

# About Campus, In the Classroom and on the Court: Supporting Your Student-Athlete

Y

ou have watched him play ball since he was three. It began in your backyard with the neighborhood kids, next came the summer camps, driving him to and from practice, cheering him on at games, and listening to how great, and how awful (sometimes on the same day), the coach was. Now his dream has come true, and he is heading to college for further education...and to play ball.



Student-athletes are a special population. They have great support amongst their athletic peers and teammates, but tend to be a segregated group on campus with special needs. Your student is fortunate; he will have two opportunities to gain valuable qualities and skills at college, in the classroom and on the field. Following are suggestions on how you can foster his continued growth and success, as a pupil and player.

**There is a reason why the word “student” is first in the identification of “student-athlete.” School first, sports next.**

- Encourage him to find out what academic resources are available for student-athletes.
- Some colleges have specific academic advising departments, tutoring programs and library resources accessible just for athletes, after hours.
- He needs to get to know his professors as well as he knows his coach.
- In order to be academically eligible to play he will need to maintain a certain GPA.
- Encourage him to use his coach as a resource. College coaches are prepared to advise students on multiple issues.

**Routinely send the message that playing sports is about having fun.**

- When the team wins, or he plays well, recognize his personal AND team success.
- When the team loses, or he plays poorly, listen and provide productive feedback; then move on.
- Playing college athletics is different than playing in high school. Sometimes the fun and passion

disappears. If your student no longer has a desire to play, and ultimately chooses to quit, support his decision.

- There is more fun, and fun people, to be found on a college campus. Encourage him to leave the “locker room” and explore campus life.

**Be a model fan.**

- Good sportsmanship is an expectation of most college communities.
- Publicly support your student’s team and the coaching staff. You certainly have the right to your opinion, but keep it for the car drive home.
- Attend family events, banquets, and competitions when you can.

**Promote overall wellness.**

- Athletes burn a lot of calories and energy, so maintaining good nutrition is a must and will show in their overall performance.
- Be aware of warning signs of disordered eating:
  - Comments** about weight, appearance, and food
  - Restricting** food, especially during hard training periods
  - Unexplained** weight loss
  - Frequent** comments about others’ eating patterns
  - Comments** about feeling cold
  - Developing** fine hair on the body, bloodshot eyes and puffy cheeks
- Encourage your student to maintain a fitness regime in the off-season. Doing so will help him transition successfully back into the regular season, and also promote an overall health lifestyle, now and after graduation.

**Encourage your student to seek help if necessary.**

- Student athletes live in an environment that stresses self-reliance, thus creating a mentality in which asking for help is seen as weak.
- Helpful campus resources that can address issues often faced by student athletes: Academic Tutors, Registered Dietitians, Registered Nurse/Doctors, Athletic Trainers, Captains.

Source: *The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)*, [www1.ncaa.org/membership/ed\\_outreach/health-safety/sports\\_med\\_education/triad/Handbook.pdf](http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/ed_outreach/health-safety/sports_med_education/triad/Handbook.pdf)