

J. Davis Winkie – About Me

- Today: 2nd year history Ph.D. student & teaching assistant at UNC-CH, officer cadet in NCARNG
- 2014-16: Scholarship football player at Vanderbilt, graduated May 2017 with double major in History and Classics



Federal 6-Year Graduation Data (4 year average)

| University | Black Male Athlete % | All Athletes % | All Students % |
|------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| UNC-CH | 43% | 69% | 90% |
| NC State | 51% | 66% | 76% |
| Duke | 81% | 86% | 95% |
| Michigan | 67% | 81% | 91% |
| UCLA | 57% | 72% | 91% |
| Vanderbilt | 86% | 86% | 92% |
| Virginia | 65% | 80% | 94% |

Source: Harper, S. R. (2018). *Black male student-athletes and racial inequities in NCAA Division I college sports: 2018 edition*. Los Angeles: University of Southern California, Race and Equity Center.

NC's Black Athletic Graduation Crisis

- State's two largest schools failing Black athletes
 - UNC-CH ranks dead last in ACC at graduating Black athletes, NCSU 3rd to last
 - NCSU's Black athlete grad rate fell by 9% from 2016 to 2018
- Disparities with general grad rate lower at other D1 public schools, but still room to improve
 - Appalachian State: 65%
 - UNC Wilmington: 44%
 - UNC Asheville: 46%
 - Eastern Carolina: 57%
 - HBCU male athletes graduate at higher rates than non-athletes

Balancing Sports and School – My Experience

- Atypical in some ways
 - Graduated in 3 years
 - Shifted focus to academics after losing position battle
 - Dead set on my majors before enrolling
 - Vanderbilt's unique internship/career driven approach to academic support
 - More on this later
- Typical in other ways
 - Study or sleep?
 - Unable to take AM classes due to practice schedule
 - Little time for extracurriculars/social activity

Primary challenges to academic success

- Scheduling/time demands
 - D1 athletes average ~40 hrs/week on athletic activities
 - Inability to take certain courses/attend office hours
 - Lack of flexibility for tougher academic weeks
- Academic identity suppressed by athletic identity
 - Leads players to “cluster” in easier majors, regardless of career aspirations
 - A majority of upperclassman UNC-CH football players have clustered in communication studies and exercise and sport science
 - Discourages career planning beyond dreams of going pro
 - Perceived lack of purpose to academics leads to lack of effort

Alleviating the challenges

- I propose three lines of effort for reform
 - Goal: reduce strain put on college athletes by problems plaguing current system in order to increase positive academic outcomes across the UNC system
- 1. Enshrine & protect athletes' academic time and right to determine own academic schedule
- 2. Mandate “academic redshirts” (with reduced practice hours) for frosh athletes who do not meet UNC system minimum admission requirements
- 3. Integrate career interests and internship opportunities into coherent, holistic academic support plans

Proposals: Protected Academic Time & Scheduling Rights

- Under current rules, athletes already have eight-hour protected overnight period (e.g. 9 PM – 5 AM)
 - Improvement: Right to 10 hour overnight period for sleep AND study, with exceptions for medical treatment in first/last hour
- Right to make verified visits to professors/TAs' office hours that irreconcilably conflict with practice or workouts
 - Limit to 2x/month to minimize missed practice
- Right to know & determine one's own academic schedule and path to graduation
 - Eliminate forced "clustering"
 - Unresolved Q: How do we protect students who require a course for graduation that is only offered during practice hours?

Proposal: Academic Redshirts

- Some admitted athletes across the state do not meet UNC System minimum admission requirements or minimum course requirements
 - 800 SAT or 17 ACT and >2.5 HS GPA
- Most vulnerable to falling behind in first year, and thus most vulnerable to exploitation
- Idea: ineligible for competition, continuous monitored academic progress, career interest workshops, reduced practice/meeting hours
 - Would allow for students to develop an academic identity
 - Opportunity for NCGA to do right by vulnerable athletes and lead the way on this issue

Proposal: Integrate career interests and internships into academic support programming

- Modeled on Vanderbilt Athletics Summer Internship Program
 - School pays room/board for athletes while they work unpaid internships exploring career interests
 - Costs school less than paying for summer classes
 - Part-time schedule allows athletes to participate in summer workouts w/ NCAA waiver
 - Mon–Thurs, with Fridays reserved for career development workshops
 - 2018: 83% of participants reported the internship clarified their career interests
- Athletes can discover career passions that will sustain an academic identity
 - Gives direction & sense of purpose to course of study

One last proposal: Open-ended scholarships

- College coaches pay lip service to academics but constantly remind players who pays the bills
- Reduce this pressure to neglect academics by safeguarding scholarships against coaches
 - Absent misconduct, scholarships should be guaranteed to graduation
 - Not possible under current NCAA rules, so should be guaranteed for entirety of an athlete's eligibility