higher rate of reported career unpreparedness upon graduation, which was also statistically higher than the study focused on the general student population. An assumption of Super’s Life-Span Life-Space approach is that work satisfaction is dependent upon an individual finding adequate outlets for
their self-concept. Super also theorizes that career decisions reflect our attempts at translating our self-understanding into career (Super, 1980). The football student-athletes in this study have a difficult time making and sustaining career decisions post-graduation due to their lack of understanding of their own self-concepts as well as a lack of understanding as to how to translate their interests and talents into career.

Although the post-graduate student-athlete initially struggles to make effective career decisions due to a delayed career development process that appears to occur predominantly post-graduation, it is important to note that at 5 – 7 years post-graduation, the football student-athlete appears to find a career path and reports 100% (12/12) career satisfaction. Without athletic time commitments, the graduated football student-athlete is able to explore other life roles. As the graduated football student-athlete reflects and makes meaning out of his life and career experiences, he is able to construct what career looks like for him at that point in time. This study did not accumulate post-graduate income levels per job. While none of the participants made remarks regarding income levels, the reported career unpreparedness and career confusion resulting in multiple job changes and an indirect career path could negatively impact a student-athlete’s initial income as well as income potential over time. Research focused on post-graduation earnings levels of the student-athlete population versus the general student population could provide evidence of these phenomena while also providing educational as well as motivational data to present to the student-athlete regarding the importance of involvement in pre-graduation career development activities.
Research Question #3: Examination of Themes

RQ 3: What are the graduated and career seeking or employed football student-athletes perceptions of what should be provided by University/athletic programs for student-athlete career development?

A summary of findings for RQ3 is summarized in Table 10. The following is a discussion of the qualitative categories and themes providing a response to RQ3 as well as an explanation of these results.

A Need for Student-Athlete Career Development Programming

Overall, 92% (11/12) of the graduated football student-athletes in this study felt there was a need for student-athlete career development programming.

I’ve been talking to my old athletic academic advisor about setting up a program for student-athletes to make sure that they are actually working on job related stuff and things that they are going to be wanting to do when they get out of school. I get a lot of phone calls from guys I used to play football with who are like ‘Okay I need help finding a job. I don’t want to work at a factory. I’ve got a degree, why would I want to work in a factory?’ They don’t want to do line work. So I am trying to figure out ‘How am I going to help these guys find jobs?’

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit
## Research Question #3 Results & Assertions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Frequency %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Need for Student-Athlete Career Development Programming</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory Career Development Programming</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Career Development Programming:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Career Development Intervention</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete Identity Naturally Decreases Over Academic Career</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Programming Content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate and Establish a Value for the College Degree</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the Importance of Personal Skill Sets &amp; Vocation</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Realistic Career/Salary Expectations</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni/NFL Player Speaker Program Focused on Career</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Need for Experiential Opportunities</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking: Understanding How and When to Effectively Network</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Opportunities &amp; Events to Network</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding How to Leverage Division I Football Status</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Athlete Alumni Career Networking &amp; Mentoring Program</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the Needs of the First Generation College Student</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Post-Graduate Career Development Assistance</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional &amp; Psychological Transition Issues:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Athlete to Civilian Life Transition</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional &amp; Psychological Issues Related to Athletic Retirement</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Assertions

Student-Athlete Career Development Programming Should be Mandatory:

- To Ensure Head Coaches & Athletic Administrators Include It in the Student-Athlete's Schedule
- To Ensure the Student-Athlete Participates

Student-Athlete Career Development Programming Should be Comprehensive:

- Beginning When the Student-Athlete is a Freshman & Continuing to Graduation
- Include a Post-Graduation Assistance Program

Important Programming Topics:

- Understanding of Skill Sets & How They Relate to Vocational Opportunities
- Experiential Opportunities - Externship, Internship, Work Experience
- Learning How to Network with Emphasis on:
  - How to Leverage Division I-A Status
  - Structured Career Network & Alumni Mentor Program

Post-Graduation Transitional Assistance Program Should Include:

- Career Development Assistance
- Psychological Assistance/Counseling
I think that there could certainly be more career programs in place with Life Skills because you know obviously everybody wants to be a professional athlete . . . I think it would be in the University’s best interest to get a program because we have meetings during the summer all the time where we have a day to go over compliance issues, a day to go over media, a day to go over maybe rule changes. I think they could bring that [career development programming] in, maybe a day where they talk about agents or whatever. So, they could certainly incorporate [career development programming] into one of those days. I don’t really feel that it [Life Skills] was utilized to its potential [when considering career preparation].

Langley, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Marketing & Recruitment Officer

I believe [the athletic department should have provided career services or career development programming]. I feel like it’s important . . . I mean, there needs to be something that is a lot more hands on because I mean, it’s one thing for a coach to speak on your behalf or a professor to speak on your behalf, but you need something that is more concrete . . . Now, whether that’s a class that’s specifically tailored to certain skills that are needed or . . . It’s going to be more hands on type class where you do job shadowing and stuff like that.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

Mandatory Student-Athlete Career Development Programming

Of the 11 student-athletes who recommended student-athlete career development programming, 4 (36%; 4/11) suggested that the student-athlete’s participation be mandatory.
Mandatory would require football student-athletes to engage in pre-scheduled career development activities and would require administrators and coaches to set aside time throughout the academic year for the student-athlete to engage in the career development activities.

Not only is it just the football mindset, but it’s like ‘When am I going to have time to do it?’ [laughs] Like, yeah, that sounds good and everything, but I don’t have time to fit [career development] into my schedule. When you’re on such a tight schedule every minute of your time that you get that is free, you are either going to spend it on something leisure or study . . . When you get free time, you don’t want to spend that free time trying to research jobs [laugh] . . . Yes [career development programming would need to] be built into the schedule.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

If they set aside the time because, with our time it was so structured. It’s like, ‘Okay, you got football from seven to twelve and you’re in class from whenever you set classes up which mine usually ran until six o’clock at night and then it’s tutors’. And I didn’t want to go and do something extra.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

We would, you know, we would have been ‘Like, aw man’ [in regards to mandatory career development programming]. You know, but [pauses] . . . You know, like a lot of things, we don’t like and they make us do and it turns out be helpful for us so . . . Because I think it would be very beneficial. I mean, the guy’s would just have to suck it
up . . . Not everyone is going to go to the NFL, so . . . I mean, you do have to realize that. Hopefully, you know, they won’t whine and complain, you know. No messing about . . . Mandatory most people will do it . . . Because like all the guys have to do it so you won’t be, you know [the only one].

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

I wished [career development programming] was set in stone, like having time, even the summer, around classes or workout time, whatever . . . This is what you have to learn, this and this, so, the athletes can be prepared.

Larry, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Mortgage Loan Originator

The qualitative results of this study show that the football student-athlete recommends mandatory career development programming. Due to the time conundrum, the participants felt that coaches and administrators would need to be committed to the programming and carve time out of the student-athletes schedules for it to take place. In addition, mandatory participation would also require the student-athlete with the strong athlete identity to participate.

Comprehensive Career Development Programming Throughout the Student-Athlete’s Academic Career

Of the 12 graduated football student-athletes, 10 (83%; 10/12) provided recommendations for career development programming that is comprehensive and involves the student-athlete’s participation over their entire academic and athletic career. Two themes
emerged from the data supporting the theme that there is a need for comprehensive student-athlete programming that engages the student-athlete from their freshman year through to graduation.

**Early Career Development Intervention.** Of the 12 graduated football student-athletes, 45% (5/12) suggested that career development programming needed to be introduced in the early stages of the student-athlete’s academic career.

And then it’s like, ‘Okay, wait, I’m graduating and I still haven’t thought about sitting down and preparing a solid concrete plan about what I want to do with my life’ and so I think that needs to be drilled in a student-athletes head as soon as they step on campus.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

They just need a [career development] program . . . Well, when we [AJ and his former teammates] heard about [the career development consulting/recruiting company that athletic department had hired to assist current-student-athletes in the career development process] the guys, we like [gets wide eyed] . . . I had talked to Kevin [AJ’s former teammate at University of X] and a couple more of the guys. It was like ‘Oh man’ you know. Like we wished we had that [career development programming]. You know, earlier . . . ’[trails off].

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

While the results showed that the participants recommended early intervention in regards to career development, it was noted that the participants felt the football student-athlete would be more motivated to engage in career development activities later in their academic career.
Athlete Identity Naturally Decreases Over Academic Career, Increasing Interest in Career Development. The data shows that half of the research participants (50%; 6/12) describe football and the possibility of a professional football career as their primary focus during their collegiate academic career. However, when the qualitative data is arranged in a narrative format, the data chronicles a gradual reduction of the athlete identity, particularly when a student-athlete incurs injury or nears graduation. The football student-athlete begins to engage himself in a mental dialogue regarding career during or near the end of his athletic eligibility displaying a natural decrease in the athletic identity and an increase in the career identity. According to the data, the student-athlete does not appear to act on the dialogue.

I mean, you had someone stand up and tell you, ‘Not everybody is going to play football, not everybody is going to play basketball’. But in the end [you think] ‘I’m going to be that lucky one’ and even though I didn’t have the passion and drive for football like everybody else did... I don’t think I had that ‘This is what I want to do forever with my life is play football’. Once I got hurt the first time, I was like, ‘Yeah, I should probably start thinking about something [but I didn’t do anything]’.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

I think I had the NFL dreams just like anybody else. I knew that, that when I got hurt the first time, not that it totally killed my dream but kind of brought me back down to reality, you know? So, it just made me kind of start thinking that if I can’t play, well, what am I going to do? Luckily, it was right at my junior year and I started taking class a lot more seriously... My first two years of school I wasn’t totally not involved in school work but I was definitely more involved my junior and senior year... I knew that football wasn’t
going to be forever . . . [I began to think] I’d better leverage University of X for what it is . . . Get my degree . . . and not just kind of go through the motions.

DJ, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Landscaping Contractor/Business Owner

So when you first get there, you know, you’re kind of young and naïve and of course, you are going to the NFL because that’s what you think and everything like that and so you’re just like, ‘Okay, I’ve got to get this football thing going so I can get to the next level’ because that’s your dream, that’s what you want. And it doesn’t always happen that way. And so by the time you get to be a little bit older, you realize, ‘Okay, now I need to focus on both aspects of it [being an athlete and a student] so I can have a Plan B.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

I know with me, you know, when you first get in there, your main focus is ball . . . that’s all you worry about. As you get older, you know you say, ‘I play ball but I might also start thinking about life after football’ because you keep hearing that, people keep telling you but it doesn’t really sink in until you have a few injuries and then you’re like, ‘Okay, I need to think about this because football probably isn’t going to be around very long’.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

The data denotes that the Division I student-athlete has a strong athlete identity, and in some cases foreclosed athlete identity, to the extent that during the student-athletes early academic career his main focus is football and a future NFL career. While early invention will provide an introduction to other life roles such as athlete and career professional, the data shows
that there is a natural decline of the athlete identity resulting in an instinctive interest to explore career. It is apparent that a comprehensive student-athlete career development program that begins when the student-athlete is a freshman and continues throughout the student-athletes academic career should be provided by athletic administrations.

Career Development Programming Content

As previously discussed in the results for research question number one, the football student-athlete is not engaging in career development activities that permit the student-athlete to establish and understand interests and skill sets, develop an understanding of how interests and skill sets relate to a career nor develop an understanding of a career to establish a post-graduation job search. Several sub-themes emerged from the data providing recommendations for the content of student-athlete career development programming:

Educate and Establish a Value for the College Degree. Of the 12 participants, 3 (25%; 3/12) made comments suggesting that football student-athletes do not value or fully understand the value of their degree in relation to a professional career.

So, I suppose that there were some guys that just kind of coasted and didn’t really care much about school. That wasn’t why they were there. They were there for sports, hoping that they would get enough exposure to get a look for the pros . . . Most I would say realized that they weren’t NFL material and they studied . . . they kept their focus and their mind on the prize. The real prize was getting a degree and moving on to do something else.

Tom, Bachelor of Science, Lawyer
At first, it was mostly for athletics, [attending University of X] was going to be a gateway for me to, you know, do a couple of years and then go to the NFL which that didn’t happen. So, got my degree.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

A lot of times you get a lot of guys that they been all their lives like, football, football, football and so it’s the only way you’re going to make money, it’s the only way you’re going to live and they’re never taught that a college degree is more valuable than they can really understand.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

I wouldn’t say all student-athletes but I would say football players . . . I would say like, um, football is their whole identity and so if they don’t have that, like who are they? . . . You go through and get your degree or go to class or whatever . . . you don’t really have a lot of professional knowledge. And so, chasing the dream of football is always going to be their number one because they don’t really have a fall back.

DJ, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Landscaping Contractor/Business Owner

The participants in this study recommend that career development programming educate or remind the student-athlete of the value of their college degree. It is apparent from the data, that the varying socio-economic backgrounds of the participants in this study which is indicative of the football student-athlete population, place varying levels of emphasis on the student and/or the athlete component of the student-athlete collegiate experience. Student-athlete career
development programming with this content can serve two purposes: 1.) to educate football student-athletes on the value of their college degree and what it can do for them post-graduation, and, 2.) serve as a reminder and motivation to make academics and a future career outside of sports a priority.

**Understanding the Importance of Personal Skill Sets & Relation to a Career.**

Researching a career involves the understanding of one’s own skill sets and how they relate to a job and ultimately a career. Forty-two percent (5/12) of the football student-athletes recommended researching a career for inclusion in a student-athlete career development program.

Something in there about employment and employment skills and things like that . . . I had one guy interview for a job here at [my current place of employment] and it was terrible. It was like . . . he related everything he had to football because that’s all he knows, he doesn’t realize all the other skills that he has, hadn’t really had the opportunity to talk about any of the other skills he possessed because that’s all he’s been doing since he was six years old is football. So, everything he had to talk about was football and nothing else. Even though he did a lot of outreach and all this . . . if it’s wasn’t football, he wasn’t talking about it.

**Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit**

Let’s see, um, knowing how to look for, you know, a job that you want to go into making sure that’s the right field for you. You know, before you even research it, you know.

**AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser**
Like I tell people all the time, when I was in school and even when I was in school and a non-athlete, like my last semester, I had time to like read personal development and I did do a lot . . . because I understand how important it is to build those skill sets. It’s only because I realize that I need them in my day to day and for my business, for my credibility and knowledge. But until you realize how important it is, then [as a student-athlete] it’s not really a big deal, you know?

DJ, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Landscaping Contractor/Business Owner

Previously established as a career development deficiency in RQ1, the results of this study show that participants recommendations include developing an understanding of skills sets and their relation to vocational opportunities in student-athlete career development programming.

**Establish Realistic Career/Salary Expectations.** Half of the research participants (50%; 6/12) touched on the theme that student-athlete career development programming should aid the student-athlete in the development of realistic career and/or salary expectations. Forty-two percent of the participants (5/12) also recommended establishing realistic career expectations for the football student-athlete who is NFL focused, recommending an alteration to the traditional former player speaker presentation that appears to occur as motivational sessions for current football student-athletes.

I think we should have, you know, um . . . you know, how to research a job, the field that you want to go into . . . So, when we finish up our junior or sophomore year, [the football players] know not everybody is going to make it to the NFL . . . Really, really stress that
everybody is not going to make it to the NFL or you’re not going to play for long and you’re going to have to get a job.

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

They [former players who played in the NFL] came back to talk about . . . to try and get us pumped up about the next game. I never really came across anybody who told me anything about life after football until you see them and, you know, ‘It didn’t work out for me so I am doing X, Y and Z for now’ . . . [Football student-athletes should hear from] former athletes who talk about the NFL and didn’t make it and then coming back and ‘This is real life’.

Larry, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Mortgage Loan Originator

I think that’s one thing I think we dropped the ball on sometimes at X University. I mean, we bring guys back but even when we bring guys back we usually only bring back the [names football legends from his university that went on into the NFL] the super, super stars and that’s still geared towards football because some of the time they have something else that they’ve transitioned into but the majority of the time their transition is something that we can clearly see [in sports broadcasting or coaching]. That’s not the case for the other ninety-five percent of the people who live [on] that campus because if you don’t make it in the NFL . . . [shrugs his shoulders].

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management
It’s usually someone with a name [who comes back and speaks to the team such as a former NFL athlete] and we are like ‘I knew this guy’. They talk, it’s inspiring. But I’m thinking athletes need more of that [listening to the transition story of a non-professional athlete] to learn life skills. To hear that person’s story . . . to network.

Brian, Bachelor of Consumer Science, University Athletic Academic Counselor

I don’t believe we have ever had a former student-athlete that didn’t make it to the NFL, come in, and tell their story. I don’t know if [University of X head coach] thinks the guys won’t listen, will be bored or I don’t know it probably would hit home to a lot of guys. ‘Yeah, you know, that guy’s right. I might end up end up in that position [not making it to the NFL and having to transition into a non-professional sports career]’. You know, the majority of the guys in that room will end up in that position.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

The results of this study show that career development programming should include content that assists the football student-athlete with developing realistic career expectations through personal discovery and vocational exploration. Participant recommendations included an alumni speaker program whereby former student-athletes that had professional athletic careers not only discuss their inspirational stories, but also share their transition into a non-athletic professional career and life after sports.

A Need for Experiential Opportunities. Half of the participants (50%; 6/12) made recommendations for the inclusion of experiential opportunities such as an externship, internship and/or work experience for a student-athlete career development program.
[Post-graduation] I did a ride along with a police officer before I got into law enforcement and that’s when I knew I wanted to go into law enforcement and so I wish I had done something like that [an externship/job shadow] when I was [a student-athlete].

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

So, when I have kids I’m going to stress the importance of internships and externships . . . just to get some kind of feel of what you want to do . . . It’s hard to say what you want to do for the rest of our life without doing anything . . . I wanted them [coaches and athletic academic staff] to stress that, in the summer, to get some type of internship, just, just something.

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

I think maybe some internship opportunities. Because a lot of times that’s wonderful experience that you can put on a resume. Because that’s the one thing that I really struggled with after graduation, there was no real experience I could really put on my resume. And that’s the first thing my employer will tell you, ‘I’m looking for someone with experience’.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

Until you actually experience something you don’t know whether or not you’re going to like it or not. Because I see someone . . . and ‘Oh, I think I want to do that’ and then when you get into it and actually start doing it, ‘Nah, this ain’t for me’ . . . I never saw myself being a teacher. Like, I’m not a teacher, I don’t fit the mold of a teacher . . . And
then, I stepped outside my comfort zone, I spoke with some teachers . . . some other coaches who do the whole teaching/coaching thing. And then I got into it and I was like, ‘You know what, this is not half bad’ . . . And so I think experience is the biggest, biggest teacher and I also think experience is the biggest thing that you need to have on a resume in order to be marketable to an employer.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

The results show that football student-athletes feel an integral component of student-athlete career development programming is experiential opportunities. Retrospectively, the participants note how valuable these experiences would have been to their career development process as well as their resume in locating a job and establishing a career post-graduation. The results of RQ1 display that the time conundrum was the primary reason for not participating in an experiential opportunity. The previous recommendation of mandatory programming would require the student-athlete to participate while also ensuring that administration and coaches provide time for the student-athlete to engage in these valuable career development experiences.

Networking: Understanding How and When to Effectively Network. Eighty-three percent (10/12) of the football student-athletes recommended an emphasis on networking.

Work your network, alright? Use your network . . . The reason I got my job was, there was an academic counselor at University of X when I got my degree and we just, you know, we just kept in touch and someone reached out to her . . . So she called me and asked me ‘What do you think?’ and I said ‘I’d love to, I’d love to!’.

Brian, Bachelor of Consumer Science, University Athletic Academic Counselor
Three sub-themes emerged from the data which display the student-athletes perceived need for career development programming that includes an emphasis on networking:

**Creating Opportunities & Events to Network.** Thirty percent (3/10) of the participants explicitly recommend providing student-athletes with opportunities and or events to network prior to graduation.

I think they could’ve maybe created more events or created more natural interaction with some of the football alums . . . I remember emailing a few guys and sending them my resume and so there was some of it . . . there weren’t that many opportunities . . . it was usually surrounded with like a golf tournament or a football game or something like that.

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

The participants in this study recalled attending many on and off campus events representing their sports team, institution or themselves as a student-athlete. The data noted that the student-athletes do not appear to recognize these events as opportunities to engage in career development networking. In the results of this study, the participants recommend the athletic administration create events specifically for the football student-athlete to network in addition to educating or reminding the student-athlete prior to routine promotional events that the events can be utilized for professional networking opportunities.

**Understanding How to Leverage Division I Football Status.** The data showed that 50% (5/10) of the student-athletes expressed the importance of understanding how and when a football student-athlete should leverage his name and/or experience as a Division I football student-athlete to further networking opportunities.
I’ve seen what really success I’ve had and kind of doing a lot of things right and a lot of people are not and I just hate it because it’s kind of like playing at the level that we played, it’s such a gift. You know what I am saying. I mean, how you can leverage it . . . like the contacts run deep from being around the program still, it’s just crazy, right? And to see like nobody really comes back around and it’s kind of like at University of X they use you for four or five years. But you get to use the program for the rest of your life but most people don’t do that, they like shy away because they’re not at a point in their lives or their professional careers that they think they should be and they shy away and they don’t take advantage of, like, the doors being open like they are, you know?

DJ, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Landscaping Contractor/Business Owner

It comes in handy, it always does. Every job interview I’ve ever had the topic [of having been a Division I football student-athlete] always comes up. At some point it, it will come off [my resume]. But it’s on there . . . and it always comes up . . . that kind of thing. That’s only when I am asked about it . . . when I am at a job interview.

Tom, Bachelor of Science, Lawyer

The results noted that half of the participants felt there was a need for the football student-athlete to learn how best to utilize his status as a Division I football player for networking purposes. This theme includes not only educating the student-athlete about how effective the status can be to set up contacts for future use, but also to communicate how their playing experience translates to desirable professional job skills such as leadership and teaming.
In addition, participants recommended that learning how and when to effectively leverage relationships with other football student-athlete alumni was a necessity.

_Student-Athlete Alumni Career Networking & Mentoring Program._ Sixty percent (6/10) of the football student-athletes expressed a need and value for networking with former teammates and alumni. One of the graduated student-athletes is currently involved in a football student-athlete mentor program.

We had a former football player’s network which we still do and I’m involved in it now . . . kind of a loose mentoring program. The Director of Football Operations kind of ran it but it was always kind of ‘Hey, this is a great idea that we have this’ but it was never really fully implemented. And even the guys that had mentors, I don’t think they met with him that often.

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

They [the football alumni] want to help everybody but at the same time, their biggest thing is like nobody ever comes around and if you don’t come around and you don’t build those relationships . . . I think everybody in there is like lawyers, orthopedic surgeons, that kind of deal . . . Like the head of the football alumni group is the President of the Chamber of Commerce . . . And I think that might be one of the biggest misconceptions is, you know, we’re all busy so like . . . If you call me, I’ll help you as much as possible.

DJ, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Landscaping Contractor/Business Owner
The results show that participants noted a need for an alumni mentoring and a career networking program. While some of the participant’s athletic programs appear to have a program in place, it is not a priority nor is it structured. Such a program would assist with the sub-theme of the football student-athlete learning how to leverage his Division I football status in professional circles with other football student-athlete alumni.

Overall, the results show that participants recommend athletic programs providing networking education in the content of student-athlete career development programming. It should be noted that networking was found to be a career development deficiency in RQ1. Several of the sub-themes that rose out of the data include educating the student-athlete on how to network and set oneself up for a post-graduation job search, providing events to hone networking skills and establishing a structured alumni career network and mentoring program.

Address the Needs of the First Generation College Student

Thirty-three percent (4/12) of the participants provided themes regarding experiences and considerations of needs for first-generation college student-athletes in the career development process. While only 2 of the student-athletes specifically stated they were first-generation college students, the initial quantitative questionnaire did not specifically ask participants if family members obtained a 2 or 4 year college degree nor did the questionnaire provide a specific definition of a first generation college student. It became apparent during the interview process, that two additional student-athletes could have been considered first-generation college students as their parents attended or completed a two -year degree at a community college during the student-athlete’s high school or collegiate career.
I’m the first-generation college student, I know more about the procedures of how everything goes than [my parents] do so I was kind of on my own in that regard. I had my counselors, I had my coaches and my teammates to try and to help out but basically on your own in that regard trying to figure that stuff out. So I do think that you have that background you have a family member, a sister or a brother, mother or father who comes through and has already been through the situation and can help you out a lot more.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

I was the first one to graduate from college and so it was like ‘Okay, now what do I do?’ It’s like everybody is looking at me, ‘Okay, you graduated from college, now what are you going to do?’ And then I ended up selling cars that first year and so it was like . . . extremely frustrating . . . It was pressure and it was like I felt like I failed just for myself because my mom was like ‘You’re the first one to graduate from college, you’ll eventually find what you want to do’ but that’s not for me and so it was like ‘Why am I selling cars out of college?’ I have a degree. I need to be doing something with this degree, not selling cars.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

For eighty or ninety percent they are the first person to graduate from college and they’re definitely one of the people to graduate . . . that is honorable in itself because so many
people don’t finish. I feel like this . . . We definitely have to bridge the gap between . . . you know [football student-athletes graduating and obtaining jobs that correlate to a college degree].

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

While the NCAA reports that 15% of Division I football student-athletes are first generation college students, data could not be located to determine the percentage of first generation college students that are playing football at the Division I level (NCAA, 2014). A study conducted by The Center for Higher Education at Pennsylvania State University states that “compared to white student-athletes, student-athletes of color are disproportionately first-generation college students and come from low-income families”. With slightly over half of a typical Division I football roster consisting of black student-athletes, the results of this study point to a need to further investigate and address the needs of the first generation football student-athlete in regards to the career development process.

Post-Graduation Career Development Assistance

Seventy-five percent (9/12) of the graduated football student-athletes either expressed a need or utilized (58%; 7/12) post-graduate career development assistance suggesting a need for career development services as student-athletes transition from graduation into the professional world.
At the beginning I [was afraid to reach out for help] but then I was like ‘No, I need as much help as I can get . . . there is a lot of them [athletes that need career assistance post-graduation].’

Larry, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Mortgage Loan Originator

[My athletic academic advisor] he actually hooked me up with a University of X alumnus [after I graduated] and you know . . . [I got an] an opportunity to go and intern for [names a University of X alumnus], who was a big University of X guy and he was going to give me the opportunity to shadow him in his law firm. Harold [Coach X] called two times. He called and called on behalf of me before an interview. All I had to do was either text him or something and he did it . . . pretty much anybody else says if I ever need anything from them after I graduate, I come over there, all I have to do is go over there and ask and they do it. [Coach X], I know he’s a busy man, but he still takes time. Even if you just leave him a message. Matter a fact . . . they said [Coach X] called and they kept replaying the message . . . they couldn’t believe it that [Coach X] called, that [Coach X] called and left a lengthy voicemail talking me up.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

The results of RQ2 display that the student-athlete is career unprepared upon graduation with the majority of the student-athlete career development process occurring post-graduation. As the data displays, participants are utilizing or seeking career development assistance post-
graduation to aid them in the transition into a career and life after sports. Therefore, the participant’s recommendation for athletic administrations is to provide career development assistance post-graduation.

**Emotional & Psychological Transition Issues.** Each of the participants (100%;12/12) provided data detailing an emotional and psychological post-graduation transition. Although each football student-athlete’s transition experience was unique in its own way, the participant’s experiences included similar themes that detail an emotional and psychological adjustment away from the rigors and structure of the student-athlete lifestyle, as well as themes indicating a significant emotional and psychological transition as a result of the loss of the athlete identity.

**Student-Athlete to Civilian Life Transition.** Participants report enduring a re-socialization process whereby they come to the realization that their previous lifestyle was either dictated or enabled by administrative support staff resulting in the former student-athlete having a reliance on others in their daily life. The athlete transitioning to a life after sports must establish or re-establish independent life skills as well as deal with the emotional and psychological loss of a daily support system and their athlete identity.

It was definitely like a big drop off because you had people saying, ‘You need to be in class, we’ll be there to check on you in class, make sure you’re in class’ and then, okay, you had tutors in study hall and so you always had somebody there making sure you do everything you needed to get done, done. But once that was done with and over... it was like, ‘Wow, now I have to actually make all these decisions by myself... do I really
want to be responsible for actually doing the things that I’m supposed to do? Or do I want to, I could actually sleep in today . . . do I want to sleep in?’ or that person texting, ‘Where are you? You’re going to be late for meetings’.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

Big time college athletics is probably one of the most detrimental things that can happen to somebody if they are not like a special person . . . Let’s say, they don’t have an identity before football because, I mean, they get into ball and you become like an overnight pseudo- celebrity, you know, more people know your regardless of talent level than the [names the state’s professional NFL team] or whatever. You know, just from the fan base. And so you get the notoriety . . . you get coddled, you get structured, you know, you don’t buy your books, you don’t sign up for class [athletic academic counselors sign you up for your classes], nobody really cares what you do unless you’re doing the wrong thing, unless you don’t go to class, unless you don’t go to study hall . . . they just don’t want you to do what you are not supposed to do, right? So, you kind of go through your whole [college] experience just going through the motions . . . until the very end and then you have no idea what you’re supposed to do until you graduate and then you lose your fame/notoriety and everything like that, you lose all of your confidence, and you’re going into the real world with no confidence and no skill sets and you have no, you can’t structure your own life . . . you can’t do the things you need to do to be a self-starter because unless you just have a special personality . . . you’re kind of not really a self-starter any more, you’re coachable but you’re not a self-starter. So, a lot of the things
about being an athlete, the tangible skills that we all encompass, like the lifestyle of an
athlete, it kind of strips a lot of these away from you because you don’t have to use those
things, you know?

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail
Management

Although the intentions of athletic administrators and support staff is facilitate the
academic and athletic success of the student-athlete, the participants in this study recognize an
involuntary structured and enabled lifestyle which does not appear to be noted by the student-
athlete until post-graduation when the support no longer exists. The student-athlete transition to a
civilian lifestyle is marked by the re-establishment of basic skill sets such as personal time
management. In addition, there are emotional and psychological repercussions that must be
overcome due to the loss of the support team.

*Emotional & Psychological Issues Related to Athletic Retirement.* As stated by
Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee (2003), the termination of the student-athlete’s football career
in this study was not a singular event, but rather a transitional process more directed over the
life-span taking years for the student-athlete to adapt. The data collected overwhelmingly details
the emotional and psychological stages the student-athlete incurs during the retirement transition
and the impact it has on the student-athlete’s post-graduation career development and career
decision making ability. During this process, the football student-athlete endures an emotional
and psychological transition that mimics the stages of grief (Kübler-Ross Model, 2005).

*Stage One: Denial.* During this initial stage, the student-athlete denies the reality of the
situation which is the loss of his athlete identity and the loss of sports participation. The
graduated student-athlete appears to be overwhelmed and wrestles with shock and denial. For the first time, or the first time in many years, the student-athlete does not have a structured daily routine and must also acclimate himself to a new lifestyle.

I always feel like I can still play though. Maybe it’s time for a change. Sometimes I feel it because a lot of people still say ‘You can still play, you’re still good’ . . . It’s been a long time.

Larry, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Mortgage Loan Originator

The first year [after you graduate and you’re football career is over] is tough. On a Saturday, when you’re used to being on the field, you’re working, that’s tough. Really, really tough . . . When the fall rolled around, I even cried the first game that University of X had after I’d graduated, I cried. I had to go back to work and I cried and thought ‘I can’t believe I’m not playing ball anymore’. I’d been playing since I was seven years old and now I was like twenty-four and I was like ‘I’m not playing any more’.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

I miss it, I miss it terribly . . . and I know any guy who I played with . . . they miss it terribly . . . you’ll never see a grown man cry more than when you tell him their football career is over . . . And Saturday afternoons when you’re playing football and you run out of that tunnel, you’ve got ninety-three, ninety five thousand screaming fans, and they
scream at you . . . You like that. And when it’s gone, it hurts. It, it, it’s tough to deal with it, it really is . . . it takes a little bit of awhile to figure out, ‘Okay who am I besides this football player?’

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

I played for a long time . . . but like sport stars, like professionals they have a problem. They were not only dedicated to the same trade for so long, but they have risen and they like that feeling, someone knowing who they were. I was a punter and nobody knew who I was anyway and I wasn’t really doing it for all that long [at the college level]. So it wasn’t like I had this big, long, impressive career at it . . . I kind of knew that the pros weren’t exactly in my future . . . I had my skills . . . and I experienced that. . . now that doesn’t mean I don’t miss it.

Tom, Bachelor of Science, Lawyer

I think getting away from football in general, for me, and a lot of my other buddies who I played ball with . . . it’s hard. Football becomes your identity. When I go home, back to where I’m from, I’m ‘Mark The Football Player’, you know? I go back and I look at it, I’d played football ever since I was nine years old . . . Then when I was twenty-two it got taken away from me. And at that point, I’m like, ‘Okay, now what?’ You know? . . . You’re not done, but football is done with you.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach
During the denial stage, the football student-athlete is not entirely ready to move away from his athlete identity nor is he ready to embrace a career identity. Early career decisions in sports retirement do not appear to be well-thought out and are made spontaneously, often just to earn money or pay the bills. For the football student-athlete who has not explored his career interests and is career unprepared, the lifestyle change and emotions of this stage are exacerbated by career confusion and a sense of belonging.

The car sales job was just like, ‘Okay, I need something to do’ . . . and I just picked up a paper and ‘Oh, they’re hiring so let me go there’ . . . it wasn’t really a long interview process. It was, ‘Yeah, you can use the fact that you played football to sell cars and so ‘Yes, we can use you’ . . . and it was like, ‘Okay, great’, you know? I’m back on a team again.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

I was calling everybody . . . ‘What do you think I should do? Where do you think I should go from here?’ . . . like I wasn’t used to getting out there and doing things on my own. I think that sounds bad but I was used to being on a set schedule and somebody was telling me where to be. And then I had everything was going five different ways. Harris One company told me ‘No’, I’m not ready because I’m still thinking about football. The other one was just like, ‘We’ll work with you until you find out if you want to do this or
play football’ and I felt like, that’s not fair to them. I can’t give them 110 percent as I would want to the NFL. They said ‘Once you find out when you’re done, come back, and then we’ll do the re-interview process’.

Larry, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Mortgage Loan Originator

I ended up . . . getting an opportunity to go and intern for X Law Firm and he was going to give me the opportunity to shadow him in his law firm . . . And I’m ever indebted to him . . . It was just really unfortunate because he gave me about a two week period to think about what I was going to do and the day I was supposed to start to work for him I got called back [for another NFL tryout] . . . I never forget about that period of time when I felt like I was really . . . I sat and felt sorry for myself.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

Stage Two: Anger. During Stage Two, shock and denial give way to anger. Forefront in this stage of the grieving process, the athlete describes regret over his athletic career. According to Kübler-Ross (2005), individuals experiencing this stage of grief become angry with themselves or with others. Overall, the participants in this study did not provide significant recounts of the anger stage:

In looking back, I’m probably ashamed to say that football did play too big of a role . . . You know, as a student-athlete, you spend all that time as a kid doing something . . . It takes on I think a disproportionate level of emphasis in your life. And like I spent all of this time practicing punting, kicking all that and I took it all upon myself . . . Athletics only lasts for a little while. But what you do in school and what you study and your work
ethic that lasts a lot longer. If I could have gone back with it, there would have been less emphasis on football. I would have worked on doing more other things than football.

Tom, Bachelor of Science, Lawyer

I was very, very, very, very bitter with football. I went to camp with the [names NFL team] and I didn’t get a shot at doing anything. I just stood around pretty much and I just felt like . . . ‘Oh, [the NFL team will] give me call’, but they don’t want you to come back . . . I mean, I didn’t get a chance. You work as hard as you can . . . and good things pay off for you but that’s not necessarily the case. So, I was really, really, really bitter with football. I just started watching it again [and I graduated six years ago].

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

In relation to career, the student-athlete’s unrealistic career expectations in combination with the pressure the student-athlete feels in regards to others’ perceptions of his status provides challenges in establishing a career path.

Why would I go and work as a manager in a Best Buy or a grocery store where nobody is going to give me credit for that? Now, I’ll be working, I’ll be making a living and I’ll possibly have the opportunity to enhance in that company but they’re thinking about other people’s perspective. I was on top of the hill as a superstar athlete at University of X and in the NFL, on the front page of the newspaper and now people are going to walk
in and see me selling cars and say, ‘Well, how did you go from the Super Bowl to selling cars?’ But the fact of the matter is, it’s not about where I am now, it’s where I’m going.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

Stage Three: Bargaining. In stage three, the graduated student-athlete appears to retrospectively evaluate the end of his athletic career. The bargaining that takes place during this stage is similar to a post-game performance assessment, perhaps allowing the student-athlete to begin the process of letting go of the athlete identity.

From my perspective, I did everything that I could to play and stay in this game as long as I possibly could stay and even when I was no longer able to continue, I felt like I still had something and that was the point that I had to let go . . . I had to let go of the part that you blame yourself even for things that are outside of your control . . . And I had to battle with that concept like, ‘Why would this happen as hard I work?’ . . . Did I not do it the correct way? Did I not pray enough? Did I not do this enough?’ and it’s not your fault, it’s just your time and you know, that’s the process of grieving that you have to go through.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

You know [after trying to get picked up by a NFL team post-graduation and incurring a career ending injury] people asked me, ‘Are you giving up?’ And to tell an athlete that you think they’ve given up. That’s one of the worst things. And that kind of ate at me,
too. I’m not giving up. I understand what is out there and I understand how the NFL works, I understand what it would take to even get somewhat back to where I could.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

As the student-athlete begins to come to terms with the end of his football career, he begins to engage in self-reflection to determine his interests, values, skill sets, etc. The student-athlete begins to relate his athlete experiences to his new career role as he continues along the transitional continuum:

I felt like the low man on the totem pole…and it was like the first time when I couldn’t really run faster than somebody or jump higher than anybody or throw further than somebody or, you know, just use my physical strength to be at the top. You know, so that was a little different. So, I had to do, like extra things at home, like extra reading on what I had to do on my job. And naturally, I make sure I went above and beyond to catch up to have certain advantage over certain people.

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

Yeah, I believe, I experienced the whole thing about trying to, you know, get used to the whole real world thing . . . And trying to learn stuff. At times it gets kind of difficult but one thing that always keeps me going when I think about is just mat drills.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver
Stage Four: Depression. During this stage, the student-athlete feels the magnitude of his loss. The student-athlete feels isolation and loneliness due to the psychological loss of his athlete identity, the physical loss of his teammates and the process of reconditioning his lifestyle to one that is less structured and/or controlled and more independent of time constraints:

You just got that feeling like you’re down . . . but that’s what I learned about life, it’s just life. It’s all on you . . . it’s all on you. You just got to persevere. Every little bit that happens. You are definitely, you have had adversity . . . you are depressed. You just feel sorry for yourself. But . . . I don’t know. I can’t even see how I got out of it even.

Brian, Bachelor of Consumer Science, University Athletic Academic Counselor

I did kind of [pause] . . . experience some isolation when I first got my job.

AJ, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Commercial Real Estate Appraiser

It was definitely the isolation because you go from being around a group of guys with all different types of personalities and you learn so much from just being around different personalities and then it’s like, ‘Okay, oh, crap, I had to really think about . . . you know, different stuff by myself”, I’d always go someone to talk to and get their perspective on different things.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit
In my experience it was certainly sadness that I probably wasn’t going to be with my team as much anymore. I think that was probably the saddest portion of that.

Langley, Bachelor of Consumer Economics, Marketing & Recruitment Officer

I did [feel sad about being done with football] because it was like ‘Okay, I’m used to being in a locker room with a hundred and ten guys all the time, I’ve always got somebody to talk to you, there’s always something to do . . . Now, it’s you leave all of those guys and now you’re on your own’.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit

It was weird, I felt like I had so much free time after I got done. It was . . . you know, there were times where I was like, ‘Well, dang, I felt like I’ve done so much before and now . . .

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

It was definitely a big drop off . . . You always had somebody there making sure you do everything you needed to get done, done . . . Or that person texting, ‘Where are you? . . . Everything was structured. You didn’t really have a whole lot of living on your own and actually manage your time and money. You did, but it was, you know, very structured and you didn’t have the opportunity to really fall on your face.

Alex, Bachelor of Arts, Case Manager for Non-Profit
Stage Five: Acceptance. During stage five, the student-athlete begins to establish realistic solutions to problems and accepts a life without football. Career-wise, the student-athlete may have begun a career path in a particular career area of interest. The student-athlete continues to self-assess, evaluating his past self as well as his new self-concept working toward crystallization and planning out a preferred occupation (Super, 1990). During acceptance, the student-athlete re-aligns displaced skill sets, values and beliefs that perhaps had a dominate role during his athletic life. The student-athlete begins to value the importance of his self-perceptions more than the input of significant others, settling into a career and become content with the athlete identity’s having a less prominent role in his daily life:

You have to find a way to mix and merge yourself . . . you have to find a way to mix and merge yourself back into society when you’re done playing.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management

My mom was like, ‘What do you want to do is be happy, go after it because you’re not going to be happy until you’re doing something that you want to do. You’re just going to have to sit down and just take a step back and stop thinking about what everybody else possibly wants you want to and do what you want to do.’ And I just sat down and I was searching for it, searching for it . . . I came back to the point where I’ve always wanted to go into law enforcement, that’s just something I’ve always wanted to do . . . I actually started the process.

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer
[Dealing with athlete transition issues] I think it is pretty interesting the kind of mindset . . . I don’t think I’m alone in it . . . that as a competitor or whatever in college, I mean, you’re just kind of groomed, you know, to want results and want to be the best and then you kind of realize that works great in athletic setting in college. I mean, it’s beneficial but then you get out in the real world and it’s kind of like . . . I don’t know, there’s more to it than winning, I guess. So, it was a maturation process for me.

Ben, Bachelor of Business Administration, University Development Officer

That was probably one of the hardest things and I tell people it’s not giving up football. It is what it is. Like it was fun, had a great time, but it’s about giving up the identity . . . Now, I’m not ‘Harris the Football Player’, I am “Harris the Police Officer’ . . . ‘Harris the Football Player’, that’s something I’ve identified every day since I was three years old. I was an athlete, that’s what I did. But now I’m not an athlete anymore . . . I’m a professional, I’m a career person. That, ‘Harris the Athlete’, was the hardest thing for me to give up . . . Now I’m ‘Harris the Police Officer.’

Harris, Bachelor of Arts, Police Officer

If you will embrace it and keep moving forward because that now is my past and I appreciate it because it has helped shaped my future but I will not let it dictate what my sole identity is because I feel like more than a better football player, I’m a better person than I am a football player. And I get to be that until the day that I drop dead and so I’m excited about that opportunity.

Harold, Bachelor of Business Administration, Finance Manager/Automotive Retail Management
So you’ve got to get used to that [no longer playing football]. But you’ll get through it. I think being a student-athlete makes you a better person, it toughens you up. I don’t let life bother me because of that, you know.

Wade, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Driver

And you do have that select group out there that because you didn’t make it to the NFL you’re not successful, you know? But you have others that are realistic and your family and close friends that realize the fact that you obtained a degree and got a job that’s a career. You are successful and you can take care of a family and take care of yourself and be self-sustaining. That’s success.

Mark, Bachelor of Consumer Science, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach

The results display that there are emotional and psychological factors that negatively impact the football student-athlete during their transition from graduation to career and a life after sports. The transition from student-athlete to civilian is marked by emotional and psychological factors relating to the loss of an involuntary structured lifestyle and a doting support staff that no longer exists. In addition, the student-athlete progresses through the stages of grief while dealing with athletic retirement and the loss of their athletic identity. While trying to establish role salience with a new identity, the participants experience anxiety and confusion. Although not noted by the participants, the overwhelming data related to this theme displays a need that should be addressed in student-athlete career development programming.
Research Question 3: Assertions

The graduated football student-athletes recommend a career development program specifically for the student-athlete population. Ideally, the program should be mandatory requiring the student-athlete’s participation but also ensuring that the athletic administration and coaching staffs set aside the time within the student-athlete’s schedule for the student-athlete to participate in the programming. From the viewpoint of the graduated football student-athlete, it is integral to the success of the program that the coaching staff be committed to the program and stress the importance of career development programming to the student-athlete.

Student-athlete career development programming should be comprehensive, with early intervention upon the student-athlete’s arrival on campus. Programming should continue throughout the student-athlete’s academic career up until graduation. The graduated football student-athlete also expressed a need for post-graduation career development services. The football student-athletes in this research study suggest that over their academic career their primary focus on athletics naturally decreases as they begin to contemplate vocational choices. While the student-athlete has career thoughts, the study shows that the football student-athlete is not acting upon those thoughts and engaging in career development activities providing additional evidence of a need for student-athlete career development programming. With the athlete role being salient to the point of foreclosure for many of the football student-athletes, the promotion of life roles outside of sport will assist with the development of the football student-athletes self-concept. Programming that spans the football student-athlete’s academic career following the athlete into his transition from athlete to college graduate embraces construction
theory as well as Super’s Life-Span Life-Space Theory in that both view the career development process as complex and ever-evolving.

The research participants recommended that student-athlete career development programming should include an emphasis on expanding the understanding of one’s own interests and skills sets and learning how those relate to a professional career. Experiential opportunities such as an internship or externships should be required providing the student-athlete with exposure to a professional career while also providing work experience for a resume. An understanding of networking and the creation of events for networking during the student-athlete’s academic years would assist the student-athlete in learning how to network effectively and how to leverage the football player status and/or Division I football experience in the job market. Networking knowledge would also assist the student-athlete in obtaining contacts for a post-graduation job search. A structured student-athlete career network and mentor program would provide current student-athletes with a contact who has an understanding of the student-athlete experience and challenges post-graduation while also providing career development assistance for researching a career, locating experiential opportunities and obtaining networking contacts. It should be noted that previously reported data (RQ1) revealed that the football student-athletes were deficient in the exact same career development activities the participants recommended for inclusion in a career development program. Super’s Life-Span Life-Space Theory as well as career construction theory both embrace career exploration through interaction and communication with different life roles experiences that allow for meaning-making experiences that provide the uniting or crystallization of current and future life-career roles. Finally, while post-graduation career assistance was not explicitly stated as a recommendation by the football student-athletes, the majority of the student-athletes did turn to their institutions for
career transition assistance. And, while none of the athletes suggested a need for psychological and emotional assistance post-graduation, the data displays that such services would be an integral component of a comprehensive student-athlete career development program.

**Summary of Results**

Upon establishing a diverse participant pool that was heterogeneous across a set of demographic variables, the topic of student-athlete career development was examined from the Division I football graduated student-athlete’s perspective. The research reveals that student-athletes are not engaging in career development activities prior to graduation with a depth of involvement that results in career preparedness upon graduation.

The student-athlete reported limited involvement with traditional career development activities and resources throughout their academic career. The majority of the participants did not extensively research a career, predominantly relying upon their athletic academic advisor for major and career advice. Involvement in enriching experiential opportunities such as externships, internships and work experiences that would expand the student-athletes self-concept and expose them to a particular career area of interest was minimal. The participants cite academic and athletic time commitments as the primary reason for their lack of involvement with experiential opportunities. While the student-athlete was equipped with a resume and interview skills prior to graduation, he does not have a career search plan in place to seek employment post-graduation.

Although the small population in this study cannot be generalized to the entire student-athlete population, the data noted that NCAA academic requirements that promote academic progress and graduation rates may be negatively impacting the student-athlete career development process. It appears that an accelerated graduation pace results in the student-athlete having less opportunities to change or “try out” different majors. While the participants in this
study note clustering, academic data was not obtained and this assertion could not be positively stated as inhibiting the career development process.

The lack of career preparedness upon graduation resulted in career confusion, anxiety, and a lack of career direction post-graduation. Football student-athletes express dissatisfaction with their initial jobs post-graduation resulting in multiple employers the first several years out of college as the student-athlete struggles to find a career path. Participants reveal unrealistic career expectations citing a lack of knowledge regarding vocation well as their personal interests, skill sets and level of experience. Through a self-discovery process, participants reveal a sense of entitlement as they discover they have unrealistic career expectations. It is not known if the indirect career path noted by the graduated football players has an economic impact on the student-athlete’s future earning potential.

The participants in this study report a need for a mandatory and comprehensive student-athlete career development program. The narratives display that over time the athlete identity naturally decreases as the football player nears graduation resulting in career thoughts and concerns regarding vocation. It was recommended that career development programming should focus on exposing the student-athlete to career education early in their academic career and then continue throughout the athlete’s academic career until graduation. The graduated football student-athletes would benefit from career education that would assist them in understanding the value of their degree resulting in realistic career and salary expectations post-graduation. Programming recommendations include an understanding of personal skills sets in relation to career, involvement in experiential and networking opportunities as well as a post-graduation assistance program that provides support to student-athlete alumni as they maneuver the emotional and psychological transition to a life after sports.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

If you had told me ‘Harold, we’re going to give you a scholarship to X University [states the name of a prestigious and nationally ranked academic institution] and we’re going to give you a scholarship to go to University of Y [a nationally ranked academic institution with a nationally ranked football program] I probably would have chosen University of Y from the standpoint that I knew that X University made a man as strong as you can possibly get academically, but what would be my opportunity to play collegiate athletics at the level that I wanted to play at? So, it’s a balancing act from that standpoint. But at the time, just being honest, in my mind, I wanted the [lists nationally ranked football programs]. You want that because everybody is paying attention to it and everybody is saying, ‘You can go here, you can go there’ and people are courting you and they’re giving you all these amenities. You’ve come into the campus a whole other way than ninety-nine percent of those students entering campus. You’re somewhat courted into coming where [the non-athlete students] are burning the midnight oil trying to make the SAT scores [to] be a certain way so they can get in.

Harold, BBA Economics, Six Year NFL Veteran/Two-Time Super Bowl Champion, 2 Jobs/Seven Years, Finance Manager

American society tends to glorify the athlete, particularly the football player, as a gladiator of modern times. Public infatuation, media coverage, and the marketing of the celebrity football player culturally fosters and promotes the athlete identity. The media frenzy spurred on by devout college football fanatics can begin as early as 14 years of age for some high school athletes promoting an athletic potential that perhaps is not even relevant yet. A large number of
publications and websites exist that are devoted to in-depth college football recruiting coverage. High school recruiting websites such as Rivals.com and Scout.com have an estimated 200,000 and 70,000 subscribers respectively who pay a little over $100 annually to follow the athletic careers of high school college prospects. On National Signing Day local, state and national media outlets spotlight high school athletes and their college selections. Major sports networks like ESPN host 24-hour coverage to catch each top level recruit or “blue chip” making his commitment live on national television. Mass media and social media all exalt the young athlete’s performance only fueling the prominence of the athletic role in the young person’s life. Due to the high level of exposure, young athletes often do not have realistic expectations regarding their sports involvement. Only 6.4% of high school football players are awarded an athletic scholarship to play at a NCAA member institution and only 8% of all NCAA football players are drafted to a NFL team (NCAA, 2013).

Society gives athletes special attention and privileges that reinforce the athlete identity. For top-level high school athletes, a verbal commitment between an athlete and a college football coach to attend a particular institution can occur as early as the ninth grade. From a university admissions standpoint, the athlete is not even a viable applicant without high school grades and standardized test scores. Upon applying, the prospective student-athlete receives special consideration in the admissions process and can receive special admittance into an institution if academic credentials fall below the competitive general student applicant pool. In 2008, U.S News & World Report declared that football student-athletes average 220 points lower on the SAT than their classmates (Go, 2008). With society cultivating the football identity and the college recruiting process prioritizing athletic exploits over academic credentials, the high school football player’s college decision process is predominantly based upon the athletic scholarship
offer and the opportunity to play. In this study, the graduated football student-athlete reported that the predominant factor (92%; 11) in selecting a college was a football athletic scholarship offer and the quality of the football program and its coaches.

Big time college athletics is probably one of the most detrimental things that can happen to somebody if they are not like a special person. Let’s say, they don’t have an identity before football because, I mean, they get into ball and you come like an overnight pseudo-celebrity, you know, more people know you regardless of talent level than the [names the state’s professional NFL team] or whatever. You know, just from the fan base. And so you get the notoriety . . . you get coddled, you get structured, you know, you don’t buy your books, you don’t sign up for class [athletic academic advisor does it for you]. Nobody really cares what you do unless you’re doing the wrong thing, unless you don’t go to class, unless you don’t go to study hall . . . They just don’t want you to do what you are not suppose to do, right? So, you kind of go through your whole [college] experience just going through the motions . . . until the very end and then you have no idea what you’re supposed to do until you graduate and then you lose your fame/notoriety and everything like that, you lose all of your confidence, and you’re going into the real world with no confidence and no skill sets . . . You can’t structure your own life. You can’t do the things you need to do to be a self-starter because unless you just have a special personality, you’re kind of not really a self-starter any more. You’re coachable, but you’re not a self-starter. So, a lot of the things about being an athlete, the tangible skills that we all encompass, like the lifestyle of an athlete, it kind of strips a lot of [your soft skills] away from you because you don’t have to use those things, you know?

DJ, Consumer Science Major, No NFL Career, 2 Jobs/5 Years, Currently Owns & Operates High End Landscaping Company
Emerging adulthood (roughly from 18 to 25 years of age) is the period of time that offers an individual the most opportunity for identity exploration in the areas of work and worldviews (Arnett, 2000). Super, Savickas & Super (1996) refer to this time period as the career exploratory stage of the life span and describe it as a period of time that the emerging adult broadens their self-concept, an individual’s perception and image of their own individual abilities and uniqueness, by utilizing educational choices and experiences to explore options in preparation for future work (Arnett, 2000; Super, 1980; Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). For the football student-athlete whose life experiences and self-concept have and will continue to be shaped by social and cultural factors emphasizing sport, his time and commitments during the college years will voluntarily and involuntarily be prioritized by athletic participation. As a result, the exploration of other identities and life roles will most likely be neglected.

Athletic scholarship obligations, university/athletic department demands and the student-athlete’s dedication to his football career can create many obstacles for the student-athlete in furthering his self-concept during his college academic career. In an effort to assist the student-athletes with their overwhelming academic and athletic demands, student-athletes are provided support in a variety of areas. While the aid provides the student-athlete greater opportunity for academic as well as athletic success, the extra assistance can have a negative impact on the personal growth and vocational development of the student-athlete. During a student-athlete’s academic career, the student-athlete becomes socialized or conditioned to rely upon others for routine academic tasks such as class selection, scheduling and registration, as well as major declaration and daily time management. The athletic academic staff is involved with the student-athlete’s academic affairs ensuring the student-athlete (and the institution) meet NCAA academic and eligibility requirements. Although further research is needed, this study notes that NCAA
academic requirements aimed at increasing graduation rates may negatively impact student-athlete career development by indirectly influencing major choice, limiting the number of times the student-athlete changes majors, and expediting matriculation. For the student-athlete, a lack of in-depth involvement with career development activities as well as resources results in the student-athlete having immature career plans upon graduation.

Taking an integrated career theory approach, this research study utilized the social constructivist-based career construction theory and the positivistic-based Donald Super’s integrated series of career theory with emphasis on the Life-Span Life-Space approach to expand and enrich the examination of the career development experiences of graduated football student-athletes. A focal point of Super’s Theory is the continued development of the self-concept from the growth stage (birth to 14 years of age), where an initial discovery of personality, abilities and aptitudes begins, to the exploratory stage (ages 15 – 24) of the life-span. This study focused on the exploratory stage which is the span of time a college student learns about career and what is required to be successful in specific careers. Through coursework and career development related experiences, the student analyzes career options in conjunction with their own self-concept while also establishing realistic vocational expectations such as salary, hours, benefits, and opportunities for advancement to narrow the field of career areas of interest. Both career construction theory and Super’s archway of career determinants take into account biographical-geographical, psychological and socioeconomic characteristics in the development of the self-concept and construction or establishment of career.

The results of this study revealed that student-athletes are failing to sufficiently engage in career development activities during their academic careers. As a result of inadequate understanding of personal interests and skill sets and how those interests and skills sets relate to a
career, the football student-athlete is ill-prepared to search for a career post-graduation. Due to the absence of a directed career search plan, the student-athlete’s post-graduation job search is marked by anxiety and career confusion. Consequently, the student-athlete is unable to make educated career decisions. Football student-athletes initially report a high level of job dissatisfaction stemming from unrealistic career expectations as a result of improper career planning. The career confusion the student-athlete experiences post-graduation is amplified by the emotional and psychological issues associated with athletic retirement and the transition away from the student-athlete lifestyle. A comprehensive student-athlete career development program that spans the student-athlete’s academic career and includes post-graduation assistance is needed. Based upon the themes revealed in the results of this study, the following is a discussion of recommendations that should be considered for student-athlete career development programming. A summary of recommendations can be found in Table 11.

**Recommendations**

**Preventative Career Development Programming**

At first, [I attended University of X] mostly for athletics, it was going to be a gateway for me to, you know, do a couple of years and then go to the NFL . . . I know with me, you know, when you first get in [to college], your main focus is ball. That’s all you worry about. And as you get older, you know, you say, ‘I play ball but I might also start thinking about life after football’ because you keep hearing that, people keep telling you but it doesn’t really sink in until you have a few injuries and then you’re like, ‘Okay, I need to think about this because football probably isn’t going to be around very long’ . . . For a young guy, I don’t think [career development]
### Summary of Recommendations for Student-Athlete Career Development Programming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations for Career Development Programming</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preventative Career Development Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Goal of Programming is to Prevent Career Unpreparedness Prior to Graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory Career Development Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators and Coaches Require Participation in a Structured Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Career Development Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming that Begins Freshman Year Through to Graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming that is Based Upon Learning Theory of Career Counseling (LTCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes development of Roles/Identities Outside of Sport &amp; Embracing Happenstance Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Should Include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Information Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Career Counseling Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of Career Development Assessment Instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Mentoring &amp; Career Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Learning Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Resume &amp; Interview Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Graduation Career Development &amp; Transitional Assistance Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics Covered:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete Identity &amp; Student-Athlete Career Development Deficiencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negatives of Student-Athlete Experience/NCAA Academic Reform/Student-Athlete Lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating &amp; Establishing a Value for the College Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research a Major, Research a Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Administrative Considerations:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training &amp; Credential of the Athletic Academic Advisor/Counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Risk &amp; First Generation College Students</td>
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would benefit them that well. Maybe for a couple, some would listen, it would [benefit them].

But the majority of people that would benefit would be the older guys, the upper classmen . . .

Once I got a little older I was like, ‘I just want to get a degree because with that degree you can pretty much get a job’ and so I kind of looked at it like that . . . Before I even graduated I had my last surgery and they already told me then I was done and so, I already knew that I wasn’t going to the next level . . . Once I graduated I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I was kind of just [pause] . . . Everything was up in the air.

Wade, Consumer Science Major, No NFL Career, 4 Jobs/3 Years, Currently Employed as a Driver/Courier

The dominance of the athlete identity causes other life roles such as student or career to be less significant during a student-athlete’s academic career. The football student-athletes in this study reported that injury and/or matriculation increased their student and/or their career identity. Unfortunately, either due to a lack of understanding of, access to, or time to devote to career development activities, the student-athlete does not engage in career exploration.

For student-athletes to successfully career develop during their academic years, it is apparent that the cultivation of other identities or life roles must take place. To de-emphasize the dominant athlete identity, preventative career development programming that focuses on averting career unpreparedness before it occurs must be instituted. “Primary prevention” helps participants acquire skills that can reduce the likelihood of being career unprepared upon graduation (Pearson & Petitpas, p. 7, 1990). While Wade’s narrative suggests that students with strong or foreclosed athlete identities may not engage in preventative programming, it is important to point out that at risk populations are often resistant to recognizing their vulnerability (Pearson, 1986).
When I was in high school, got a little notoriety playing football . . . I wasn’t thinking about going to college, I was thinking ‘Okay, I’m going to graduate high school and then enter the military or I’m going to go work somewhere’ because that’s what everybody from my town did. Then, I started getting interest from different colleges and then I started thinking about ‘Okay, maybe, I can go to college and play football and get a degree’ and it became a reality . . . I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to major in when I first got to school . . . Just talked really with a lot of my teammates to get an idea of what they were thinking about . . . talked with my teammates and talked with their professors and I just tried to figure out, you know, a path for me . . . My idea was that I was going into the NFL, was going to have me some collateral, upfront money. I’m going to buy houses, I’m going to flip them and that’s how I’m going to make my career and my living. Housing market took a tank. First of all, I didn’t make the NFL so that kind of took a tank, too . . . I wound up getting my degree . . . I was unemployed for a year and a half before I found a job . . . It was in my major . . . [I was] a [multi-family commercial] leasing manager . . . Did not take me long to realize that’s not what I wanted to do . . . I started researching to figure out how can I get out of it . . . What I did is [pause] . . . I was like, I need to coach football in some way, shape or form or fashion because football is what I know. And then I looked into it and realized that I could coach high school football and in order to be able to provide for my family, I needed to teach as well . . . I could be a P.E. coach, that’s what I am going to do . . .

Mark, First Generation College Student, B.S. Consumer Science, No NFL Career, One Year Unemployed/2 Jobs/3 Years, Special Needs Teacher/High School Football Coach
To address the issue of student-athlete career unpreparedness upon graduation, athletic administrators need to implement mandatory comprehensive student-athlete career development programming. As this study and previous research notes, student-athletes are not taking advantage of the range of services more readily accessible to other students in the university community (Jordan & Denson, 1995) due to their university and athletic obligations as a student-athlete. While the NCAA’s Life Skills program has a career development component to encourage the student-athlete to develop and pursue career and life goals, based upon the results of this study, athletic programs do not appear to be emphasizing the career development tier of Life Skills programming. Langley, a history major who had a relatively smooth transition into his profession as a university marketing and recruitment officer stated:

I think there could certainly be more career programs in place with Life Skills because you know obviously everybody wants to be a professional athlete. So, I think that certainly could be helpful . . . to have a system for their career path, I think that should certainly be something that is a priority for these programs . . . We have meetings during the summer all the time where we have a day to go over compliance issues, a day to go over media, a day to go over maybe rule changes. I think they could bring that [career development programming] in. Maybe a day where they talk about agents or whatever. So, they could certainly incorporate [career development programming] into one of those days. I don’t really feel that it [Life Skills] was utilized to its potential. (personal communication, 2014)

Therefore, student-athletes must voluntarily seek career development services and resources voluntarily on their own time. The participants in this research study cited that a time conundrum prevented the student-athlete from voluntarily engaging in career development
activities. The participants in this study described a rigid scheduled that was dictated by academic and athletic requirements, often prescribed and monitored by coaching and athletic administrative staff. The graduated football student-athletes in this study felt that career development programming could be an emphasis if their coaching and athletic administrative staff felt it was important. Harris felt that his head coach could have fostered his focus on career development. He explained, “I just think that maybe if I just had a little more pushing at my back [I would have gotten involved in career development]. I think a lot of push has to come from the coach or your position coach.” Mark also suggested that the coaching staff’s support of career development is needed to alleviate the time conundrum allowing student-athletes to engage in career development activities. Mark stated:

I believe [the athletic department should have provided career services]. I feel like it’s important because a lot of times, and I understand that coaches are under a lot of pressure, that goes without saying. . . . A lot of times coaches they get bogged down with ‘Okay, I need to get these guys prepared to win football games and I need to make sure grades stay up, not necessarily so they’re eligible, but so they can graduate.’ . . . That’s a formula for keeping their job, you know? . . . What would have had to happen, something would have had to happen from the coaching staff, like they would have to be lenient . . . ‘Okay, I give you this amount of time [to participate in career development for me to have participated in career development activities]. (personal communication, 2104)

For a student-athlete career development program to be impactful, it is imperative the program be supported by athletic administrators and coaches. Mandatory participation will ensure the student-athlete has the opportunity and the “push” to participate. It will also ensure
that administrators and coaches will set aside time in the student-athlete’s schedule for participation without the consequences of missing practices or making up training times.

An impactful student-athlete career program is one that is comprehensive and on-going from the time the student-athlete steps on campus until graduation. Vocational development is a continuous dynamic process; therefore, career development services cannot be occasional and piecemeal. To engage and significantly impact the student-athlete’s career maturity, there must be an overall student-athlete career development game plan. The game plan should include group information sessions or seminars that educate and address vocational and transitional issues inherent to the student-athlete population as well as individual counseling sessions. Experiential opportunities unique to the individual student-athletes interests and career development process should be mandated. The program should emphasize researching a career, engaging in career experiential opportunities (externships and internships), networking and the creation of a mature career plan. Post-graduation career assistance involving networking opportunities, mentoring and emotional and psychological transitional services should also be considered. The career development activities recommended above were not only identified in the data as development deficiencies by the researcher, but each of the recommendations were also identified as programming needs by the participants.

Applying Career Theory to Student-Athlete Career Development Programming. I knew that I always wanted to be in the FBI, I wanted to be a federal agent. I also knew that law school would be a good way to get there and so I started out in political science. And just like every athlete, you get here and you realize that school, not necessarily a focus but you’re playing at a major division I school, it’s hard to buckle down and keep a social life, football . . . a lot of it started kind of bearing down on me my first year and so I changed my major to criminal justice.
Sophomore year or junior year you have to have an internship with criminal justice and I realized that I don’t think I am going to be able to do that because I can’t take a whole summer off [from football] . . . What I think it all boils down to is, I probably could have done [an internship], I think I was just more focused on football . . . So, that’s why I changed [my major] to sociology . . . I [was required by team administrator and my athletic academic advisor] to come meet the career consulting firm [for a career counseling session] and it was just kind of one of those things where you know you probably should do it but it’s like you only get like an hour or two each day just to have to myself . . . I didn’t want to go do an externship . . . [but I did and] I got a lot out of it . . . If I had talked with somebody early in my college career, I probably would have stayed either in political science or criminal justice because those are the degrees that [the FBI] looks for . . . One thing I wish for to happen in college is that . . . somebody had just sat down and been like ‘Okay here’s a secret service agent that you can talk with that can show you what classes you need to take, what major you need to be in and this is how you need to go about it’ instead of me trying to figure it out as I go. I mean, I figured it out which is fine [after I graduated] . . . but I guess the career ladder and career help wasn’t always there.

Harris, B.S. Sociology, Three Months with the NFL, 4 Jobs/4 years, Currently Employed as a Police Officer (with career goal of becoming an FBI Agent)

The content of a vocational program dedicated to the student-athlete population must be innovative in regards to content and delivery. For a program to be impactful, it needs to consider the development of other roles or identities beyond that of athlete, address the special time and structure challenges inherent with the student-athlete lifestyle, recognize the positive behaviors and skills that athletes have developed through playing their sport, and guide student-athletes to
think more broadly about themselves and their futures. The program has been successful if the student-athlete has crystallized. Crystallization is the ability to specify current and future-life role goals (Super, 1990).

It is recommended that student-athlete career development programming should be guided by the principles of the Learning Theory of Career Counseling (LTCC) (Krumboltz, 1996). Shurts & Shoffner (2004) deduct that the career confusion and uncertainty experienced by student-athletes entering the workforce was a result of the athlete’s narrow view of potential career options due to a limited exposure to learning opportunities. Because the student-athlete has spent an exorbitant amount of time dedicated to sport, he has sacrificed learning opportunities that would have otherwise furthered his skill sets and interests and broadened his understanding of available career options. To assist student-athletes with new ways to explore career opportunities, Shurts & Shoffner suggest the use of LTCC (2004). The focus of LTCC is to facilitate the acquisition of new skills, interests and beliefs, thus assisting the student-athlete with the growth of their self-concept and alternative identities outside of sport. LTCC encourages the student-athlete to embrace “happenstance” events, which are unplanned occurrences (e.g. not majoring in a primary career area of interest, having a career in the NFL, not having a career in the NFL). When applying LTCC, student-athletes should be encouraged to understand that it is highly likely that their future occupations will differ from what has been planned. Utilizing LTCC as a foundation, student-athlete career development programming should stress learning how to create and benefit from unplanned events (Krumboltz & Levin, 2010). LTCC appears to be a good fit for student-athlete career development as it does not attempt to force the reduction of the athlete identity. Infused within preventative programming, LTCC focuses on the construction of other life roles by teaching the student-athlete to immerse himself in planned and
unplanned experiences for self-discovery and growth, leading to situations where the athlete
finds himself with the right people, at the right place, at the right time.

**Student-Athlete Career Development Content**

Well, I was a pretty highly touted recruit coming out of high school. I had a bunch of
different schools [recruiting me] and I always wanted to play in the [names an athletic
conference] and academics was always big in my family from high school . . . My first semester
was just terrible. I had a terrible GPA . . . My parents went to college. My mom has an
associate’s degree. My father, he started college and finished when I was in high school . . . I
didn’t really understand the fact that that there were all these different colleges and schools
within the University that you have to pay attention to and that you have to be accepted to. I just
though you write an essay you go to school and you study finance. I didn’t realize that you have
to apply and get accepted . . . I think, you know, they should sit down with the student-athlete
when they come in [as a freshman] and kind of explain the process and try to let everyone know
the process so you know what the expectations are . . . I mean they do everything else for you . . .
I didn’t realize that you have to apply and get accepted [into a school/college to declare a
major]. Once I didn’t succeed in the classroom, because of that bad semester . . . it was when I
realized that like you aren’t going to get into the business school with that GPA and I was like
‘Oh, I did not know that!’ Explain the process, the different colleges, different majors, APR’s
and explain to you the different graduation rates and academic progress rates . . . I wanted to be
more in the corporate world. I am not blaming anybody, I love everyone that was there at
University of X] and I appreciate everything they do. I didn’t know what questions to ask [in
regards to university policies, etc.] . . . I probably glanced over it or I was so happy about
signing and just playing football that I, I don’t even think that I . . . I don’t want to blame that on
anybody . . . I graduated in three and a half years. Then, I took a year off of school to pursue the NFL . . . The way it works at University of X is you get six years to get an undergraduate degree so I got in my six year window to get my master’s and I finished it up in a year . . . I realized I wanted to be around the guys, to influence young guys like myself [as an athletic academic advisor] and I also didn’t want them to fall into the traps. Not that I fell into the trap, but I wanted them to know the things that I didn’t to see all the things that were open to them.

Brian, B.S. Consumer Science, 3 Jobs/5 Years, Currently Employed as an Athletic Academic Advisor

**Group Informational Sessions.** Preventive career development programming should provide early intervention during the student-athlete’s freshman and sophomore years. Student-athletes should be exposed to the topic of career development upon their arrival on campus introducing the student-athlete to the opportunity costs associated with being an athlete. Orientation sessions or initial Life Skills sessions should indoctrinate the student-athlete to career development resources and personnel. It should be apparent to the student-athlete that career development is an important component of their college experience and that services and career personnel are easily accessible. NCAA academic requirements (APR’s and GSR’s) and university policies and procedures regarding major selection (application process and projected GPA requirements) should be discussed in detail. The student-athlete should have an understanding of how these policies and procedures can positively and negatively impact their career development process on their way to earning a degree. The student-athlete should be provided a game plan booklet that includes a step-by-step outline of mandatory programming the student-athlete will be exposed to over his academic career to assist him with a successful transition to career post-graduation. Student-athletes should be made aware of other career
resources that are available to assist them in this capacity, including university career services office location and programming including course listings that focus on life skills, career exploration and/or post-graduation job search preparation.

At the orientation session or at a later scheduled group session, freshman student-athletes should be made aware of the opportunity costs associated with being an athlete. A presentation should be provided focused on the athlete identity emphasizing how its dominance has a negative impact on the student-athlete career development process resulting in career unpreparedness and a difficult transition to a life after sport. For example, the International Olympic Committee’s Athletic Career Programme website includes an “Athletic Identity and Sports Transition” fact sheet. The fact sheet defines the athlete identity, explains its impact upon career development and provides guidelines to maximize the positive effects of identity change (IOC, 2011). The student-athlete’s freshman year should also include an introduction to an alumni speaker series whereby former student-athletes speak about their academic and athletic careers emphasizing their career development process and transition to a life after sports. The NFL hosts an annual Rookie Symposium that, according to Troy Vincent, Senior Vice President of Player Engagement, is a “peer-to-peer model” whereby former NFL players tell their story including a teachable lesson “to provide our rookies the tools to succeed during the NFL playing experience and beyond” (NFL, 2013). According to this study, college head football coaches appear to have an informal alumni speaker program. However, the research participants reported that the intentions of the speaker series is more oriented towards athletic motivation and athletic success stories versus athlete-to-career transition stories. A career speaker series program should be included as a component of Life Skills. The speaker program could be coordinated by individual teams in conjunction with pre-planned team meetings, occur in a group session with a panel of
student-athlete alumni or occur in a smaller group setting over a dining hall meal with individual student-athletes. Student-athlete career development programming should be flexible and coordinated with individual head coaches, but it also needs to follow the overall game plan for consistent student-athlete participation and optimal results.

A theme within this research study was educating and establishing a value for the college degree. Participants reported not having an understanding of the value of a college degree during their student-athlete experience as well as what the degree could do for the student-athlete vocationally post-graduation. Freshman year is an appropriate time to educate the student-athlete on the estimated cost of his athletic scholarship in regards to tuition, room and board as well as academic support (tutors, computers, etc.) and athletic support (coaching, equipment, training, sports nutritionist, sports psychologist, sports medicine, etc.). For students who never see a tuition bill and have no understanding of the cost of a college education, such a presentation should add value to the student-athlete experience. The group presentation should also include information regarding salary expectations for a variety of careers (with or without a degree). A discussion on the impact a college degree can have on earnings will not only provide realistic career expectations post-graduation, but the seminar may also motivate the student-athlete to take an active role in their academic pursuits. Martens and Lee (1998) reveal that exposing freshman student-athletes to career services resulted in higher grade point averages, more changes in major, and greater satisfaction with their majors. Preventative programming infused with LTCC will promote the growth of other identities and roles through learning experiences resulting in graduated student-athletes who are more prepared to enter the workforce.

**Skill Set Assessment & Researching a Major/Career.** While the student-athlete is working towards the completion of their core degree requirements, but prior to declaring a major,
the student-athlete should engage in an interest and skill set or personality assessment. Student-athletes should review their results with a career counselor. “The counseling process for the student-athlete is one of exploration and learning rather than one of moving toward a final career choice or decision” (Shurts & Shoffner, 2004, p.101). In keeping with the Learning Theory of Career Counseling (LTCC), the student-athlete should be made aware that the results of the skill set and personality assessment are not static, that they are merely a starting point that can be used for further expansion. Utilizing LTCC, the baseline skills and interests of the student-athlete should be utilized to co-construct new learning opportunities (Krumboltz, 1996). The student-athlete should be advised and directed towards future career development learning experiences that will expose the student-athlete to additional skill sets and interests, reminding the student-athlete to always pursue and capitalize upon “chance” events. For those student-athletes who are foreclosed, the assessment results can initiate a discussion about current life roles, interests after athletic retirement and what skill sets the student-athlete might like to develop and/or change (Shurts & Shoffner, 2004). Also, a discussion regarding “chance” events and how these events have impacted the student-athletes life is an important aspect of this theory. The student-athlete should be encouraged to prepare for and make attempts at influencing unforeseen events.

**Researching a Major, Researching a Career.** Following a review of the assessment results, the student-athlete should begin the process of researching a major and/or career. With LTCC, the goal isn’t necessarily about narrowing down a specific career goal as much as it is a discovery process involving the student-athlete’s interests and skill sets and how those apply to career options. This phase of the student-athlete career development process should begin with an explanation of how to research a career beginning with a discussion of majors and course requirements available to the student-athlete. The student-athlete should be encouraged to utilize
on-line as well as other available resources so the student-athlete can further educate himself on major interests and related career options. A review of student-athlete career development programming content in conjunction with the game plan checklist will guide the student-athlete toward opportunities for further research and career exploration. For example, introducing the student-athlete to a career mentor, personally engaging him with a speaker, and assisting the student-athlete in setting up an externship are all programming activities that will assist the student-athlete in researching a major and/or career. For the athlete-focused student, it will be important to draw connections with the various career development programming activities and seminars so the student-athlete can understand the progression of the process. To encourage participation, the student-athlete should always be reminded of the “change” event theory and that they have an opportunity to capitalize on future events by being active in current events, although future events may be unknown.

**Networking.** During the end of the student-athlete’s sophomore year and throughout the student-athlete’s junior year, the topic of networking should be at the forefront. At this point in the student-athlete’s academic career, educational learning opportunities should involve the student-athlete’s moving outside of their comfort zone and outside of the social isolation of the student-athlete lifestyle by interacting and networking with individuals outside of the athletic department. An educational seminar on networking should introduce and explain the concept of networking as well as introduce effective networking techniques. As recommended by the participants in this study, this seminar should include an informative discussion on how the football student-athlete can leverage the Division I football player status and experience in a professional setting. Prior to the athletic department hosting fan, alumni or donor events as well as awards banquets, the student-athlete or team should be given a brief networking tutorial
including a discussion of individual networking expectations at the event. Motivation to participate may be encouraged by reminding student-athletes of the impact “happenstance” events can have on one’s future. Opportunities for student-athletes to mix and mingle with other student-athletes, the non-athlete student population, administrators and faculty, and other current students and alumni should be maximized during the course of the student-athlete’s academic career. Student-athletes should always be reminded that while they might feel they are attending an event to fulfill a university or athletic department obligation, the event is actually an opportunity to practice networking and establish or cultivate relationships for future use following graduation. Through this progression, by the junior and senior year the student-athlete should be encouraged through a career mentor or through contacts provided by the career counselor to network with professional contacts outside of the university community.

**Alumni Mentoring & Career Network.** An alumni career mentoring and networking program is essential for the success of the student-athlete career development program. Athletic administrative efforts in recruiting and establishing an alumni and mentoring program has mutual benefits for the athletic program, the current student-athlete and the alumnus. For the alumnus, a career mentoring and networking program will have mutually exclusive benefits as it provides the alumnus an opportunity to stay connected with his university and athletic program while also giving back. The relationship might also assist the student-athlete with business networking and professional opportunities. As a development officer, the researcher believes a structured mentoring and networking program could also serve as a non-threatening way to establish a development or fundraising relationship with the alumnus and/or a business for future giving opportunities. An alumni career mentoring and networking program will not only provide a career confidante for the student-athlete to further research career options, but it will also provide
the student-athlete a networking contact to begin a post-graduation job search. In addition, the alumni contacts are a resource for the creation of an internship and externship database as well as job postings for employment seeking student-athletes.

**Experiential Learning Opportunities.** During the student-athlete’s junior and senior year, experiential learning opportunities such as an externship or an internship should be required. As a mandatory activity, these experiences will need to be coordinated with the coaching staff and athletic academic advisor to prevent scheduling conflicts and to ensure a positive educational learning opportunity that does not have consequences for the student-athlete who misses athletic commitments. Experiential opportunities provide student-athletes the opportunity to explore a career, expanding the student-athlete’s narrow perspective of career options. Even if the experiential opportunities are not in the areas that the student-athlete will necessarily be employed, these new learning opportunities can trigger a wider range of positive results (e.g. hobby formation, elective selection, expansion of knowledge base) (Shurts & Shoffner, p. 103, 2004). While an internship or direct work experience would provide the most desirable resume experience, the student-athlete’s off-season training and academic schedule might limit the availability to engage in such opportunities. Therefore, externships or job shadowing should be emphasized. An externship is a short practical experience whereby a student-athlete goes to a place of business, meets with a business professional and observes a typical day in that profession or industry. Due to the short duration, externships can be easily completed during a student’s spring and summer breaks or even during a holiday break. The student-athlete will have the chance to observe and ask questions, see firsthand what skill sets are needed to excel in that particular position or industry and assist the student-athlete in establishing realistic career expectations for future career possibilities. In addition, the student-athlete will
have career knowledge to place on a resume. Utilizing LTCC, a discussion with the student-athlete following the experiential opportunity should review the current status of the student-athlete’s skill sets and interests, how the experience could be discussed in a job interview and how the opportunity could lead to future “chance” events (e.g. recruitment offer). An emphasis on future networking possibilities with the contact and/or company should be addressed to continue to emphasize the fundamental components of the overall student-athlete career development game plan.

**Resume & Interview Skills.** A student-athlete’s senior year should be focused on the practical skills necessary to obtain employment such as resume writing and interview skills. In this study, almost all of the participants had completed their resume and practiced interviewing prior to graduation. Student-athletes should be encouraged to enroll in a university course or seminar if offered, which provides resume and interviewing education as well as the opportunity to interact and network with the general student population. Student-athlete career development programming should involve a resume night event and/or mock interview night for student-athletes to participate in these important career development activities interacting with business professionals. The student-athlete should be required to attend an on-campus career fair during their junior and/or senior year. Vocational learning experiences that lead the student-athlete outside of their comfort zone and allow them to engage with individuals outside the athlete community are imperative for a smoother post-graduation career transition. Outside of gaining general career knowledge and familiarity with businesses who attend the career fair, the experience can assist the student-athlete in perfecting their networking skills as well as locating employment leads. Even the NFL bound student-athlete would benefit from the opportunity of stepping outside his comfort zone to mix and mingle in a professional setting practicing
important professional skills that will be needed in a life after sports. During the junior or senior year, a seminar regarding the emotional and psychological transition challenges the student-athlete may experience post-graduation should be presented. At that time, the post-graduation career and transitional program should be introduced to the student-athlete.

**Post-Graduation Career Development & Transitional Assistance Programming**

*I think getting away from football in general, for me, and a lot of my other buddies who I played ball with, it’s hard . . . football becomes your identity. When I go home, back to where I’m from, I’m ‘Marcus, the Football Player’, you know? And that’s where everybody knows me. . . I’d played football ever since I was nine years old . . . and then when I was twenty-two, it got taken away from me. And at that point, I’m like, ‘Okay, now what?’ You know? . . . I miss it, I miss it terribly and I know any guy who I played with who used to play football, they miss it terribly . . . When it’s gone, it hurts. It, it, it’s tough to deal with, it really is, it takes a little bit of while to figure out, ‘Okay, who am I beside this football player?’ and I think what you probably as an athlete will need to realize earlier on in life is that football is not going to last forever . . . You’re not done, but football is done with you . . . It’s hard, you do go through an identity crisis trying to figure out who am I now? A lot of guys, you know, when they graduate, and then it’s just kind of done. They’re in an apartment by themselves . . .

Mark

Displaying the need for athlete career and transitional assistance, organizations such as the National Football League (NFL) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have established career development and transitional assistance programs for their athletes. In recent years, there also has been growth in former athlete owned career development and corporate recruiting firms devoted to assisting the athlete population in career development and
employment as well as providing transitional support to a life after sports. In 2006, the IOC established the Athlete Career Programme (ACP) to help “athletes successfully manage the difficult transition from elite sport to a new career through professional development and job placement” (IOC, 2011). The ACP reports that in the program’s initial year it assisted 1054 athletes with career and athletic transitional assistance compared to 2,402 athletes in 2011 (IOC, 2011). These figures show not only a need for such programming, but also display growing participation suggesting that “if you build it, they will come.”

While influential sports organizations like the IOC and the NFL are providing considerable resources to establish transitional services for the elite athlete, the NCAA has not formally acknowledged or addressed student-athlete post-graduation transitional issues or intentions to establish a collegiate post-graduation transitional assistance program. Football student-athletes in this study did not report having been exposed to Life Skills programming that discussed transitional issues. Hawkins, Milan-Williams and Carter (2007) also note a lack of student-athlete retirement education and state that, “athletic administrators must incorporate [athletic retirement education] into the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program with mandatory workshops, seminars and/or classes” (p. 111). Throughout this research study, there was an overwhelming amount of evidence documenting the emotional as well as psychological challenges that confront the student-athlete post-graduation in regards to lifestyle transition and athletic retirement.

**Emotional & Psychological Transitional Support**

*Because it was like, ‘Okay, I’m used to being in a locker room with a hundred and ten guys all the time, I’ve always got somebody to talk to you, there’s always something to do’ . . . Now, it’s you leave all of those guys and now you’re on your own. They’ve got their schedules*
now and so they're in meetings at seven o'clock in morning doing football stuff from seven to
twelve and you're sitting at home or at work trying to figure out [what am I going to do]. Man, I
miss getting up at five o'clock in the morning. Never thought I'd say that but, you know, what am
I doing? . . . It was definitely the isolation [that was the hardest] because you go from being
around a group of guys with all different types of personalities and you learn so much from just
being around different personalities and then it's like . . . I had to really think about, you know,
different stuff by myself. I'd always got someone to talk to and get their perspective on different
things . . . It was definitely like a big drop off because you had people saying, 'You need to be in
class, we'll be there to check on you in class, make sure you’re in class' and then, okay, you had
tutors in study hall and so you always had somebody there making sure you do everything you
needed to get done, done. But once that was done with and over [when I graduated], it was like,
'Wow, now I have to actually make all these decisions by myself. Do I really want to be
responsible for actually doing the things that I’m supposed to do? Or do I want to, I could
actually sleep in today . . . Or that person texting, 'Where are you? You’re going to be late for
meetings.'

Mark

Upon graduation, a reconditioning of the conditioned athletes takes place in regards to
lifestyle. The over-structured scheduled that was dictated by the athletic and administrative staff
leaves the student-athlete with an unusual amount of down time. Conditioned to constant
communications from a support staff regarding responsibilities, the transition can be a very
lonely and isolated time for the student-athlete. The emotional and psychological impact of the
lifestyle change can be magnified with career confusion and career anxiety. While not explicitly
expressed, many of the student-athletes in this study felt that they had been left to fend for
themselves; this observation was also made by Hawkins, Milan-Williams and Carter (2007). The emotional and psychological issues related to athletic retirement are very real as documented in this study and can persist for years following graduation. It takes time for the football player to adapt to the athlete identity having a less prominent role in his life and it takes time to identify and redirect previously dominant skill sets that must take on a less prominent role or may no longer be needed in the graduated student-athletes life. During this transition, career unpreparedness is very problematic as the graduated football player is not in an emotional or psychological state for career development. However, if the student-athlete had career developed during his college years, he would at least have a foundation to begin a job search. In this research study, the presence of other identities (student, career, husband, father, brother, son) appeared to expedite and/or lessen the emotional and psychological grieving process over the loss of the athlete identity. To assist the student-athlete with this difficult transition, a comprehensive student-athlete career development program should include a post-graduate transitional assistance program including access to or a referral for psychological services to assist the student-athlete in adjusting to a career and life without sports. Academically and/or athletically successful student-athletes are forever celebrated by their alma mater to lure future recruits or to promote the institution’s academic and athletic excellence. Simply stated, a post-graduation assistance program just seems to be the right thing to do.

**Additional Administrative Considerations for Student-Athlete Career Development Programming**

For a student-athlete career development program to be successful, it is important to outline and define the roles of the individuals invested in the student-athlete’s athletic and career development process. According to this research study, the athletic academic advisor is the
primary major and career development resource for the student-athlete. In 1981, the University of Florida outlined an innovative counseling program with the goal of increasing student-athlete graduation rates. The program expanded the “traditional” athletic advisor role to not only include assisting the student-athlete with course selection and eligibility status, but to also include the identification and guidance of personal vocation and academic concerns (Wittmer, Bostic, Phillips, & Waters, p. 54, 1981).

While the NCAA’s APR and GSR academic requirements are largely credited for the increase in student-athlete graduation rates today, on many college campuses the athletic academic advisor role has continued to expand. For example, the role of the athletic academic advisor at the University of Florida now includes assisting student-athletes in the areas of class advisement, tutoring, mentoring and career development as well as petition processes, problematic areas (such as test anxiety), personal counseling and time management (University of Florida, 2012). This study revealed the reliance of the student-athlete on the athletic academic advisor for issues related to academics as well as major, career information and personal development. The data displayed major and career conversations that are based upon advisor perceptions of the student-athlete in career versus an informed career counseling session with the student-athlete taking an active role in personal exploration and decisions impacting his future career.

According to McCalla-Wriggens (2009), while both academic and career advising are grounded in student development and student learning theories, career advising has the added caveat of career development theory. Academic advisors have a vast knowledge of the institution’s academic policies, procedures, degree and GPA requirements, but may not have specific information about careers, skills required for certain jobs, employment options in
different fields, or strategies to obtain employment (McCalla-Wrigngens, 2009). The individual working directly with the student-athlete in a career counseling role should have a formal education in career counseling or direct experience in a career development role particularly for LTCC to be effectively implemented in individual student-athlete career development counseling sessions. While an athletic department’s financial and human resources may be limited to employ an individual educated and experienced in the area of career counseling specifically for the student-athlete population, perhaps career services for the student-athlete population can be coordinated with existing university career services staff and resources. Another option would be to train athletic academic advisors in career counseling for this hybrid role. It is important that the career counselor be integrated as part of the athletic academic advising staff. A holistic approach whereby the career counselor is working in tandem with the athletic academic advisor would be ideal.

Special attention needs to be given to those student-athletes who have been identified as “high risk”. High risk student-athletes include those who may struggle academically, are first-generation college students and/or are from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The academically “high risk” student might not have the time and/or mental energies to devote to career development during his academic career. These students will most likely be career delayed and every effort should be made to engage them in the post-graduation assistance program prior to and following graduation. Consideration should also be provided to the first-generation college student and/or the student-athlete who comes from a low socioeconomic background. King, Madsen, Braverman, Paterson & Yancey (2008) report that urban, low-income and minority youth appear more likely to “utilize media-saturated images of popular culture” to construct their career aspirations “due to a lack of models of success for them to draw upon” (p. 37). These
student-athletes will have a very narrow view of career and will especially need to be exposed to learning experiences that allow them to become aware of their skill sets and interests as well as career opportunities that relate to those skill sets and interests. “It is important that program developers pay particular attention to intervening in the cycle of problems related to poverty that often derail the career development process of low-income youth: low educational attainment, limited awareness of career options and the belief that there are few meaningful employment opportunities available to them” (King & Madsen, 2007 p. 397).

If the university has a first-generation college student support program or student group, the student-athlete should be encouraged to participate when at all possible. The engagement with other first generation college students who are not athletes will provide emotional and psychological support for the student-athlete but also assist the student-athlete in gauging his career development process. As these student-athletes near graduation, they most likely will not have impactful career resources nor will they be able to rely upon family for career search assistance. Therefore, these student-athletes should be introduced to a strong mentor early in their academic career. The career mentor should be someone willing to provide the first generation college student-athlete career development and transitional assistance during the student-athlete’s academic career and beyond as these student-athletes will need continued support in navigating the job market.

**Conclusion**

*I came back to the point where I’ve always wanted to go into law enforcement, that’s just something I’ve always wanted to do. And when I sat down and I actually started the process . . . It’s kind of funny, a buddy, he’s a sergeant with the police department and he called me and said, ‘If you want a job, just apply and I’m pretty sure you’ll get it’ and I applied in December*
and I got hired April 11th . . . He was working here when I was in college and I got my scooter stolen and he actually came and did the report and we kind of met then and started talking and I told him one day that I wanted to go into law enforcement and I guess he remembered and he called me. Just out of the blue. I didn’t even have his number and he called me out of the blue one day and said, ‘If you want a job, we’ve got one for you.’ The first couple of months I had to go to the Academy and so I spent eleven weeks, two months at the Academy and that was awesome. I met a lot of people from different departments that I work with now . . . It’s hard to fulfill that sports feeling but [my work environment] is like an athletic team because it is a law enforcement community. There are a lot of things that we do, a lot of people don’t realize and there are a lot of things that I didn’t realize until I got into this job . . . I’ve never once questioned being in law enforcement. Now, obviously, I don’t want to be patrol forever, really want to get into the FBI what’s called a “Behavior Science Unit” where they profile serial killers and get into the mind and understand why they do what they do. That’s something that’s going to come later because obviously, I need to have more experience and stuff of that nature but that’s what I want to do . . . I have a plan . . . I know where I want to get to [within the FBI] . . . I love my job and career . . . I felt like college sports prepares you mentally for a career.

Harris

Although the participants in this research study all report career satisfaction at three to seven years post-graduation, the career search process upon entering the job market and the transition to a life after sports is a very turbulent time from the perspective of the student-athlete. While elite athletes are praised for their high level of dedication and focus on their sport, the tunnel vision lifestyle comes at a cost. The physical, emotional, and mental time demands of sport at the elite level, despite an athlete’s best efforts at balancing other life roles, result in the
underdevelopment of identities, interests and skill sets outside of the sports arena. Culturally, our society praises the athlete status, providing the athlete special benefits and considerations promoting a sense of entitlement and/or a lack of understanding of how the real world operates. For the collegiate athlete experiencing emerging adulthood, athletic demands whether voluntarily or involuntarily imposed, result in the athlete inadequately exploring and engaging in activities that would broaden the student-athlete’s self-concept. With a broader understanding of themselves, the student-athlete would be in a more advantageous position to begin the athletic retirement process and make successful post-graduate vocational decisions.

Although the NCAA promotes a Life Skills program that enhances the academic, athletic and personal development of the student-athlete through educational seminars, community service and career development throughout the student-athlete’s years of eligibility, according to this study, the career development component of this program does not appear to be a priority at membership institutions. Despite research dating back to the 1980’s pointing out student-athlete deficiencies in the area of career development, the NCAA has not publically acknowledged that student-athletes are facing vocational and retirement challenges post-graduation. In 2007, the NCAA launched a well-known public service announcement that delivered a message to the contrary stating that “There are over 380,000 student athletes, and most of us go pro in something other than sports” (NCAA, 2007). While organizations such as the International Olympic Committee and the National Football League have established programming to assist athletes in career and retirement transition at the conclusion of a sports career, the NCAA and its academic institutions are in a unique position to provide educational vocational programming during the student-athlete’s academic career preventing the dramatic transitional issues student-athletes are experiencing as they evolve from athlete to working professional. A comprehensive
and mandatory career development program focused on educating the student-athlete on the opportunity costs of the student-athlete experience as well as exposing the student-athlete to career development activities to expand the athlete’s self-concept outside of sport will result in a student-athlete who is better prepared for the job search process and the emotional and psychological transition away from athletic retirement. Just as athletic administrators were faced with the provocation of academic reform by the NCAA in the early 2000’s, administrators should be challenged to also prepare the student-athlete for a career and transition to a life after sports. Other sporting organizations that have acknowledged this issue by establishing career development and transitional programs have already shown that if you build it, the athletes will come.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The topic of student-athlete career development is multi-faceted. The limited research on this topic has primarily focused on quantitative research methods. While this study did utilize quantitative and qualitative methods for purposes of complementarity, development and initiation, this study had a primary qualitative emphasis. The results of this study display the effectiveness of qualitative methods in obtaining a breadth and depth of understanding to the issues involving this complex topic. Not only did this research study provide themes that concurred with previous research findings, the lived experiences of the football student-athlete provided an enriched understanding of the student-athlete career development process. The use of qualitative inquiry and/or mixed methods is highly recommended for future studies focused on the topic of student-athlete career development. The following are recommendations for future research:
1. The mixed methods research design of this study should be duplicated featuring individual men and women sport teams sponsored by a particular institution. Collectively the results of these studies across teams could be compared to determine similarities and differences among teams in regards to student-athlete career development engagement, career development deficiencies, levels of career preparedness upon graduation and post-graduation transition issues. Research among teams and across teams can be evaluated to ensure that student-athlete career development programming is meeting the needs of the entire student-athlete population on a particular campus.

2. Although the researcher is not well read on military veteran’s emotional and psychological transition into a career and life after the military, there does appear to be parallels between military veteran population transition and the athlete population. Future research focused on exploring parallels between these two populations may provide insights into transitional counseling as well as career counseling.

3. Mixed methods research focused on the topic of clustering should be conducted to determine the impact NCAA Academic Success Rates (ASR’s) and Graduation Success Rates (GSR’s) have on the student-athlete’s major declaration, matriculation pace and career development process. For a fair and balanced evaluation of this topic, a complete review of the research participant’s academic admissions information as well as academic progression information must be reviewed. In addition, qualitative interviews providing the athletic academic advisor’s perspective as well as the student-athlete’s perspective must be evaluated for a complete understanding of each individual student-athlete’s academic journey. Due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA),
obtaining academic records and speaking to an athletic academic advisor about a specific student-athlete’s academic situation for the purposes of research will be a challenge.

4. Further research should focus on the student-athlete population’s post-graduate career ladder examining the quality of jobs as well as income level at which the former athlete has been employed. If at all possible, this information should be compared to the general student population as it may provide additional evidence to support the need for student-athlete career development programming. If a student-athlete career development program and/or student-athlete alumni career mentoring or networking program is in place, this data should provide evidence of what athletes are ‘going pro in’ outside of sports. The data can assist an athletic program in evaluating the growth and the effectiveness of the student-athlete career development program and, if the data is favorable, it could also be utilized for recruiting and university promotional purposes displaying a commitment to prepare the student-athlete for a life after sports.
REFERENCES


http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/ViewArticles/Integrating-career-and-academic-advising.aspx


National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), (1994). *NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Program* [Brochure].


APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project that is being conducted as a dissertation requirement for the doctoral program in the College of Education at the University of Georgia. For this project I will be conducting an on-line questionnaire, an on-line survey and a one hour interview with graduated Division I football student-athletes who are three to five years post-graduation to examine their personal career development experiences, perspectives of their career preparedness upon graduation and their transition into a professional career. The research will be supervised by advising faculty and dissertation committee member Billy Hawkins, Ph.D. The information generated will be used for academic research and/or publication. All information obtained will be treated confidentially.

To participate in the research study you will need to complete this consent form. Upon completion of the consent form, you will be asked to complete an on-line questionnaire. At the conclusion of the on-line questionnaire, you will be invited to participate further in this research study. If you agree, you may be contacted to complete an additional on-line survey followed by a one hour interview.

For the interview component of this research study, I will conduct an audiotaped interview. Based upon your location, the interview may take place face-to-face or over the telephone. Should the interview be conducted over the telephone, the researcher will conduct the interview in a private location. The audiotaped interview will later be confidentially transcribed and coded for analysis. Following transcription and analysis, I will contact participants to perform a follow-up interview to acquire additional depth of information, if needed. Participants will have the opportunity to review the transcriptions for clarification.

You are free to withdraw from participating in the study at any time. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 770-354-4587. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences and viewpoints with us. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Heather Stepp McCormick

Billy Hawkins, PhD
Associate Professor, College of Education, Professor, Department of Kinesiology
Signature of Researcher  Date

Signature of Participant  Date

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.
APPENDIX B

ON-LINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant ID: ________

Name: _____________________________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

Home Phone: _________________________      Cell Phone: _________________________

E-Mail Address: _____________________________________________________________________

University Attended: __________________________________________________________________

Years Attended College: ________________________ Year Graduated: _______________

Major: ___________________     Current Occupation: ________________________________

Please answer the following questions by checking the appropriate answer.

1. My ethnic identification is:

    ______ African American      ______ White

    ______ Asian-American        ______ Other, Please Specify:___________

    ______ Hispanic

2. Please provide an estimated range of family income prior to enrolling as a student-
athlete at your academic institution. Please check the appropriate family income range
below.

    ______ Under $25,000      ______ $75,000 - $100,000

    ______ $25,000 - $50,000      ______ $100,000 - $125,000
3. Are you the first member of your family to attend and graduate from a college or university? YES _________ NO _________

If no, please check which other immediate family members have graduated from a college or university?

_____ Mother _____ Father _____ Brother/Sister

4. As a student-athlete, in regards to an athletic scholarship, I was on:

_____ A Full Scholarship _____ Personally Financed Education

_____ A Partial Scholarship _____ Other Scholarship

5. Please check the response that describes your playing status during the majority of your college athletic career.

_____ A Starter _____ A Reserve

_____ In the Playing Rotation _____ Medical Hardship

6. Did you participate in a professional sports combine or tryout?

_____ Yes _____ No

7. What is your status in regards to employment as a professional athlete?

_____ Currently Employed as a Pro Athlete

_____ Previously Employed as a Pro Athlete Number of Years Played: _____

_____ Never Employed as a Pro Athlete

8. Which of the following career development activities did you engage in prior to graduating from your academic institution? Please check all that apply.

_____ Research a Career. Acquired information through athletic/academic advisors, family members, professors, working professionals or other resources to learn about careers related to your major or career area of interest.
________ Internship. Participated in a course credit or paying internship gaining work experience or knowledge in a career area.

________ Externship. Followed or shadowed a professional in a work environment.

________ Work Experience. Employed in a part-time or full-time paid position.

________ Resume. Prepared a resume for your job search.

________ Interview Preparation. Performed a mock interview or practiced answering interviewing questions specifically for a job in your career area of interest.

________ Networking. Attended networking events and/or actively sought out individuals in your career area of interest for information or your future job search.

________ Created/Developed a Job Search Plan. Formulated a plan or process to find a job in your career area of interest prior to graduation.

9. What is your current employment situation?

_______ Unemployed, Not Job Seeking _________ Employed, Full Time

_______ Unemployed, Job Seeking _________ Employed, Job Seeking

_______ Employed, Part Time _________ Graduate Student

10. Which of the following describes your professional role? Please check one.

_______ Business Owner/Self-Employed _________ Support Staff

_______ Executive _________ Trained Professional

_______ Upper Management _________ Skilled Laborer

_______ Middle Management _________ Consultant

_______ Lower Management _________ Researcher

_______ Administrative Staff _________ Temporary Employee

_______ Other: _____________
11. What is the salary range of your current position or your last full-time employed position:

- [ ] Under $25,000
- [ ] $25,000 - $50,000
- [ ] $50,000 - $75,000
- [ ] $75,000 - $100,000
- [ ] $100,000 - $125,000
- [ ] $150,000 +

12. If employed, please rate your current job satisfaction. Please check one below.

- [ ] Very Satisfied
- [ ] Partially Satisfied
- [ ] Satisfied
- [ ] Unsatisfied
- [ ] Very Unsatisfied

13. Would you like to continue as a participant in this study by participating in an open-ended survey and a one hour interview?

- [ ] Yes, please contact me.
- [ ] No thank you.
APPENDIX C

OPEN-ENDED SURVEY

Participant ID: _________

1. What was your major? Was this your preferred area of study?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2. Are your career goals related to your degree of study? Why or why not?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

3. Was your job search following graduation in your career area of interest? If not, why?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

4. Did you feel prepared to make the transition into a professional career? Why or why not?

___________________________________________________________________________
5. How many different positions have you held since graduation? Are they in the same career field? If not, why?

6. What are your thoughts on your current occupation and your future career?
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about your experience as a student-athlete?

2. Tell me about your academic area of study?

3. Do you feel your education/degree of study prepared you for your career? Explain your answer.

4. Did you feel prepared to make the transition to a life after sports? Why or why not?

5. What were your feelings upon graduation and entering the professional world?

6. Tell me about the career development activities you participated prior to graduating from your academic institution.
   A.) How did you research your career?
   B.) Tell me about any externships or internships you performed?
   C.) What type of employment opportunities, if any, did you have prior to graduation?
   D.) Tell me about the way you conducted your initial job search?
   E.) How did you practice your interviewing skills?
   F.) How did you conduct your job search?

7. What led to your involvement in these activities (personal initiation, a course, CHAMPS/Life Skills program, University career services)?

8. Tell me about the career development activities you participated following graduation from your academic institution.
   A.) How did you research your career?
   B.) Tell me about any externships or internships you performed?
C.) What type of employment opportunities, if any, did you have prior to graduation?

D.) Tell me about the way you conducted your initial job search?

E.) How did you practice your interviewing skills?

F.) How did you conduct your job search?

9. Tell me about the process you took in obtaining your first job post-graduation.

10. Tell me about your first job leading up the career ladder to where you are today.

11. Tell me about your personal transition from being a student-athlete to a working professional.

12. What type of services or activities would have had you better prepared, if any, for making the transition from a student-athlete to the professional world?

13. What is your current employment situation? Are you satisfied/were you satisfied with your first job and where you are today in regards to your career path?

14. What is your current employment situation? Are you satisfied/were you satisfied with your first job and where you are today in regards to your career path?

15. What is your current employment situation? Are you satisfied/were you satisfied with your first job and where you are today in regards to your career path?

16. What do you think the University and/or Athletic Association would/should have provided to you or done differently in preparing you for a life after sports?

17. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the topic of career development and the student-athlete?

***Interviewer will ask additional probing questions when needed.***
APPENDIX E

QUALITATIVE CODES

100 Reason for Selection Institution
   110 Academics Prominent in Decision-Making Process
   111 Parental Influence
   120 Athletics Prominent in Decision-Making Process
   121 NFL/Professional Opportunities

200 Major
   210 Preferred Area of Study
      211 Career Goals Related to Major
      212 Career Goals Not Related to Major
   220 Not Preferred Area of Study
      221 Career Goals Related to Major
      222 Career Goals Not Related to Major
   230 Major Changes During Academic Career (#)
      231 Reasons for Major Changes
      232 Influence(s) for Major Change
   240 Clustering
      241 Experienced Clustering
      242 Witnessed Clustering

300 Research a Career
   310 Did Research a Career
      311 Activities Performed
      312 Resources Utilized for Major/Career Research
   320 Did Not Research a Career
      321 Reasons for Not Researching a Career
      322 Lack of Understanding of Interests/Values, Etc.

400 Externship
   410 Participated
      411 Influence(s) in Participation
   420 Did Not Participate
      421 Reasons for Not Participating/Time Conundrum

500 Internship
   510 Participated
      511 Influences(s) in Participation
   520 Did Not Participate
      521 Reasons for Not Participating/Time Conundrum

600 Work Experience
   610 Participated
      611 Not Exploratory Work Experience
620  Did Not Participate
621  Reasons for Not Participating/Time Conundrum

700  Resume
710  Participated
711  Resources Utilized
720  Did Not Participate
721  Reasons for Not Participating

800  Networking
810  Participated
811  Resources Utilized
820  Did Not Participate
821  Reasons for Not Participating
822  Feelings of Regret/Lost Opportunities

900  Job Search Plan
910  Had Plan Prior to Graduation
911  Influence(s) in Participation
920  Did Not Have Plan Prior to Graduation
921  Reasons for Not Participating/Time Conundrum

1000  Career Preparedness Upon Graduation
1010  Feelings of Preparedness
1011  Reasons for Preparedness
1020  Feelings of Unpreparedness
1021  Post-Graduation Career Confusion
1022  Entitlement/Unrealistic Career Expectations

1100  Career Ladder Post-Graduation
1110  First Job in Career Area of Interest
1120  First Job Not in Career Area of Interest
1130  Dissatisfaction with First Job Post-Graduation
1131  Number of Jobs/Year Post-Graduation
1132  Types of Job Post-Grad/Lack of Career Ladder

1200  Current Career
1210  Career Satisfied
1220  Career Unsatisfied
1230  Career Related to Degree Area of Study

1300  Career Development Programming
1310  Need for Student-Athlete Career Development Programming
1311  Mandatory Programming
1320  Comprehensive Programming
1321  Early Career Development Programming
1322  Programming As Athlete ID Naturally Decreases
1330  Suggested Content
1331  Establish a Value for Degree
1332  Understand Skill Sets & Relation to Career
1333  Establish Realistic Career/Salary Expectations
1334  Need for Experiential Opportunities
1335  Networking
1335.1 Leverage D-1 Status
1335.2 Mentoring Program
1336 Address First Generation College Student Needs
1337 Post-Graduation Career Development Assistance

1400 Transition to a Life After Sports
1410 Student-Athlete to Civilian Life Transition

1411 Independent Life Skills
1412 Loss of Support Team/Handlers

1420 Emotional & Psychological Transition Issues
1421 Loss of Athlete Identity
1421.1 Career Confusion
1422 Stages of Grief
1422.1 Career Confusion