

Organizational Analysis at San José State Athletics:

Building the SASS Peer Mentoring Program

A Project Report

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Building the SASS Peer Mentoring Program

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Abstract

This research project was set out to conduct organizational analysis at the San José State Athletics Department in order to, first, gain understanding of the organizational practices and behaviors across and within the subdivisions of the department, with specific focus on the processes of the Student-Athlete Success Services (SASS) unit. The second and ultimate goal of the research project was to establish a peer mentoring pilot program offered under the scope of SASS services. The mentoring program was established with the purpose to provide academic, personal, social, and professional support for Spartan student-athletes to aid them in their efforts to gain a holistic college experience while meeting the various expectations brought on by their dual role as collegiate athletes.

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Above all, I would be nowhere without my Family. Szülőcskék, a világot adtátok nekem. Áron, Te vagy a legjobb barátom. Éva, köszönöm hogy vagy, végtelenül hálás vagyok a támogatásodért. Bubu, L.Y.A.L.Y.F.

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
	Collegiate Athletics.....	1
	San José State Spartans.....	2
	Scott Gadway Academic Center	3
	Student-Athlete Success Services (SASS).....	3
	SASS Peer Mentoring Services	4
II.	Developing the Project Focus	6
III.	Theoretical Framework	10
	Organizational Culture.....	10
	Student-Athletes' Challenges.....	12
	Peer Mentoring Framework.....	14
IV.	Methodology	17
V.	Fieldwork	21
	Limited Student-Athlete Support Services.....	22
	Disconnected Units.....	24
	Student-Athlete Success Services Unit.....	25
	Change in SASS Leadership.....	27
	SASS Peer Mentoring Services.....	29
	i. <i>Fall 2015</i>	30
	ii. <i>Spring 2016</i>	33
	iii. <i>Fall 2016</i>	36
	GradesFirst.....	37
	Coaches' Involvement.....	39
	Through the Eyes of the Student-Athletes.....	40
	Discussion.....	45
VI.	Suggestions	47
	Student-Athlete Success Services.....	48
	Hiring Peer Mentors.....	49
	Training the Peer Mentors.....	51
	Involving Coaches.....	52
	Improving GradesFirst.....	52
	Informing Student-Athletes.....	52
VII.	Conclusion	54
VIII.	Anthropological Difference	57
IX.	References	58
X.	Appendix of Evidence	62

I. Introduction

Collegiate Athletics

Having to fulfill a variety of expectations in the classroom as well as on the field, student-athletes are under immense stress. Beyond academic requirements given by their professors, student-athletes also face demands set by their coaches and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). These tasks come with daunting commitments regarding time and energy, and thus bring tremendous pressure. While competing for playing time on the field, they are expected to maintain good academic standing, participate in practice up to 20 hours a week, and attend mandatory team meetings as well as one-on-one athletic, academic, and advisor meetings (NCAA 2016a, 2016b; Cosh and Tully 2015; Putukian 2015; Wolverson 2007; Carodine *et al.* 2001). As the National Collegiate Athletic Association's eligibility requirements have been gradually growing stricter (NCAA 2016a, 2016b; Carodine *et al.* 2001), the collegiate athletics' academic support staffs and the student-athletes are now under even more pressure to meet these demands, often to the expense of academic attainment (Jayakumar, Comeaux 2016; Kulics *et al.* 2015; Putukian 2015; Wolverson 2007; Meyer 2005).

The strain that the various challenges put on student-athletes are demanding even for academically successful participants of collegiate athletics, let alone for 'at-risk' students. At-risk student-athletes are those in jeopardy of entering college unprepared to meet the academic requirements (Cosh and Tully 2015; Carodine *et al.* 2001). In order to aid student-athletes in coping with stress and meeting environmental expectations the NCAA (2016b) requires all member colleges participating in varsity sports to provide general academic counseling services specific to the needs of the student-athletes. Such services are offered

either by Athletics or another, non-athletic department of the university, and may include academic advising, career planning, tutoring, learning support etc. While the NCAA encourages and often provides funding for specific services, not all of them are implemented or utilized efficiently in the member universities (Jayakumar and Comeaux 2016). For example, the Division I Athletic Directors Association sponsors Challenging Athletic Minds for Personal Success (CHAMPS)/Life Skills programs that assure a distinguished athletic experience and comprehensive life-skill development for student-athletes (Carodine *et al.* 2001). Even with designated financial support, however, there is a shortage of resources in many universities. Nevertheless, there is an undeniable need for support and guidance for student-athletes in their endeavors to meet the number of strains brought on by their dual role.

San José State Spartans

As an NCAA Division I college, San José State University is among the leading institutions participating in collegiate athletics. Accordingly, the Spartan athletes must deal with a multitude of personal, academic, and athletic challenges. In the past years, due to a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, a lack of sufficient funding and resources, high turnover rate among the academic support staff, and inadequate communication within and across different organizational units of the Athletic department, the leadership agreed to assist my ethnographic study that evaluates organizational processes within the department. The main goal of the study was to troubleshoot problem areas within the Gadway Academic Center at San José State Athletics in general, and within the Student-Athlete Success Services unit in particular. Upon determining the main shortcomings within the department, the ultimate

purpose of the project was to plan a program that addresses the much needed—but so far neglected—areas of student-athlete development. In this project report, I review the organizational culture of San José State University’s Athletics department and the Student-Athlete Success Services unit, and offer a plan for implementing a peer mentor program as a supplementary service aiding the overall success of Spartan student-athletes.

Scott Gadway Academic Center

San José State University has been competing in collegiate athletics since 1890 and the school currently sponsors seven men’s and thirteen women’s varsity teams. On the main campus, the Event Center and the Spartan Complex and, at south campus, the CEFCU Stadium are hosts to practice and competition to these National Collegiate Athletic Association sanctioned teams. In 2003, the then president of the Spartan Foundation, Stan Gadway and his wife, Marilyn, gifted the Scott Gadway Academic Center (henceforth referred to as Gadway) in honor of their late son, Scott, to provide a quiet space for collegiate Spartan athletes to pursue their academic goals (SJSU Spartans 2016a).

Student-Athlete Success Services (SASS)

Since its unveiling, Gadway has been the central location for academic support services managed by the Student-Athlete Success Services unit that operates under the Office of Student and Faculty Success (SFS). SFS (2016) defines its framework for student success as providing “a rich and diverse learning environment to engage students not only in mastering core subject areas but also in developing and refining their competencies in creativity, critical

thinking, problem solving quantitative literacy, information literacy, communication and collaboration.” Led by the Senior Associate Athletics Director, the SASS full-time staff includes three academic advisors, two learning specialists, one academic eligibility coordinator and an academic support coordinator at the service of all currently enrolled student-athletes. SASS focuses on aiding student-athletes in pursuing academic success and personal accountability. Academic services offered to student-athletes include academic advising, and learning assistance by specialists and a group of peer tutors.

SASS Peer Mentoring Services

The lack of a long-term designated program conductor has accelerated the decentralization of both the tutoring and the mentoring program, leaving the Student-Athlete Success Services with a mentoring service that operates on inaccurate and inappropriate guidelines. On the right hand, due to a lack of consensus regarding the goals of peer mentoring and the Student-Athlete Success Services temporarily omitted mentoring from academic services. On the other hand, student-athletes’ past experiences of inconsistent and unsupervised mentoring have made many coaches hesitant to request mentoring for their incoming and/or ‘at-risk’ athletes. In addition, some coaches and many athletes were not aware about SASS offering mentoring to student-athletes, and thus did not take advantage of it. The formerly inaccurate representation of mentoring has generated a generally reluctant attitude towards the service among student-athletes, who now often perceive being assigned to meet with a mentor as a form of punishment.

Although, in the past years, peer mentoring has not been coordinated in a manner that lives up to the standards of Spartan Athletics, the need for it is beyond dispute (Cosh and Tully 2014; Cosh and Tully 2015). The unique stressors that collegiate student-athletes face often compromise their academics and well-being. Thus, it is imperative for the academic support staff to provide effective services that address student-athletes' needs accordingly (Cardoline et. al 2001; Cosh and Tully 2015). Sharing the vision of her predecessor, Ms. Bethel who called for the primary assessment and reviving of peer mentoring services at SJSU Athletics, Lena Fountain, the current senior associate athletics director for academics and student services, has been highly supportive of this research. She believed in my research project's potential to assess SJSU Athletics and the SASS unit, to provide guidance for collective action and, ultimately, to aid the construction of a new peer mentoring program, which will offer effective help to student-athletes in need.

I delivered a presentation (Appendix A) discussing the final summary of my research, my findings and recommendations to the Student-Athlete Success Services staff during a staff meeting December 16th, 2016.

II. Developing the Project Focus

The original plan for my project consisted of a comparative study of mentoring practices at San José State University. My goal was to gain better understanding of cross cultural mentoring practices (i.e.: when mentor and mentee come from different backgrounds) and intracultural mentoring practices (i.e.: when mentor and mentee share a background), and assess which one might provide the most effective support to students on diverse college campuses. This research concept was based on the issue that while the student body is constantly diversifying, the high school and college faculties and staff have failed to mirror this drift (Boser 2011), further adding to the disproportionate representation of students of color in the educational workforce (Levinson 2005).

In addition to the problem of disproportionate representation of the population's multicultural makeup, in education, on-campus staff and faculty are often unprepared to adequately address potential issues deriving from diversity, to navigate conversations on multiculturalism, and to nurture student success beyond the classroom (Barker 2007). Shortcomings in educators' training regarding cultural preparedness, thus, further contribute to the opportunity and achievement gaps, potentially reinforcing social stratification. Therefore, the original project was intended to provide data on which aspects of mentorship practices are most effective for student mentees' academic, personal, and social well-being, and to use the results to build a program incorporating these aspects into student success services.

Based on my preliminary observation, I learned that San José State's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) offered mentoring in which the mentors and the mentees were paired up based on shared interest and background, while the Athletics Department offered

mentoring with randomly selected mentors. Therefore, I set out to compare the two programs, considering the EOP's program to be the base for intracultural (Mata-Benito 2013) mentoring, while looking at Athletics' program as a cross-cultural mentoring practice (Collins et al. 1997).

However, my original project plan quickly changed, for the programs I set out to study were not comparable the way I had previously intended. First, as I was considering the program, potential connections, and key participants at EOP, I encountered a much too familiar obstacle in social science research, in which my access was so limited that it practically disabled any noteworthy impact on the studied community (Schensul 1973). While the leadership of the Educational Opportunity Program was willing to let me conduct academic research and limited observation within their quarters, they were not open to advocacy anthropology nor did they want an evaluation of their program. During a personal interview Jose (2016 April), the Transitions Programs Support Coordinator, shared that EOP leaders conduct self-assessment at the end of each semester and regroup accordingly —this practice has worked for them for years, and thus they felt that there was no need for me to conduct any additional evaluation. However, I did get some valuable insight about how their mentoring program is conducted by interviewing Jose (2016 April) and some students participating in the EOP New Student Mentor Program. Second, although the Academic department staff was much more welcoming —eager even— to have me conduct an assessment, upon taking a closer look at the supposed mentoring program, I concluded that there was no set program in progress that I could study. While Athletics offered “mentoring” through a designated intern majoring in Social Work, she was not trained nor supervised, and the offered service hardly passed as a set mentor program.

With the intention to redirect my research focus exclusively to San José State Athletics, I shared my primary observations with Ms. Bethel, the then Senior Associate Athletics Director for Academics and Student Services, who welcomed input (Personal interview, October 2015). Ms. Bethel called for a more in-depth study of the Student-Athlete Success Services program at Athletics, with the goal of establishing a structured peer-mentor program that would attend to student-athletes' need to succeed in and out of the classroom.

As a former SJSU student-athlete, playing on the Spartans water polo team from 2010-2015, I had extensive experience with the Athletics department. However, this experience was limited to that of a student-athlete, and excluded insight and understanding regarding operations on any other levels (e.g.: SASS staff, Administration, coaching staff, etc.) of the department. During the years I played it was clear that the Athletic department is determined to help its students in many ways, as well as the fact that despite operating with a spirited, willing and dedicated staff on all levels, there are several areas of student-development which were not properly addressed by any specific service at Spartan Athletics. These sidelined domains included building personal connections beyond athletics, professional development, and mental health care. Tutoring was mandatory for students in remedial classes and available for others in need, yet there was not much academic assistance that would go beyond helping with homework and focus on overall useful learning and study habits. To conclude, my past experience as a student-athlete regarding the Student-Athlete Success Services at Gadway, I found that while academic advisors helped with class enrollment and peer tutors helped with remedial homework, there was much room for improvement in services dealing with social, emotional and professional development of student-athletes. Inspired by my past experiences

as a student-athlete, nevertheless aware of potential personal biases, I set out to learn whether my previous observations of the limited nature of student-athlete support services are pertinent and, if so, to establish a service that aids address these potential shortcomings.

The project provides an anthropological approach to establishing a peer mentoring program as an integral part of the Student-Athlete Success Services at San José State University by Fall 2017, based on the diagnosis of the existing organizational structure and practices at the Spartans' Athletics Department. The research took place from the beginning of 2015 Fall until the end of 2016 Fall, as I worked alongside the staff of student-athlete success services as a graduate assistant for Athletics. Taking on the position allowed me access to observe all academic support services currently offered at Gadway, participate in academic staff and team meetings, attend workshops and conduct interviews with student-athletes (i.e.: mentees) and student employees (i.e.: peer mentors). Upon gathering and analyzing data, I have constructed a presentation for the Student-Athlete Success Services staff addressing the located issues regarding the academic support services, as well as delivering recommendations regarding the implementation of the peer mentoring program.

III. Theoretical Framework

The three main collectives operating within Spartan Athletics that I looked at are the SASS unit, providing academic support; coaches, facilitating athletic endeavors; and the student-athletes, aspiring to navigate their dual roles. Looking at how the units operate within Gadway, I set out to get insight about the behaviors and practices of the academic support staff, such as their methods to cooperate with other groups within the Athletics department and to assist student-athletes in their pursuit of a college degree. Examined concepts within these main Spartan collectives included communication patterns and system dynamics (Harrison 2005). My efforts in conducting an in-depth analysis of the services provided at Gadway required a general understanding of the culture of athletics in general, and especially that of San José State Athletics. My fieldwork revealed how organizational flaws in the Spartans' Athletic department trickle down to the level of student-athletes. Consequently, while the first part of my research deals with organizational culture and learning, the second part aims to establish a (peer mentoring) program that provides student-athletes with services and resources that potentially maximize their college experience.

Organizational Culture:

Although culture is an abstract concept, its mechanisms and effects are observable among the people and the rules that they follow, within the systems and organizations they belong to. "Culture is both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership behavior, and a set of structures, routines, rules, and norms that guide and constrain behavior" (Schein 2004).

Accordingly, in order to gain sufficient understanding of a given organization, its structure and members, it is important to understand how rules are created, enforced and manipulated among and by the people involved. Schein (2004) claims that group leaders determine the core values to be followed by the group, and if these prove to be successful, that will ultimately define the kind of leadership acceptable by group members. At the same time, if values and assumptions set by a leader do not help the group be successful, the unit will call for new leadership, one that can assess the shortages and limitations of the ongoing processes and renew the culture of the organization accordingly (Schein 2004).

While some organizational aspects of San José State Athletics are evident, such as the hierarchical structure of the department and its teams, the turnovers in multiple leadership positions have made it difficult to pin down the values and assumptions subgroups are expected to follow. Over the period of two years, from 2015-16 Fall, there have been many changes in the Academic department, including turnover in the roles of Athletic Director (2017 February), Senior Associate Athletics Director for Academics (2016 May), Academic Support Coordinator (2015 December and 2016 September), Academic Eligibility Coordinator (2016 May), Director of Compliance (2016 August), and among the coaching staff of multiple athletic teams (e.g.: Football, Tennis, Water Polo, and Baseball). Frequent changes in leadership positions have led to a perpetually changing system of values within and among the multiple units of the department. My research focused on how changes in leadership roles in the Student-Athlete Success Services affect the culture of the SASS staff, the efficiency of the services offered by the unit, and, ultimately, their impact on student-athletes' behavior and attitude towards these services.

In order to locate where issues derive, it was pivotal to understand how the Athletics department and the SASS operate. In addition, beyond conducting general organizational research, I was keen on inducing organizational learning (Davidson 2005). Therefore, the ultimate goal of my project was to, upon clear understanding of organizational processes and shortcomings, offer a deliverable (i.e.: in form of a presentation) that addresses these shortcomings and thus enables the successful implementation of a peer mentoring program. When looking at the research domain (i.e.: SJSU Athletics and SASS), the already existent mentoring services —as scarce as they were— indicated the need for services that provide student-athletes with support and guidance beyond what they get from their coaches and advisors.

Student-Athletes' Challenges:

Being both students and athletes, college athletes often struggle to balance the multiple roles that they need to take on and the variety of responsibilities that come with each (Jayakumar and Comeaux 2016; Heird and Steinfeldt 2013; Carodine *et al.* 2001). Environmental challenges include having to meet the expectations of coaches, with scholarships and playing time at stake (Putukian 2015); the requirements set by professors and the NCAA, to make sufficient progress towards their degree while also staying eligible (NCAA 2016; Cosh and Tully 2015; Wolverton 2007; Carodine *et al.* 2001); all while having to deal with the added difficulty of not being able to fully engage in the college experience beyond athletics (Adler and Adler 1985, 1987). Heird and Steinfeld (2013) claim that the exceptional demands that student-athletes need to meet and disruptive events such as injuries, can induce destructive behavior and diminish athletes'

multidimensional self-concept. In these troubling cases student-athletes see themselves merely as athletes, without considering themselves as students or independent individuals.

Parham (1993) pinpointed six main challenges that student-athletes encounter during their college careers: (a) balancing athletic and academic efforts; (b) balancing social activities with the isolation from athletic pursuits; (c) balancing athletic success or lack of success; (d) balancing one's physical health and injuries; (e) maintaining meaningful familial, social and professional relationships; and (f) dealing with the termination of one's athletic career. While organizational effort to aid student-athletes is constantly emphasized verbally, the realization of such support often leaves much to be desired (Jayakumar and Comeaux 2016).

Studies show that institutions participating in collegiate athletics often make more effort to cover up the lack of sufficient support for the athletes' academic success than they do to actually aid the athletes in succeeding. In fact, the organizational structure and focus of colleges tend to add to the difficulty that athletes may experience, by reinforcing practices that focus on athletics in the expense of academics (Jayakumar and Comeaux 2016). Such practices compromise students' chances for acquiring quality education, require them to maneuver classes, and even forgo certain majors that might pose potential conflicts with the strict athletic schedule (Putukian 2015; Wolverton 2007).

Peer Mentoring Framework:

Although elite collegiate athletics may take a toll on the student-athletes' physical, mental and social lives, participating in college sports can also play a key role in enhancing their overall well-being and teach them skills on which they can capitalize in their professional lives (Heird and Steinfeldt 2013; Miller and Kerr 2002). With adequate support and guidance, student-athletes can learn to navigate their roles and turn their challenges into advantages. A widely known motto of the NCAA states that "There are over 400,000 student-athletes, and most of [them] will go pro in something other than sports." While often there is still a disproportionate focus on athletic performance over academic and professional development, student success services at universities strive to assist students in their endeavors to succeed in and outside of the classroom. Mentoring services have shown to aid student-athletes not only in their athletic, but also in their academic and social endeavors, making them more satisfied and prepared for life after college (Hoffmann and Loughead 2016). While staff often advise student-athletes to make sure they do well in school, these relationships do not necessarily include mentoring. An essential difference between the two is that advising mostly focuses on courses and university policies, while mentoring allows the student to feel comfortable discussing their goals, interests, and concerns.

Mentoring offers mentees guidance and support through a trusting relationship. Peer mentors have the opportunity –and potentially, the responsibility– to mediate between the athletic staff and players and “transfer” insight between the two groups. Players often report feeling pressure and a lack of support from their coaches, especially in the case of recent injuries that compensated their ability to participate in their sport (Cosh and Tully 2015;

Putukian 2015). In addition, while many athletes might convey doubt in the academic staff's ability to understand their position, they are likely to connect with and relate to peer mentors more than full-time staff members. Student-athletes who participated in peer-mentoring also expressed an increased level of satisfaction, personal dedication, and social involvement (Hoffmann and Loughhead 2016).

Being connected on campus plays a great role in nurturing student-athletes' commitment to their responsibilities (Carodine *et al.* 2001). Since personal isolation causes student-athletes to perform poorly both on the field and in the classroom, developing social skills and encouraging the student-athletes' connectedness are key foci of mentoring sessions. Peer-mentoring can help mentees build relationships outside of their sports teams by encouraging them to reach out and engage in on-campus activities and events. Mentoring can include activities during sessions that concentrate on developing the student-athletes' interpersonal skills, so they can capitalize on social situations and build meaningful connections. Since the strains of athletics have the tendency to cause social isolation among the participants (Heird, Steinfeldt 2013; Parham 1993), learning to form and maintain connections beyond their athletic teams are essential for athletes in their quest to acquire a more comprehensive college experience.

The mentoring program at the Student-Athlete Success Services is set out to provide peer-mentoring services that correspond with Howie and Bagnall's (2013) interpretations of the Transformational Learning Theory as a metaphor, and target student-athletes' main challenges (Parham 1993). In their interpretation of Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory, Howie and Bagnall (2013) claim that TLT does not work as a concept as much as it does as a conceptual

metaphor. Extending this approach to the mentoring program, I suggest that peer mentoring should serve as a transformative learning experience for student-athletes, through which they get to reflect on and reevaluate their perceptions of themselves and their environment. This allows athletes to reconsider their opportunities and limitations as student-athletes, and explore their identities beyond that of an athlete (Heird and Steinfeld 2013; Loseke 2013). By pairing up freshmen and transfer student-athletes with a peer mentor, they are presented with a new approach to college and thus encouraged to shift their “frames of reference” by critically reflecting on their prior experiences and impressions. Furthermore, peer mentoring can offer not only an analytical, but also a practical learning process that enhances student-athletes’ learning and self-development, and encourages to discover the resources available to them.

IV. Methodology

Although my original plan to conduct comparative study would have limited me to conducting mostly theoretical work, I was determined to take advantage of my training and conduct my research in a way that it lives up to anthropology's potential as a practical endeavor (Kedia, van Willigen 2005). Recognizing the need for organizational assessment at Gadway, but lacking the resources to put the wheels in motion, the former senior associate director for SJSU Athletics assisted for rapid anthropological assessment at SJSU Athletics. The goal of the research was to assess the organizational dynamics among the academic support staff, the coaches, and the student-athletes in order to maximize student-athletes' use of Gadway and on-campus resources.

The open systems (OS) model considers organizations as open arenas in which divisions interact with and impact each other (Harrison 2005). This approach allows for the complex diagnosis of an organization by assessing the key aspects that the units obtain from and contribute to their environment, as well as the (behavioral) processes conducting the system dynamics within the units. Using the open systems approach (Harrison 2005) to get a better understanding on how groups operate within the SJSU Athletics department, I focused on the endeavors of the Student-Athlete Success Services unit, and looked at how this collective operates within itself, within the department, and with the student-athletes whom it serves. I conducted participatory action research to determine the resources and how they are allocated by and among the athletics staff and the student-athletes, and to troubleshoot shortcomings of current services offered to the athletes.

Led by the main notion of advocacy anthropology, I conducted the research with the goal to not only provide the SJSU Athletics staff with empirical data, but also to partake in decision making and the implementation of the program (Kedia and van Willigen 2005). Accordingly, while my initial efforts were merely to get a better understanding of the processes and services of SJSU Athletics and the SASS unit, as soon as I accepted the challenge of establishing grounds for a mentoring program, I went beyond the role of the observer. I set out to gather information about the research area and assess what kind of program would fit into the culture of Spartan Athletics.

Following Schensul's guidelines, as discussed by van Willigen (1993), I first proceeded to present the Student-Athlete Success Services leadership staff with information about the culture and ongoing processes within Gadway, based on research conducted among the department's staff and the student-athletes. Second, I collaborated with the staff and the student-athletes for further research to establish clear goals and a feasible implementation plan for a potential peer mentoring program.

While this task allowed me to utilize my training as an applied anthropologist, it also upheld the risk of diminishing the outsider's objectivity. According to Bourdieu, "Those who have the good fortune to be able to devote their lives to the study of the social world cannot stand aside, neutral and indifferent, from the struggles in which the future of that world is at stake" (Hillier and Rooksby 2005). Mindful not to get too involved in the studied community (i.e.: the Spartan Athletics staff and student-athletes), I aimed to conduct the research in an objective manner. In addition, my goal regarding the peer mentoring program was to deliver such detailed feedback on the research and plan for the program that inform and empower the

Athletics staff so that they can implement and maintain the program without me. This will require a great input from the Academic Support Coordinator in terms of recruiting, training and supervising the mentors; as well as from the rest of the SASS group in communicating with coaches regarding the criteria for signing up and informing student-athletes about mentoring.

Formal interviews with the EOP mentor coordinator, peer mentors, and mentees allowed me to gain first-hand insight about working on-campus peer-mentoring practices. Furthermore, my fieldwork included participatory observation of staff meetings and Study Hall hours at Gadway. While my past as a student-athlete provided me with some rudimentary insight, the many changes that have taken place at SJSU Athletics, especially regarding academic support and staff, have called for a deeper look and understanding of the organizational dynamics that play out at Gadway. At Gadway, I obtained more in-depth information about the processes from semi-structured interviews with full time SASS staff members, student employees and student-athletes. Personal communication and informal group interviews provided further feedback on the organizational processes of Spartan Athletics as well as on former mentoring services offered by the Student-Athlete Success Services. In addition, informal personal communications with the director of the SJSU Living Learning Center and faculty members at the University's Social Work Department established on-campus connections for peer mentor reinforcement as well as space for future peer mentoring practices.

As of now, the responsibilities that I have taken on during the course of my research have not been completely taken over by the respective SASS members. However, it is my current endeavor to gradually take myself out of the organizational mechanisms in a way that

will not affect the successful implementation process of the peer mentoring program. Post-project endeavors involve aiding the current academic support coordinator in planning the training for peer mentors, and preparing an instrument to collect feedback from future participants of the peer-mentoring program for succeeding reassessment of the service.

V. Fieldwork

Studying SJSU Athletics through the OS approach (Harrison 2005), I learned how the academic staff (i.e.: SASS), coaches, student employees and student-athletes operate within and across their groups. The connection between the Spartans' academic and athletic staff is representative of the student-athletes' dual role, and finding the balance between the two is essential to reach success. While Gadway is an academic center, even here the culture and values are dominated by that of athletics. Both the SASS and the coaching staff's concern regarding the student-athletes' academic performance is primarily dominated by their efforts to make and keep their students eligible to compete in their sports.

The SASS staff have been supportive and open throughout my research, and proved to be committed to address current flaws in the Athletics community as well as to follow through with the implementation of the peer mentoring program. As it is the case with any endeavors under participatory action research, the studied community's authentic commitment is crucial to the success of the implemented program. The SASS unit delivered this devotion, yet, since the group is merely a subdivision of the whole organization of San José State Athletics, the attitude of other units needs to be considered as well. Accordingly, in terms of securing the resources that would enable the necessary actions and follow through, a lot comes down to the secondary stakeholders, such as the Athletics Administration and Development staff. These units disseminate the Athletics resources heavily in favor of sports initiatives, as opposed to that of academic or mentoring endeavors, leaving the academic support unit understaffed, overworked and, in many cases, inefficient.

Limited Student-Athlete Support Services

Based on information gathered from staff meetings and personal discussions with full-time SASS employees, the unit recognizes the need for aiding student-athletes in their endeavors beyond athletics and academics (e.g.: mental, social and emotional well-being), but up until recently there was no long-term designated leadership to put such a service in place. Even though the SASS have offered some services targeting a variety of topics that could aid student-athletes in their overall well-being and success, these services were often unused by the students.

Furthermore, while the student-athlete body is a pluralistic community, the offered resources and practices often fail to correspond with this diversity and to address the different needs that it brings. For example, while all incoming student-athletes have to adapt challenges of facing a new school, team, coaches, and housing, in addition to these aspects of the experience, international student-athletes also deal with potential culture shock and language barriers. Although the high withdrawal rate of international athletes is a recurring topic at SASS staff meetings, at this point, there is no program in place that would address cultural differences and awareness among athletes and coaches. Mandy, one of the SASS learning specialists, an immigrant herself, has repeatedly pointed out the high withdrawal rate of international athletes and expressed the need to better accommodate them, still no action has been taken to make these ideas into reality. Even though the rest of the unit shares the concerns, and understands the need for better course of action in dealing with these athletes, at this point there is nobody that would have the time or the resources to take charge in this matter.

Like international athletes, student-athletes coming from low socio-economic backgrounds could also benefit from more targeted discourse, in the form of workshops, for example. SASS employers recognize that while scholarships enable economically challenged athletes to attend college, even full-ride scholarships require students to be able to manage their money well in order to avoid financial stress. Often lacking experience in budgeting, many at-risk student-athletes face challenges when trying to allocate their scholarship. SASS tried to address this recurring issue by signing up incoming student-athletes, who arrive to SJSU over the Summer, to enroll in Business 12, an online class about managing money and resources. Unfortunately, however, the number of the students who are allowed to participate in Summer classes is limited. In addition, depending on their sport, some student-athletes have more access to Summer enrollment than others, for Summer classes are primarily open for teams whose pre-season period is Summer (teams whose season starts in the Winter or in the Spring are less likely to be on campus over Summer). Furthermore, while Business 12 was supposed to address students' shortcomings in their money management skills, the class did not meet the expectations of the staff and coaches, due to the way it was organized, and so they requested SASS to enroll students in a different Summer class in the future. Therefore, possible shortcomings in financial literacy is yet again unaddressed among student-athletes.

Although there are hundreds of student clubs, services and events offered on campus that target the multitude of different groups and their specific needs, due to their demanding schedule and obligations, student-athletes are often not aware of these services, nor do they have free time to discover them on their own. On the other hand, the services that SASS offers at Gadway for the convenience of these very students, often remain unutilized.

Workshops and services offered by SASS promise a lot of valuable knowledge, but most student-athletes do not take advantage of them. During her four months with the program Melinda, the former coordinator for academic support services, called for a culture shift that should change students' and coaches' attitudes towards the services provided. While there are some high-achieving students, who go to the workshops and tutoring sessions, not only because they are required but because they see their benefits, many whom the workshops target do not attend them. To make this culture shift happen, the full Athletics staff —SASS members, coaches, and administration— should take part in putting more emphasis on the resources that student-athletes have so far failed to utilize to a greater extent. When I asked her about the reasons why student-athletes do not take full advantage of their opportunities, Melinda argued that there is a lack of effective communication across the units of the Athletic department as well as from the part of student-athletes. Limited communication leads to disconnect and lack of understanding among staff and it trickles down to the student-athletes who often sense the fault in the organization and weakness caused by the lack of unity from the department.

Disconnected Units

The significant disconnect both across and within department units is mostly due to the lack of centralized organizational practices. While the SASS unit is located in three separate places, the overall department is spread out even more widely. Coaches, administration, academics, weight training and athletic training are all separate units within the department, and the only major common point among them is the student-athlete body whom they serve. Therefore, in case any two or more of these units are not on the same page when it comes to dealing with

concerns regarding a student-athlete or a sports team, it is the athletes who recognize this fault first. Thus, disconnect among the units within the department makes student-athletes distrust the staff and have a reluctant attitude towards the services offered to them.

Student-Athlete Success Services Unit

There are eight members in the Spartans' academic support crew working with over four hundred and fifty student-athletes, taking care of admissions, eligibility, remediation, academic progress, and any additional requirement necessary to keep student-athletes in the classroom and on the field. The eligibility coordinator and the academic advisors are responsible for keeping the athletes eligible (i.e.: enrolled in enough credits and the right classes each semester), the learning specialists specify in helping student-athletes with specific classes and assignments, the academic support coordinator is responsible for running the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and academic support services (e.g.: tutoring and mentoring) at Gadway. While most aspects of the roles and responsibilities are clearly divided among staff, in some cases there is a lack of consensus on what each service should entail and whose responsibility it is to coordinate it.

One aspect that makes information flow within the SASS unit difficult is that the group is spread across three locations. One learning specialist and an academic advisor are located on the main SJSU campus, the senior associate director and the eligibility coordinator are in the Simpkins Athletic Building at South Campus, and the rest of the academic unit works at Gadway. The lack of proximity complicates communication within the unit, but staff meetings could serve to address ongoing processes and concerns in person.

While my access as a researcher was limited under the previous senior associate director, I did get to sit in in two staff meetings while she was in charge. These consisted of the director sharing general concerns regarding student-athletes' admission process, and talking about upcoming events. While the whole SASS staff was in these meetings, it was mostly the director who talked.

Under the management of the former senior athletics director there were more division between roles and less communication among staff members. This system helped employees avoid overlapping responsibilities, but it also left some duties unclaimed. Since the unit is understaffed, all employees must take care of more than just what comes with their assigned roles. However, without open discussions and transparency, some unfulfilled positions left relating responsibilities unanswered. For example, at times when the unit was without a student success services coordinator, the duties that came with this position remained, but were not assigned to a current employee. Since the football team's learning specialist Ms. Black's office was located at Gadway and she was the closest to the coaches' offices, the coaching staff regularly approached her with questions regarding remedial tutoring (Personal Communication 2016). These recurring questions from the coaching staff as well as the proximity of her office to Study Hall prompted her to take over the coordination of tutoring and mentoring, at least until the next coordinator arrived. However, due to her many obligations as a learning specialist, the time and effort Ms. Black could spare to coordinate the services and the student employees were limited. Despite her efforts to maintain some system in the academic services offered, Ms. Black did not have time to supervise the tutors and mentors, let alone to keep track with their session reports and provide feedback to the peer workers.

Therefore, the student employees working with the most vulnerable group of the student-athletes were unsupervised.

Change in SASS Leadership

With new leadership then came a new system. There had been much disconnect among different athletics units as well as within SASS, thus the new senior associate director's efforts started with damage control. Ms. Fountain joined the SJSU Athletics staff in May 2016, and she was much more keen on employees giving input about their ongoing endeavors and potential concerns regarding their student-athletes, as well as on connecting with the coaching staff. Ms. Fountain facilitated weekly SASS staff meetings and encouraged open communication among all members of the SASS, which brought the promise of more effective troubleshooting within the unit. Discussions dealt with the admission processes, class enrolment, cooperation with professors and coaches, and concerns regarding student-athletes. She also insisted that I participate in the weekly meetings and share any information and feedback from my then ongoing research, that could be immediately addressed. Unlike her predecessor, Ms. Fountain lead her unit based on the notion of transparency and urged immediate communication among group members within SASS, as well as with other athletics units.

During meetings, the SASS staff members spoke one by one, shared what they were working on that week and with which student-athlete they were most concerned. Once people started to hear more about what the others in the unit were doing, previously unclaimed tasks came to light. With the momentum brought on by the newly appointed senior associate director, the unit was motivated to discuss some previously neglected endeavors, such as

reassessing some at-risk athletes and having them tested for learning disabilities at the SJSU Accessible Education Center (AEC), and improving the communication between SASS and the coaching staff. Unfortunately, while the open and dynamic discussions benefited many aspects of the SASS unit's work, they also diverted the conversation from important concerns and tasks at times. Information overflow blurred the lines between some roles, since once SASS members knew more about what was going on with each of the student-athletes, often more than one of them sought to address the same concerns. While it speaks for the commitment of the unit that they were so actively trying to help student-athletes, the lack of clear roles and divided responsibilities often became counterproductive. Staff meetings covered concerns, but frequently lacked discussions on the necessary course of action.

While conflicting organizational behavior has so far failed to improve the disconnect between SASS and other units of Athletics, changes within the academic support group and the efforts to bring different units onto the same page have brought the promise of the culture change necessary for the betterment of the student-athlete experience at SJSU. The SASS unit's tireless effort and persistence to serve the athletes is a testament to their endless dedication, yet even they cannot make up for all the lacking resources and labor force. The arrivals of the new senior associate director, the new the academic support coordinator, and many new coaches, who represent a more rigorous work style, allow for a brighter outlook regarding a potential culture shift in SJSU Athletics. However, change in leadership is not enough, in order to pursue a holistic shift in the department, it is important to also induce change from the bottom up.

SASS Peer Mentoring Services

While SASS appears to lack efficiency in the execution of some services, even the ones that would be available for student-athletes at Gadway seem underutilized, either because students do not know about them or because they do not always see the benefit in attending. At the same time, many of the students who do not take advantage of the offered resources are also marked to be 'at-risk,' either due to their low GPA, inconsistent academic and athletic performance, economic difficulties, or other concerns. Therefore, I believe there is a need for, first, a culture shift among the whole department that foster a more positive and proactive attitude towards the already existent programs and services; second, a program, beyond group workshops, that offers personalized guidance and support for those in need. While organizational learning and change are necessary in order to solve the former, peer mentoring can target the latter issue.

To meet NCAA requirements in aiding student-athletes in their efforts to meet the academic demands imposed on them, SASS has been offering "peer mentoring" at Gadway. However, at the time of the study, the SASS staff had not yet reached consensus on what this service should offer, on the necessary recruiting and training processes of student mentors, and on the follow-up methods that allow to keep track of the sessions and assess the course of the peer mentoring services. In addition, whenever there was a hiatus in the academic support coordinator position, there was no clear agreement on which full-time employee's responsibility it should be to plan and supervise peer mentoring at Gadway. Accordingly, the peer mentors were working with some of the most vulnerable student-athletes without much guidance or supervision.

Fall 2015

At the beginning of my fieldwork, the now former senior associate director at Gadway, allowed me to approach any student-athlete who might be willing to participate in my research. At this time, the goal was to assess the existing mentoring practices and to offer suggestions to make it better. However, issues soon started to arise, pointing to a lack of organization as well as a general lack of communication and transparency among SASS staff, coaches, and student employees. While I could talk to any student-athlete and student working at Gadway, at this point I was not granted access to SASS staff meetings, nor was I allowed to approach coaches. My plan was to talk to staff members at Gadway, and then get a more in-depth, bottom-up input from student-athletes and peer mentors who participated in mentoring services.

While SASS has been offering “mentoring” to student-athletes through peer employees, it seemed to have done so without a well-regulated program in place. Moreover, instead of having one designated full-time employee run mentoring, the tasks of coordinating and supervising peer mentoring often fell on a random staff member each semester. This was due to recent years’ high turnover rate among staff, specifically in the student success coordinator position, as well as due to the lack of effective communication regarding responsibilities within the academic support group. Regular changes in positions and shifts in roles (i.e.: responsibilities) among staff caused several hiatuses in the coordination of mentoring, including the hiring and training processes of students who had planned to work at Gadway.

Since there was no list of student-athletes participating in mentoring, I asked the senior associate director for the list of peer mentors working for Athletics. She pointed me to Ms. Black, the football team’s learning specialist, who sent me to ask Melinda, the academic

support coordinator at the time, who gave me a list with the name of six student employees. I was quite surprised to find my own name on the list, as well as to learn that two of the listed students did not work at Gadway, while one other was working as a math tutor, not as a peer mentor. However, the two peer mentors who were in fact working with student-athletes were forthcoming and willing to give input about their experiences at Gadway.

In the Fall of 2015, fifth year athletes (who have exhausted their athletic eligibility but had not graduated yet) were hired to work for Athletics in exchange for the department covering the cost of their classes until they graduate. These students worked either with their previous team as student assistants, or at Gadway as Study Hall monitors, tutors, or peer mentors. They shared that prior to the start of their work they were interviewed by a former academic advisor and worked without much guidance or supervision. The minimal training that they said to have received before the semester included a brief description of what they were expected to do in each position. Study hall monitors had to check students in and out, and make sure that the study area is quiet. Tutors and mentors had to make sure students pass their classes. There was little distinction between what to cover during tutoring sessions as opposed to mentoring sessions, in fact, the only instruction mentors got was regarding academics: to do grade-check with the students and make sure they kept up with their assignments.

Thereby, student-athletes, who were signed up by coaches and academic advisors to receive support and guidance to developing life skills, often ended up spending their sessions working on their homework. The student workers who were hired as “mentors” but ultimately ended up tutoring the student-athletes, expressed that as long as their students were passing

their classes, there was no further input required from them as mentors. Rebecca, a Social Work student who was completing her internship at Gadway from Fall 2015 to Spring 2016, explained that she was hired after a five-minute casual interview with an athletic advisor (Personal communication 2016). A prerequisite for Rebecca's internship was for her to be supervised by a full-time employee who holds a degree in Social Work. However, Jill, the academic advisor who was originally up for the role of the supervisor, got relocated to the main campus a month before Rebecca started. In Rebecca's words, she was "without any guidance, just kind of thrown in every direction." She claimed that while the SASS staff members were welcoming and supportive towards her, they did not offer much guidance in terms of what she was expected to do. Ms. Black assigned Rebecca some student-athletes for the Fall and told her to mentor them.

Rebecca said that at the beginning she felt a bit lost, and was not sure whether what she was doing was right, but then she just kept at it and "heard no complaints from students." At the same time, students had no formal way of expressing any kind of opinion about their meetings with Rebecca, since Melinda left before conducting any instrument that would follow-up with students regarding the service. After Ms. Black gave her the list of the student-athletes who had been assigned to her, Rebecca emailed them to set up weekly appointments and started her quest to make sure that each of them pass all their classes. She explained that most sessions lasted about 10-15 minutes and included grade check and general check-in regarding the well-being of the student. During their sessions, most of the student-athletes were reluctant towards mentoring and thought that the fact that their coaches or advisors signed them up meant that they had issues. Some did not show up regularly, and a few only came to

show Rebecca their grades, then they left. Without much direction or advice, Rebecca decided to take part in organizing the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and volunteered at the events it offered, just so she could fulfill her internship hours.

Spring 2016

Melinda worked at Athletics as the academic support coordinator from 2015 December to 2016 March. She was in charge of recruiting student employees (i.e.: study hall monitors, tutors and mentors) to work at Gadway during the Spring semester (Formal Interview 2016). She reached out by posting the job descriptions (assembled by a former academic advisor) to the SJSU Athletics website and prior to hiring the students she met with them in person. During these meetings, she explored whether the students applying to work at Gadway had experience working multiple jobs while also maintaining good academic standing. She believed that since these peer employees would be working with student-athletes, who need guidance in managing a demanding schedule and the manifold responsibilities they have, they needed to be familiar with and successful in these same efforts as well. In addition, she asked the applicants to describe the kind of supervision to which they respond best, believing that their answer would also reflect the style of supervision they would apply to student-athletes. She also created a standard handbook that summarized the expectations posed to student employees working at Gadway; most of it focused on university and NCAA policies and administration.

Out of all the new hires, there was only one additional peer mentor who joined Rebecca: Fred, who started working with student-athletes following the brief interview meeting led by Melinda, in which they discussed the job description. This description, posted on the San

José State Athletics website (2016b) —a nearly word-by-word copy of the Tutoring job description— called for peer mentors to assist student-athletes’ transition to college and aid their academic endeavors, stating that:

Duties include monitoring of the academic performance and achievement of student-athletes, communicating to SASS staff and coaches any academic abnormalities or problems encountered by student-athletes, suggesting study skills and techniques to student-athletes, and preparing regular reports on the academic status/progress of student-athletes (SJSU Spartans 2016b).

Tracking back the origin of the *mentoring* job description, I found that a former SASS academic advisor, who is no longer at SJSU, created the document calling for *tutors*, then merely renamed it and used it to bring in peer mentors. Unfortunately, however, this lack of distinction in the responsibilities of the student employees led to confusion about the goal of mentoring among student-athletes, peer mentors, coaches, and the academic support staff. Therefore, in addition to the lack of clarity regarding whose responsibility it was to run peer mentoring, now the service itself seemed to become ambiguous, as well.

During our interview, Melinda shared her many plans for clarifying and bettering both peer mentoring and tutoring. She expressed her desire to see a more developed mentor model in Athletics, based on “training, dedication and accountability,” building on input from both the sides of coaches, student-athletes and mentors. However, she already knew that these changes will be up to whoever takes over the position next, since just a bit over four months after she had come to SJSU, she was now leaving.

As Melinda left soon after the beginning of the Spring semester, the student workers — including Rebecca and Fred— were now once again without much guidance. Fred had come to work at Athletics thinking that there would be a set curriculum to follow throughout the

semesters, but after he was hired he had no more contact with any of the full-time SASS employees, let alone with coaches. He was “without help, without supervision, and with students half of whom hated the fact that they had been signed up for mentoring.” He claimed that there were two parts to collegiate success: GPA-based in-class academics, and out of class academics measured in real-life skills. Holding a second job as a Resident Advisor in the dorms, Fred was actively involved in on-campus activities and community service, and as such, he developed a keen insight to the importance of networking on campus. He also understood that student-athletes do not get as much exposure to on-campus events and resources as other students might, and he wanted to educate them about their resources. In addition, Fred considered mentoring to be instrumental in helping student-athletes set goals and achieve them by guiding them through their own decision-making processes. However, he soon found that many of the students assigned to him wanted little of this guidance.

Fred claimed that although none of the student-athletes voiced their reluctance, he felt a vibe that reflected their unwillingness to get mentoring. He said, “With some of them I can feel that they are ashamed of having to meet with me, like mentoring was a punishment. There’s definitely a stigma that often comes with it” (Formal interview 2016). He felt frustrated that even when there were a few students with whom he managed to build a connection, he knew nobody on the full-time staff whom he could have given feedback, or who could have helped him get a student extra help. Fred was hired by Melinda, and since she left by the middle of the Spring semester, and he had not been introduced to the rest of the SASS staff, he was not sure whom to communicate to about his student-athletes. He decided to just keep writing online reports about the sessions, and hoped that someone would read them.

Fred added that motivating the student-athletes was the hardest part, because, like Rebecca pointed it out as well, most of the students' attitude towards mentoring seemed to reflect their coaches' lack of interest towards their engagement in non-athletic activities. Furthermore, the student-athletes Rebecca and Fred worked with showed little interest in academics, and both mentors claimed that for many of their students, athletics seemed to be not only the main priority, but the only priority. Ultimately, the mentor sessions were mostly reduced to grade-checks and often superficial talks, while they covered goals and some resources with the few student-athletes who wanted to take advantage of the meetings. The semester ended without anyone gathering any feedback from mentors or mentees, but with a hopeful outlook from SASS due to the new leadership coming in.

Fall 2016

Now led by Ms. Fountain, during the Summer of 2016, SASS hired Pamela for the academic support coordinator position, expecting her to coordinate the program; however, due to administrative difficulties she could not start until October. Therefore, football's learning specialist, Ms. Black volunteered again to take on the task and supervise the student employees. She utilized the mentor handbook that Melinda used previously, and discussed it during the pre-semester meeting that all student employees working at Gadway (i.e.: study hall monitors, tutors and mentors) had to attend. While the expectations were straight forward regarding the study hall monitors' job, there was still no clear agreement on the responsibilities of tutors and mentors —both were told to just make sure that the student-athletes pass their classes. Furthermore, since the job description for tutoring and peer mentoring were essentially

the same document, there was still no major distinction between tutoring and mentoring practices.

In addition, there appeared to be no set criteria based on which student-athletes were assigned to mentoring, nor a general agreement on who should assign the students. For example, Flora, a volleyball player found out that her coach signed her up when she got an email from Rebecca to set up a weekly appointment to meet; but she never found out why she got assigned for mentoring (Formal interview 2016). Another mentee, Michael, reported that his coaches required all the freshmen in the team to participate in peer mentoring, although not all players followed through with the request (Formal interview 2016). Considering the much-limited resources and the generally low number of peer mentors, SASS could benefit from communicating with coaches and agree on the criteria that decides which students to sign up for mentoring. This way, while the resources are still limited, the service could be provided for those who most need it. For this, however, the SASS and the coaches' input is necessary to get on the same page regarding support services, such as mentoring, and the course of action regarding the dissemination of resources among student-athletes.

GradesFirst

Another shortcoming of the offered mentoring service seemed to be that even though administration was one of the few requirements that mentors had to meet, the academic staff and the coaches rarely kept up with the reports that peer mentors wrote on GradesFirst, the online monitoring system for tracking student performance. SJSU Athletics has its own branch within the school's GradesFirst domain, and it is accessible for every coach and athletics staff

member. Unfortunately, only a couple of coaches use it to keep track with the reports about their athletes, because while some might not be concerned with such reports, some do not know about GradesFirst at all. In addition, even though GradesFirst is the most widely-used web-based system on campus that is used to monitor student performance at SJSU, a few teams decided to go with a different system called TeamWorks.

Bringing in new practices is not uncommon among new coaching staff, who often implement their own systems that proved to be successful in their previous workplace instead of adopting the ones used at San José State. Nevertheless, some coaches' apparent reluctance to adopt GradesFirst keeps them out of any correspondence that goes through the system (e.g.: scheduled appointments, tutor and mentor reports, academic advisor and learning specialist notes, progress reports etc.), while it also creates additional work for the academic support staff. Currently, the only way to transfer scheduled appointments from GradesFirst to TeamWorks is by deleting the original appointment from GradesFirst. This means that whenever a SASS member wants to schedule an appointment for a student-athlete, if his or her coach uses TeamWorks instead of GradesFirst, the meeting needs to be scheduled twice —once in each system.

Furthermore, many times scheduling appointments and setting up reminders through GradesFirst make little sense considering that many student-athletes admittedly do not check their emails. During informal interviews with student-athletes participating in tutoring during the 2016 Spring semester, less than half of the students asked (18 out of 45) reported that they check their emails regularly, and even a smaller amount (9 out of 45) said that they kept up with reminder emails that they get through GradesFirst. While there is not much harm in

students ignoring reminder emails (besides staff members wasting time with setting up online reminders in vain), there is more harm in coaches and the academic staff ignoring the tutor and mentor reports written about their student-athletes. Since mentoring should concern the most vulnerable student-athletes, it should be important for full-time staff to keep up with the peer mentors' reports, to get a more in-depth picture of each athlete's overall progress. An additional limitation, one that of the GradesFirst system, is that the site does not have a designated section for mentor reports, therefore the peer mentors' write-ups were either under 'Notes,' or 'Tutor Reports.' This way, even when coaches or the academic staff tries to follow the reports, they might face difficulty locating those.

Coaches' Involvement:

Coaches' involvement in students' engagement beyond athletics showed to play a key role both in the working relations between SASS and the coaching staff, and in the student-athletes' attitude towards utilizing Gadway resources and services. Peer mentors noted that it shows on the mentees' attitudes, whether their coach cares for their performance beyond athletics or not. Rebecca, a peer mentor for multiple cross-country athletes stated that they would not dare be late, let alone to not show up at all, because then they would have to face penalty workout besides their regular practice time. The football coaches also applied penalty practices, while the swim coach forbid his swimmers from getting into the water if they failed to show up to a mandatory appointment. Peer mentors reported that student-athletes who had stricter coaches were more likely to engage in personal conversations, since "they had to be there anyways, might as well make the most of it" (Fred and Rebecca personal communication 2016).

More engaged coaches seem to lead to more engaged student-athletes, who could thus learn and benefit from the resources around them more than those whose coach do not invest in their lives beyond athletics.

Besides the peer mentors, the SASS staff members also expressed that the coaches' attitudes played a major role in the way student-athletes with the athletic staff and, ultimately, in their academic performance. The academic advisors agreed that coaches who were invested in their athletes' performance beyond athletics were generally more cooperative. Furthermore, they claimed that coaches' willingness to hold their athletes accountable for their academic responsibilities reflected positively in the overall performance of the student-athletes.

Through the Eyes of the Student-Athletes:

On multiple occasions, I observed that the athletics staff, including both academic advisors and coaches, approach individual student-athletes based on generalizations that are assigned to their sport or position. While these included both positive and negative presumptions, in both cases students seemed to perceive it in a negative way. For example, female athletes, specifically tennis players and gymnasts were generally held to high academic standards, which often lead these athletes to experience anxiety and pressure to do well (Staff meeting, 2016). During an informal personal interview (2016 October) that touched upon stressors, a gymnast explained: "I know that a 'B' grade is good in general, but my coach made it clear that if I can do better, I must do better. He says we don't only work for ourselves, but always for the team too." Environmental expectations put significant strains on student-athletes, who often showed signs of reification. Elaborating on the labeling theory, the concept of reification refers to the

situation when a person's individuality is exchanged for preconceived ideas and expectations, often in form of a self-fulfilling prophecy (Stahl 2016). Student-athletes tend to internalize the characteristics assigned to their labels, causing them to start performing according to these presumptions instead of according to their own abilities. Upon learning about a recurring academic issue regarding two football players' academic difficulties, a member of the academic staff nonchalantly stated, "well, I'm not surprised —they are wide receivers." Agreeing nods from some surrounding colleagues reassured the generally low academic expectations that accompanied players of the position. While the assumption came from the staff, it also reflected in the self-image of the athlete.

Just a bit after the staff meeting that included the above comment, Jared, one of the athletes previously in question told me that he believes it is a general understanding that he is "not here to score high on tests, but to score high on the field." When I asked him who the understanding is with, he said "Everyone... well, the coaches I guess; as long as we are eligible, and not too injured to play, we matter. Beyond that, they don't care." At this point, Matt, another football player walked by and Jared pulled him into the conversation: "Isn't that right? They don't care if we're injured." "That's right," Matt responded, "we're just bodies for them. When I failed my classes and lost eligibility, they set me up with a learning specialist and a tutor too, to make me eligible over Summer. But when I sprained my knee and had to miss, I suddenly didn't exist." The players' impression about their coaches' attitudes towards them seemed to have left them feeling exploited as well as doubting their own self-worth whenever their identity as an athlete was compromised, either because their low GPA made them ineligible or because they got injured.

It is not uncommon for student-athletes to experience isolation, lack of support, stress and even depression when going through injuries. Injuries can have long lasting negative effects on student-athletes' mental health, even after they got through the physical challenges of rehabilitation and strengthening (Putukian 2015). While many coaches are invested in nurturing their athletes outside of the field too, the athletes can still feel like their interests get lost in the numbers, whether it is the number of the team members or that of the scoreboard and the timer. Correspondingly, Rebecca pointed out that two of her mentees got injured during the Spring semester and one of them almost quit as he felt overwhelmed in the face of pressing expectations but without significant support from his coaches (Formal Interview 2016).

Even though they are major stakeholders, athletes rarely appeared to voice their concern in a united way regarding shortcomings of the Athletic department, whether relating to athletic, academic, or other services. To promote communication between the administrative staff and student-athletes, Spartan Athletics has established the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). Each sports team is supposed to have at least one representative in the committee, who is responsible to communicate information and potential concerns between the Athletics staff and the team. In the past, many teams did not take on the opportunity to have representatives, and many who had, did not show up at meetings. At the same time, since the planning and supervision of SAAC meetings fell under the responsibilities of the academic support coordinator, the irregularities (i.e.: frequent turnovers and hiatuses) surrounding the position trickled down and diminished the potential of even the active SAAC representatives.

Without representatives and targeted discourse on how to better the student-athlete experience, many athletes remain overwhelmed. Melinda claimed that while being able to

communicate one's needs is a learned behavior the SASS unit did not encourage this notion among student-athletes very well. In addition, there seemed to be no clear understanding among most student-athletes about what SAAC is and why it would be important or beneficial. Carmen, a junior student-athlete who was nominated as a SAAC representative for her team, explained that most of the athletes looked at the Committee as just "one more mandatory waste of time" besides weekly Study Hall hours, team meetings, tutoring appointments, classes and practice. She said that while she would see the point in talking to other student representatives and discussing ideas with the coordinator, there were not enough students involved in generating these ideas for them to make a difference in the experience of the general student-athlete population. "We talk about workshops, we organize some events, but at the end most of us are too exhausted to want to go," Carmen said, "I know it's useful, but people are busy. They don't go unless coaches make it mandatory." Melinda also claimed that a big issue is that student-athletes associate SAAC with 'mandatory meetings' instead of 'potential change,' this way missing out on opportunities to better their own experience by talking to administration. However, while student-athletes might fail to pursue change for all Spartan athletes through SAAC, learning about their resources through peer mentoring could bring significant improvement to their individual experiences and development.

Unfortunately, even if Athletics could raise the rate of student participation in events and services, due to limited resources, the SASS would likely not be able to accommodate everyone. Nevertheless, coaches' involvement still can make a great difference in the students' experience and knowledge of their surroundings. During the 2016 Spring semester, the volleyball coaches requested mentoring for their whole team, but due to the ongoing hiatus in

the academic support services coordinator position, SASS could not match up all the players with peer mentors. The most at-risk students were paired with a peer mentor at Gadway, and the coaches required everyone else to learn about and sign up for alternative mentoring sessions on-campus, through Peer Connections.

Flora, who was signed up for Gadway mentoring shared that while she appreciated her coach's involvement, she did not feel that she needed mentoring sessions. Nevertheless, she said that it felt good to know that her mentor is there if she changed her mind. She found that the mentoring sessions were quick, for the mentor just checked her grades, and as long as she was passing all her classes, they did not spend much time discussing anything else. She expressed that her mentor was likable and approachable, but that since there was not much concern regarding her academics, the short sessions did not prompt any deeper conversation and thus left them with a good but superficial relationship.

Eliot, another athlete whose coach required him to attend regular peer mentoring sessions at Gadway, shared a similar experience: if his grades were up, his tutor did not keep him for long. Eliot also expressed that while he liked his mentor, they did not develop much of a personal connection. On the other hand, he said that despite that his learning specialist is a full-time employee and not a peer educator, with her he connected on a much deeper level than with his mentor. Eliot pointed out that the closer connection with the learning specialist was perhaps due to the fact that they spent a full hour together weekly, as opposed to the few minutes that it took to check in with his mentor. The quick nature of the mentoring sessions and the fact that those did not include much talk about anything but grades, made Eliot have a formal approach towards the meeting that should have provided him with warmth, support,

and comfort. He shared that while mentoring did not provide him with support that he would want to rely on in times of hardship, but that through his adoptive family and church community he has gained a support system that helped him whenever he needed some assistance. These mentees' experiences and impressions challenge the presumptions that student-athletes consider mentoring a waste of time. Moreover, in both cases it was the mentors who seemed to diminish the potential impact of mentoring by reducing the length of the meeting.

Discussion:

Conflicting organizational behavior within the SJSU Athletics seem to have led to inefficient communication and distrust within and across some units of the department. Organizational shortcomings can trickle down and reflect on the attitudes of student-athletes who are often uninformed about or uninterested in the services offered to them. While student-athletes might not take advantage of the support services, some expressed feelings of lack of support from their coaches. Some students who have tried the peer mentoring services offered by SAAS expressed desire to build more personal connections with the mentors than what they had. Peer mentors considered it efficient not to waste student-athletes' time if it seemed like they did not need mentoring, which mostly meant that the student was passing all of his or her classes. It is important to note that both students who agreed to participate in a formal interview had good academic standing. Many other student-athletes who were open to impromptu reflections during study hall hours and might have given different insights, would not volunteer for more in-depth interviews. The Gadway mentors' behavior seemed more

focused on problems, especially those regarding academics, than on teaching mentees how to prevent them, this way reinforcing the SAs' preconceptions that students in mentoring are the ones who have issues.

The lack of efficient mentor training and supervision kept peer mentoring from providing overall effective support in form of a service that would teach student-athletes about the resources in their environment. Since the athletes' schedules are mostly planned for them, they could miss out on having to develop time management skills through practice. Thus, in some cases, the lack of these skills came to light only when they got stressed and overwhelmed; so, skill development emerged as a reaction, not as a prevention. Peer mentors should not merely react to emerging issues, but rather provide student-athletes with the tools to prevent those. Peer mentoring could bridge the gap between student-athletes and their surroundings. For that to be efficient, however, SASS should implement a structured peer mentoring program that provides academic, personal, social and professional development for its student-athletes facilitated by well-trained peer mentors.

VI. Suggestions:

To better and smoothen the experiences of San José State student-athletes, it is important to found a program that aid them in addressing any needs and preventing potential issues that might have been neglected in the past. Peer mentoring has the potential to provide student-athletes with the support they need but might not get from their immediate surroundings.

While being a student-athlete comes with many perks, it might also limit the athletes' access to and knowledge about the resources that are around them, but that they may not utilize.

Through a thought-out agenda that targets general topics and resources, as well as each mentee's specific needs, as agents independent from the main stress factors and sources of pressure that influence the student-athletes (e.g.: coaches, teachers and athletics staff), peer workers can offer instant support and guidance. If the SASS is serious about improving the mentoring program, I suggest they consider the following suggestions.

While the meetings can help mentees with their ongoing issues, setting an agenda (i.e.: Mentoring Action Plan) that covers some main themes and resources that aid them in reaching their personal, academic, social and professional goals. Basing the mentoring sessions on themes, as opposed to potential issues should also diminish the stigma that comes from problem based assignment of mentees, which could make students ashamed of being in mentoring. Furthermore, informing student-athletes about the services available to them and encouraging them to seek them out alone as well, fosters their resourcefulness, ultimately reinforcing their skills as independent learners. Such independence is crucial for student-athletes in their pursuit to establish goals and develop their identity beyond the one reinforced by athletics. The Spartans Athletic staff has shown great dedication to their student-athletes,

but to live up to the potential of the athletics program and serve their athletes accordingly, major changes are needed in the department.

Student-Athlete Success Services:

To enhance services offered by the Student-Athlete Success Services, especially the ones that attempt to reach beyond academics and aid the student-athletes in more ways than just through tutoring, the Athletics needs to improve their communication within across subdivisions of the department. For the successful implementation of a set peer mentoring program, it is important to first reach consensus about the difference between tutoring and mentoring roles. To aid the discussion clarifying these roles, I assembled a new Peer Mentoring Handbook (see Appendix B) that defines the mission and responsibilities of peer mentors. The Handbook also provides guidelines to follow when mentoring student-athletes, as well as the main themes (i.e.: concepts and on-campus resources) that mentoring should cover throughout a semester.

To enhance the implementation process of the peer mentoring program, it is important that the SASS staff clarifies not only the roles and tasks of the student employers, but that of the SASS members as well. While the academic staff's devotion to their athletes is admirable, dividing roles and assigning tasks in a more straightforward way will only enhance their efforts to help the athletes. In addition, improving focus during staff meetings to thus conclude discourses regarding concerns with an agreed course of action will lead to more efficient planning and implementation of support services. Also, with discussions on the more purposeful division of responsibilities should diminish unclaimed tasks.

Since the new academic support services coordinator is now in full effect, it is her job to take on the hiring, training, and supervision of student employers, including the future peer mentors. Learning from the experiences of the previous semesters, in order for mentoring to run as planned, it can be assumed that the earlier the mentors are interviewed, hired, and trained the smoother the service's implementation will be. This is because most student-athletes arrive at the beginning of the semester, and to limit any potential distrust or reluctance towards mentoring, the service needs to be well-established and ready to go by the time students arrive.

Hiring Peer Mentors:

The first necessary step in the hiring process of peer mentors is to take down the misguided job posting that was copied after the tutoring job description, and put up an updated and accurate description on the Spartans Athletics website. When recruiting peer mentors, it is important to hire students who have a clear understanding and experience of having to navigate multiple responsibilities at once, either because they were previously student-athletes themselves or because they have successfully balanced work and school simultaneously. Peer mentors can emerge from a variety of places, so long as they are dedicated, reliable, and open to comply with the requirements of the position. In accordance with the goal to extend the mentoring service to a larger number of student-athletes, there also needs to be a significant increase in the number of peer mentors. While the funding is limited, SASS can work with other SJSU units to harness them as sources of student employees. For example, by strengthening ties with the Social Work (SW) department, SASS could establish more fix positions for interns to work as

peer mentors each semester. Since SW internships last a year, these students could work with the most at-risk student-athletes, who might require intensive mentoring, and so they could be assigned for two semesters instead of one.

Furthermore, fifth year student-athletes are potentially ideal candidates to mentor, since they have experienced the very role that current student-athletes are in, which makes these veterans empathetic and relatable. However, they need to go through the selection and training process to make sure that they are fit for the position. Unlike in some past cases, students should not be hired as peer mentors merely based on their need to reimburse Athletics for their fifth-year scholarship, nor based on their lack of ability or willingness to work as a tutor.

In addition, each year the athletics teams compete to earn Spartan Cup Points by participating in five life skills areas (i.e.: Athletic Excellence, Academic Excellence, Personal Development, Career Development and Community Involvement). The team with the most points at the end of the Spring semester gets a trophy and \$2000. SASS could offer Spartan Cup Points for upper class or senior student-athletes in exchange for taking on an incoming mentee each year. All these options would offer Athletics more volunteer peer mentors to choose from without having to worry about limited funding that used to restrict the number of student employees SASS could hire.

Training the Peer Mentors:

The mentor training should enhance the future peer mentors' familiarity with the culture of collegiate athletics, establish extensive knowledge of the main themes (i.e.: concepts and on-campus resources) that the sessions will need to cover, and foster the mentors' interpersonal skills to aid their work with student-athletes. Ideally, the training should take place over Summer, before the Fall semester starts. On the other hand, considering that many student is away during the Summer, it might not be possible to conduct the training before the semester starts, in which case peer mentoring should start after the beginning of the semester. No mentor can be allowed to start working with student-athletes without going through proper training first, for it would compromise the credibility of the program as well as potentially harm the mentees. With a structured mentoring plan, however, the program can make up for not starting right at the beginning of the semester.

For maximum efficiency, the training should consist of two to three consecutive sessions facilitated by the academic support success coordinator. The sessions should cover 1.) institutional policies 2.) expectations and responsibilities regarding mentoring as an independent support service; 3.) building a mentoring action plan; 4.) discussing and visiting on-campus resources; 5.) icebreaker and team building activities among the mentors to build a collective, so mentors can connect and discuss best practices based on their experiences throughout the semester.

Involving Coaches:

To improve the disconnect between Athletics units, specifically between SASS and the coaching staff, which emerged due to lack of knowledge, interest, or trust in the services offered at Gadway, SASS advisors can take initiative and reach out to coaches to clarify what mentoring offers and which students to sign up (Sample email in Appendix F). In addition, SASS should determine which employer's role it is to inform the coaches about GradesFirst, as well as to check and provide feedback to the coaches and during staff meetings, based on the mentoring reports. In addition, since athletes and peer mentors reported that heightened involvement from the coaches' part resulted in more positive general attitude among student-athletes, coaches could engage in mentoring as a general practice as well, to enhance their athletes' overall performance.

Improving GradesFirst:

To reinforce clarity in cross-organizational communication, GradesFirst should provide a separate label for 'Peer Mentors' within the system, as well as a designated place for mentoring reports.

Informing Student-Athletes:

At the beginning of each semester, the main staff of the Spartan Athletics hold a meeting that is mandatory for every student-athletes. When introducing SASS, their mission and services, the unit representative should also incorporate a short description on peer mentoring. This way student-athletes will know about the service, even if their coach would fail to tell them about it.

In addition, the public discussion of the mentoring program and its goals should clarify, and potentially diminish the stigma that it is mainly for students with issues.

Furthermore, SASS needs to designate a staff member (ideally the coordinator) to create an evaluation sheet to get feedback from mentees towards the end of each semester, this way ensuring the continuous reassessment and improvement of the SASS Peer Mentoring Program.

VII. Conclusion

While progress is slow, the recent changes that created more transparent communication within the SASS unit, as well as between the unit and coaches. Open communication has led these units of the department to show more effort to create a united front through which the athletics staff, as a whole, can positively influence the student-athletes' attitude towards services and mandatory meetings at Gadway. While the Athletics staff welcomed the research and my findings and the peer mentoring program will launch next semester, there has not been enough improvement regarding some organizational behaviors that are key for the future success of the peer mentoring program. For example, the timely hiring of peer mentors is crucial to provide sufficient training and have them ready to go by the time the semester starts, but there is still no set network established through which the coordinator would be able to bring in the potential employees. Realistically, the mentors will be hired and trained by the first week of school, so they can reach out for student-athletes the following week, and start the sessions after. In addition, to be able to match up mentors with mentees, coaches also need to collaborate with the SASS staff and take part in signing up the student-athletes who need mentoring the most. While it would be ideal to provide mentoring for all freshmen and transfer athletes, considering the limited resources, at this point, Athletics needs to focus on reaching those who most need it.

The findings of my study should be interpreted in the context of its limitations. The research was conducted at San José State University and looked at organizational practices within the institution. Furthermore, the project was heavily based on qualitative research methods. Due to the subjective nature of experiences any kind of peer mentoring practice,

whether we talk about mentors or mentees, research on mentoring is almost exclusively qualitative. Due to the low number of students who participated in formal in depth-interviews, I did not include in-depth analysis of how race, ethnicity, and gender form the student-athlete experience; nevertheless, these factors are of great import and they can be addressed on an individual basis within the peer mentoring program. Finally, it is important to note that I used to be a student-athlete at San José State University for five years. This status has provided me with keen insight to many aspects of athletics, one that a researcher less familiar with this culture might lack. However, my experience as an athlete and stake in the project could also likely affect my perspective and limit my ability to remain objective. Although I strove to maintain neutrality to conduct the project in its highest potential, my passion for the program and ability to relate to the role of the student-athletes might have brought me to, at times, advocate for the student-athletes instead of merely discussing my observations.

Possible focus of future studies includes taking a further look into the effectiveness of different mentoring practices —specifically that of cross-cultural versus intracultural practices— and locate key variables (i.e.: factors and characteristics) that contribute to effective peer mentor-mentee relationships. The vast amount of data on the potentially stressful and overwhelming nature of the student-athlete dual role calls for a potential reevaluation of ethical standards in college athletics. In addition, research should focus on the impacts of peer mentoring on mentors' personal and professional lives. Finally, it is agreed that effective mentoring unfolds through a relatively long period of time (e.g.: several months, years, or decades); however, there is not much discourse on best practices when the time is limited

to just a few weeks or months. Potential future projects could offer quick impact intensive mentoring programs that can be delivered in the course of one semester.

VIII. Anthropological Difference:

Conducting anthropological research at the SJSU Athletics Department allowed for a culture-oriented approach that not only explored the on-going processes across and within the department units, but shed light on and assessed the very values and concepts that these processes operate on. Utilizing my training as an applied anthropologist, I set out the project to go beyond gathering data and drawing conclusions and put the obtained knowledge into practice. Drawing on existing data and generated knowledge from my research, the final part of the project offers practical use of the information by setting up a mentoring program and suggesting specific organizational changes. Such suggestions aim to induce and guide the cultural shift that can provide the ideal environment for the program to thrive. Through the familiarity of an insider and trained eye of an applied anthropologist, I worked to bring a fresh outlook and awareness to the SASS staff, building awareness of the guiding forces and potential weaknesses of their program. This awareness can thus establish the ground for taking the necessary action—informed by the offered suggestions—to induce positive organizational change in the unit as well as in the whole department to best aid the Spartan student-athletes. While there is a vast amount of studies on the student-athlete experience and ways to better it, this project offers suggestions that are specific to the culture of San José State Athletics as well as the needs of the Spartan athletes.

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Appendix A
Deliverable for Student-Athlete Success Services Staff
Presentation Slides

SJSU Athletics

SASS Mentoring Program



Research Project Briefing

Research, Findings, Moving Forward

Research Project

Original Plan:

Intracultural (EOP) mentoring versus
Cross-cultural (SASS) mentoring

Shift happens

Main Focus: SASS Mentoring

Primary data from interviews and
observation (2015-2016),

Secondary research on organizational
structures and mentoring practices

Findings

Opportunities for improvement

- **Assigning SAs**
 - Who assigns (Advisor, Coach)
 - Who is assigned (Criteria, terms)
 - To Whom (Random/Schedule)
 - How (Request form)
 - When? (Semester start/As required)
- **Peer Mentoring**
 - Not here by start of semester
 - SAs (clarifying terms)
 - Mentors (few, isolated)
 - Mentor Training (limited)
 - Session Reports (GF, to whom)
 - Stigma
- **Space**
 - Indiscreet
 - Monotone

Moving Forward I

- **SASS**
 - Clarify terms and conditions
 - Coordinate mentor requests
 - Advisor meeting
 - Mandatory (fresh, transfer)
 - Time change after a month
 - Group meet with mentors at the beginning of the semester
 - Gadway Workshop (SH, M, T)
- **Peer Mentoring**
 - Recruit mentors ahead of time
 - Develop mentor training
 - Regular mentor group meetings
 - Weekly theme to address
 - Get feedback from SAs
 - Engage Coaches (GF)
- **Space**
 - Outside of Gadway? (rapport)

Moving Forward II

Long Term

- **Expand Network**
 - Reach out to
 - Social Work and
 - Liberal Studies Departments for mentor (and tutor) reinforcement (unpaid internship for credit)
-

Thank you!

Appendix B

SASS Peer Mentoring Handbook

Academic Integrity Policy

The University emphasizes responsible citizenship and an awareness of ethical choices inherent in human development. Academic honesty and fairness foster ethical standards for all those who depend upon the integrity of the university, its courses, and its degrees. University degrees are compromised and the public is defrauded if faculty members or students knowingly or unwittingly allow dishonest acts to be rewarded academically. This policy sets the standards for such integrity and shall be used to inform students, faculty and staff of the university's Academic Integrity Policy.

Student Role

The San José State University Academic Integrity Policy requires that each student:

- Know the rules that preserve academic integrity and abide by them at all times. This includes learning and abiding by rules associated with specific classes, exams and course assignments
- Know the consequences of violating the Academic Integrity Policy
- Know the appeal rights, and the procedures to be followed in the event of an appeal
- Foster academic integrity among peers

Compliance Office

The work that you do and the interactions that you have may affect eligibility of student-athletes, either positively or negatively. The NCAA considers you an institutional staff member. You must report the following to the Academic Support Coordinator, Associate Athletics Director for Student Services and/or the Associate Athletics Director for Compliance:

- Inappropriate requests or pressures from student-athletes
- Romantic or social involvement between mentors and student-athletes
- Alleged or actual NCAA rules violations
- Any incident of academic fraud or of a suspicious nature academically
- Extra benefits impermissibly given to student-athletes such as gifts, meals or transportation known to you

Professionalism Statement

As a mentor, you have the access to confidential information about student-athletes' academic background, progress, and grades. It is imperative that you keep this information confidential. Confidentiality allows you to build a trusting relationship with student-athletes. Any breach of confidence, other than one pertaining to a student-athlete in personal crisis or shared information with a full-time staff member, may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Do not discuss a student-athlete's academic information with friends, family, relatives, acquaintances, other mentors, or students.

SASS Peer Mentoring

Mission Statement

The SASS Mentoring Program is set out to decrease early withdrawal from San José State University's Athletics program by supporting student-athletes' academic, athletic, personal, and professional objectives. The purpose of the program is to facilitate relationships between peer mentors and "at-risk" student-athletes. Such a relationship can play an instrumental role in a student-athlete's development towards becoming an independent learner and an empowered individual. While in some cases withdrawal from the program may be inevitable, yet attrition from Athletic programs is often motivated by lack of confidence and support in the face of internal and external expectations and the rigorous requirements of collegiate athletics. The mentoring program is designed to help student-athletes cope with those feelings and provide a system of support.

Mentoring

Mentors should foster student-athletes' character as well as their competency. The purpose of a mentor is to provide assistance, support and encouragement for student-athletes, while guiding them to develop skills including, but not limited to, time management and organizational skills, stress management, and strategies for learning based on the student-athlete's individual learning style. Mentors ought to teach the ways to find an answer to a question or concern, rather than providing the mentees with the answer itself. Upon establishing rapport with a mentee and identifying potential themes to cover in upcoming meetings (Mentoring Action Plan), mentors should locate appropriate on-campus and local resources to discuss and explore with the student-athlete during the following weeks.

- Provide Support
- Engage in Academics
- Familiarize with Services and Resources

Limitations

It is crucial for a mentor to recognize if mentoring sessions are ineffective or if a specific situation is out of his/her depth. In both cases the mentor must contact Timea (timea.molnar@sjsu.edu) immediately, so that appropriate actions can be made.

No-Shows and Cancellations

In the event a student-athlete does not show up, leave a voicemail on the student's phone and send the student an email. Still enter session notes if the student "No-Shows" and report that the student did not attend the scheduled session (you will be compensated for the missed session up to 1 hour).

Mentor Scheduling and Absences

If you cannot make your scheduled session, notify the student-athlete with whom you are supposed to meet. You can reschedule for a different day/time but try to limit the number of reschedules. If you are canceling a session that will not be made up another time that week, approval is needed, please notify Timea (timea.molnar@sjsu.edu) as soon as you know you will be absent, so she can find a replacement for the session(s) that will be missed. You and your assigned student-athlete are responsible for setting up a schedule that fulfills the number of hours per week assigned to the mentor/student-athlete. Multiple absences or tardiness without prior approval from the Academic Support Coordinator is grounds for dismissal.

Compensation

Positions are paid hourly and employees are compensated based on the hourly pay outlined in their new hire paperwork. Time worked will only be paid if time is submitted accurately in MySJSU before the end of the pay period. Positions are paid on a monthly basis. You will be paid for the time you work, not the number of students you are assigned. All time recorded for the mentor roles must be accompanied by a session summary (report) in Grades First.

Contact:

Timea Molnar		
Graduate Assistant	Academic Support Coordinator	Learning Support Specialist
Student-Athlete Success Services	Student-Athlete Success Services	Student-Athlete Success Services
timea.molnar@sjsu.edu		
405.915.9145.	Office: 408.924.1578	Office: 408.924.2462

Mentor Expectations

- Abide by NCAA, Conference, and SJSU rules and regulations and uphold the highest level of academic integrity
- Professionalism should be exemplified through conduct, behavior, and attire
- Be on time, responsive, and prepared
- Follow cancellation policies and procedures
- Prepare a Mentoring Action Plan (campus resources, services, activities etc.)
- Submit session summary for every session and for every student (mentors will not receive credit for time worked if a session summary is not submitted)
- Make referrals to timea.molnar@sjsu.edu as appropriate and document thoroughly
- Mentor only students assigned to you
- Contact student-athletes only after being assigned to them; do not solicit appointments
- Refer any discipline problems to the Academic Support Coordinator
- Do not correspond electronically with your assigned student-athlete unless it is scheduling related. All mentor sessions are done in-person.
- Your involvement with the student is restricted to your sessions. Personal relationships, including dating, are strictly forbidden.
- A mentor is not permitted to speak to a professor or coach regarding a student-athlete
- Notify Academic Support Coordinator of cancelled appointments
- A mentor cannot share information about sessions with family, friends, other athletes
- Any issues or lack of efficiency during sessions should be reported immediately
- A mentor may be terminated for any of the following reasons: a. Any violation of NCAA and Mountain West Conference rules and guidelines b. Failure to uphold the general duties of a mentor as outlined in this handbook c. Failure to observe the rules and regulations of SJSU Athletics d. Falsification of mentor reports and payroll information e. Failure to keep mentor appointments f. Behavior that creates unfavorable attention to the SJSU Athletics, or to San José State University.

I have received the Peer Mentoring Handbook, participated in training, and I agree to abide by all guidelines.

Name(Print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

*Please sign and submit to Academic Support Coordinator. It is recommended you retain a copy for your records

Student-Athlete Expectations

- Abide by NCAA, Conference, SJSU, and Gadway rules and regulations and uphold the highest level of academic integrity
- Attend all scheduled sessions (exceptions must be approved by an Academic Advisor or Learning Specialist)
- 4Ps (Punctual, prepared, present, participate)
- **Cancellation Policies and Procedures:**
 - Missing appointments -due to reasons other than personal emergency or illness- without prior notice constitutes a 'NO-SHOW.'
 - It is the responsibility of the student-athlete to contact his/her mentor requesting the cancellation 24 hours before the scheduled session takes place.
 - To reschedule an appointment, contact mentor with a minimum of 24 hours' notice to reschedule for a different day/time. Notify mentor of any change/variation to your set schedule
- Be responsive to mentor communication for scheduling purposes and during sessions
- Understand the mentor role and limitations of the role. Mentors cannot complete any work for the student-athlete and cannot provide answers to coursework
- CELL PHONES may NOT be used during mentoring sessions
- Dating or any type of intimate relationship between a student-athlete and mentor is strictly forbidden
- Any issues or lack of efficiency during sessions should be reported immediately to timea.molnar@sjsu.edu, jen.jurgensen@sjsu.edu, or melanie.hein@sjsu.edu, or

By signing below, you are acknowledging that you have read and understand each statement and you agree to abide by the above responsibilities

Full Name (Print) _____ Sport _____

Signature _____ Date _____

*Please sign and submit to Academic Support Coordinator. It is recommended you retain a copy for your records

Mentoring Schedule Sketch

Date	Topic (activity)	‘Homework’	Notes/ Concerns
<i>1st meeting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction ● Discuss Mentoring ● Set Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Short Term ○ Long Term (hw) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Observe situations, ● Visit a place, ● Make appointment, ● Look up terms related to next meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Impressions, ● Reflection on meeting
<i>2nd meeting</i>			

Main topics, concepts and resources to discuss over the course of the semester (specify based on student’s plans and needs):

- Personal
 - physical and mental well-being, stress management, communication skills & tools, nutritionist, general and specified check-ups/tests
 - Resources: Trainers, Fitness Center, SHC, CAPs, etc.
- Academics
 - study goals, strategies, note taking, critical reading, study cards, reading syllabus, time management. prep for grad school
 - Resources: Peer Connections, Writing Center, LLC, Faculty Office Hours, AEC, etc.
- Professional
 - CV, Resume, Transferrable Skills, Job Applications, Interview
 - Resources: Career Center, Community Service, Job Fairs
- Social (-Political)
 - Interpersonal relationships, sex and sexuality, culture, places, events
 - Resources: I-House, MOSAIC, PRIDE, Student Clubs, Community Action, Fire on the Fountain, Community Engagement, Exhibitions etc.
- Miscellaneous
 - Computer Rental, Repair services, Affordable Textbook Program, International Office, Tax Filing, Financial Aid, Scholarships, CHEW (Cooking Healthy, Eating Well), Student Food Shelves, Housing Assistance etc.

Campus Resources

Peer Connections (previously LARC) - SSC

Tutors at Peer Connections assist students in the development of their academic potential and to help motivate them to become independent learners. They offer tutoring in a wide range of subjects.

Writing Center – CL Suite 126

The Writing Center offers a variety of resources to help students become better writers, from one-on-one tutoring sessions, to writing workshops. All the services at the writing center are free for SJSU students.

Career Center - ADM 154

The Career Center promotes the development of SJSU students as professionals by providing the tools to guide them in making career-planning decisions and marketing their skills to employers.

Counseling Services – ADM 201

The Counseling Services provides counseling for individuals, couples and groups on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Counseling Services on campus cover a broad range of topics, including nutrition, sexual health, alcohol and drug abuse prevention.

Accessible Education Center – ADM 110

The San José State University Accessible Education Center (AEC), formerly known as the Disability Resource Center (DRC), is a comprehensive center providing both students and employees with accommodations and services. The Center works closely with faculty, staff, programs and departments to deliver services and promote access for students with disabilities in the classroom and throughout the campus.

Health Center – Health Building

The Student Health Center provides medical care to students enrolled at SJSU. In addition to treating acute conditions, injuries, and illnesses, the Health Center provides a family planning program and maintains an in-house licensed pharmacy, a physical therapy department, a federally certified high complexity laboratory, and an x-ray department.

Transportation Solutions

Located on the main floor of the Student Union building, the Transportation Solutions Help Desk provides students with a transit plan that will work best for them. Students can look up carpool match, VTA bus routes, bicycling routes and parking information.

Campus Recreation

Campus Recreation provide students, faculty, and staff with opportunities to stay healthy, have fun, and enhance their education and development experiences through recreational activities such as intramural sports, fitness classes, outdoor activities, and cheerleading.

Child Development Center

The program is designed to offer the child the freedom to explore, create and develop mastery in all areas of learning in a safe, nurturing environment. The Child Development Center supports the academic mission of students at SJSU by providing high quality child care for their children, thus, allowing students to fulfill their educational goals.

General Services

Located on the main floor of the Student Union, General Services provide students with services such as faxing, special events coordination, trust accounts, medical insurance, dental plans, money order, notarization, international student ID, and book loans.

MOSAIC Cross Cultural Center

MOSAIC provides a safe and welcoming environment which honors and celebrates diversity. MOSAIC offer support and advocacy for historically underrepresented groups, leadership opportunities, and intentional programming that focus on critical thought, social justice, and cultural empowerment for the SJSU community.

Science 2 Online SJSU Resource Center

The Science 2 Online SJSU Resource Center provides online video advising and resource for students when they need it at their convenience. The topics range from freshmen orientation to advising for new transfers.

The Library Reference Desk

The King Library has subject liaisons -course specific assistants- whose sole job is to help students find the resources that they need for their projects. These reference librarians have made a career of tracking down resources and are excited to help students find what they need

Activities

1. Setting Goals

Activity: Set goals with the student in terms of what you two expect from mentoring. Set short-term goals (i.e.: something to accomplish each session) and long-term goals (for the semester).

Objective: Identify skills that s/he considers important and set a plan to develop them. Follow through. Revisit the goals often, discuss progress and what steps are necessary to take to enhance the development of those skills. Once mentoring is coming to an end, reflect on what helped while pursuing the goals, what made it more difficult? Set goals for the future.

2. 'I Am' Poems

Activity: Write an I Am poem by completing each line in the template so it corresponds with the beginning.

Objective: The I Am poem is a great way to introduce and reveal yourself to your students as well as to encourage them to do the same. The lines encourage openness, while leaving the level of intimacy up to the 'poet.' You can repeat the 'I am' poems many times, weekly, monthly, so they allow each person to reveal different identities as well as to tap into new depths, as the mentor-mentee relationship evolves throughout the course of the semester.

Template*:

This template is just of one template from many, feel free to look up more, or come up with your own.

First Stanza:

I am...
I wonder...
I hear...
I see...
I want...
I am... (first line repeated)

Second Stanza:

I pretend...
I feel...
I touch...
I worry...
I cry...
I am... (first line of poem repeated)

Third Stanza:

I understand...
I say...
I dream...
I try...
I am... (first line of poem repeated)

*From the article "A Barrio pedagogy: identity, intellectualism, activism, and academic achievement through the evolution of critically compassionate intellectualism," by Augustine Romero, Sean Arce and Julio Cammarota.

3. Discussion Starters:

Activity: Write down questions on pieces of paper and pull 1 each at the beginning or end of your session. Bring already written questions to the first session, and encourage the student to bring his/her own questions. Both of you can answer each question, or you can alternate.

Objective: The routine of “random questions” to answer each meeting opens the floor for light conversations, while also makes it easy to guide the conversation towards specific discussions on habits, views, self-perception, etc.

Tip: Here are some examples, feel free to use any or all. The bold ones are more closely related to specific mentoring topics/themes, the rest is for building rapport and having fun.

- **What are five things you want me to know about you?**
- **What do you do to get rid of stress?**
- **What’s your favorite way to waste time?**
- If you could have any animal as a pet, what animal would you choose?
- Where did you go last weekend? What did you do?
- **What was the last time you worked incredibly hard?**
- Are you active or do you prefer to just relax in your free time?
- **What’s the best / worst thing about your sport / school?**
- **If you had intro music, what song would it be? Why?**
- What were you really into when you were a kid?
- **If you started a business, what kind of business would it be?**
- What is the strangest dream you have ever had?
- **Who/what event had the biggest impact on the person you are now?**
- Where is the most beautiful place near where you live?
- Which recent news story is the most interesting?
- If you had to change your name, what would your new name be?

- What is something that annoys you might not bother most people?
- **How do you think success should be measured (in your sport/ school)?**
- **What benefit do you bring to the group when you hang out with friends?**
- **What do you do to improve your mood when you are in a bad mood?**
- What is the silliest fear you have?
- Who are the 3 greatest athletes of all time?
- Why do you think sports are common across most cultures present and past?
- **Where is the most relaxing place you have been?**
- What would you consider to be the best invention ever?
- **Does technology simplify life or make it more complicated?**
- Will technology save the human race or destroy it?
- What do you think the next big technological advance will be?
- **How do clothes change how the opposite sex views a person?**
- **What is the craziest, most outrageous thing you want to achieve?**
- Time freezes for everyone but you for one day. What do you do?
- **If your mind was an island, what would it look like?**
- What are some goals you have already achieved?
- **What is the best way to stay motivated and complete goals?**
- **What are your goals for the next two years?**
- **How has the education you received impacted your life?**
- **What does your own personal hell look like? How about your own personal heaven?**
- If you had a personal mascot, what would your mascot be?

4. “Five-Sided Mirror”

Activity: Ask your mentee to portray (draw, paint, photograph etc.) him/herself in 5 ways: 1. As seen by self, 2. Seen by a relative, 3. Seen by a friend 4. Seen by one freely chosen person, and 5. Seen by a peer group, team, collective s/he belongs to. Give explanations of each of the portrayals. Mentee’s should do this without asking the ‘featured’ people about how they see the mentee. The focus is on self-perception and reflection on their relationships with the people/group involved.

Objective: Get an insight into how the students see themselves through the ‘eyes’ of those around them. Opens conversation about the mentee’s interpersonal relationships and potential stress factors (e.g. wanting to meet expectations).

Tip: While it can be interesting who the mentee chooses as a ‘viewer,’ mentors can modify the activity to guide conversations on specific topics, e.g. by telling the student to portray how they think their coach, parent, roommate, sees them.

5. Monopoly

Objective: While playing, you can discuss financing strategies, future plans and ways to reach specific goals. Have the student relate game scenarios to real life.

6. Role-playing

Activity: Act out specific situations each of you playing a part; finally, reflect on what was difficult, easy, how the student felt, reflect on the reactions. In retrospect, would you have done anything differently? What other good answers are there to an enacted question? etc.

Objective: Practice specific situations

- Interview: practice professional language, interview questions, discuss professional clothing. Depending on what’s relevant to the student, this can be a job interview (specify job), official meeting with a scout, grad school interview etc. Discuss how being an athlete prepares students for having a job and being an ideal employee.

- Tip: plan for this with the mentee ahead of time! Schedule this session at a professional environment, both of you can dress up. Have the student bring a CV and/or resume, discuss transferable skills. You can connect or, rather, precede this session with a visit to the Career Center.

- Personal Conversation: you can reenact a conversation between the student and their friend/ parent, etc.
 - Tip: ask the student to suggest a specific situation, e.g. one in which s/he felt stressed or silenced, or in which the discussion just didn't go as planned, and discuss how else s/he could have reacted, talked, approached, etc. Discuss mannerisms and body language, and how to be conscious about it and how to control them.
 - Tip: reenact an argument, discuss conflict management and have the mentee identify his/her own behavior, communication style and strategies (concepts to discuss: active listening, conflict resolution strategies, task oriented vs. the process oriented people, etc.)

- Asking the boss for a raise or asking coach for more playing time
 - Tip: have the mentees acknowledge their strengths. What do they bring to the table? Focus on transferable skills: are there skills of which s/he might not be aware?

7. "Power Posing"

Simple, quick and might just make all the difference in an important situation.

Below is a link to a video by social psychologist Amy Cuddy, on "the power of the power pose" and how body language can impact one's mood, attitude and more.

Link:

https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are

+1. Dance-Off

This one is just fun. Happy bonding!

Appendix C
Interview with San José State Student-Athlete Mentee

I. The first part of the interview is set out to explore the interviewee's personal and academic background.

1. Where are you from?
2. What year are you in at San José State?
3. What is your major?
4. What sport do you play at San José State University?
5. Please describe yourself as a student. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
6. How do you define academic success?
7. How do you define personal success?
8. Imagine that you are writing an ad to find yourself a mentor. How would you describe yourself in the ad? What characteristics do you look for in the mentor?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself before we move on to the next section?

II. The second part of the interview focuses on the interviewee's experiences as a student-athlete at San José State University.

10. How long have you been in San José State's Athletic program?
11. How did you first hear about the program?
12. The Student-Athlete Success Services offers multiple programs for its members. Which programs and events do you regularly go to/ participate in? (Exp.: mentoring, tutoring, volunteer opportunities etc.)
13. Which program(s) have you found useful for advancing your academic career? Explain.
14. Which program(s) have you found useful in advancing your social skills and personal relationships? Please explain.
15. Is there anything else that a specific program or event helped you with?
16. Is there any program that you are required to participate in that you otherwise would not? Why would you rather not participate?
17. Please describe your overall experience as a student-athlete so far. What do you think about the Student-Athlete Success Services program?

III. The third part explores the interviewee's experiences within Student-Athlete Success Services' Mentorship program, along with the relationship between the mentee and his/her mentor as it is perceived by the interviewee.

18. How long have you been participating in the mentorship program?
19. How were you introduced to the program? How did you find out who your mentor was going to be? How did you learn about your first meeting?
20. How often do you have mentoring?
21. Please describe the effects that mentoring have had on your academic performance, social life and any other areas of your life that you feel were impacted by the mentorship program.
22. How would you describe yourself as a mentee?
23. Please describe your mentor.
24. Please describe your first meeting with your mentor in as much detail as you can. What were your thoughts and impressions? How did you feel?
25. What are your mentor's skills and strengths? Is there anything you feel could improve his/her mentorship?
26. Do you find your mentor relatable? Please explain why/ why not.
27. How would you describe your relationship with your mentor?
28. Can you remember a specific thing that influenced you and your mentor's relationship?
29. Is there anything else you would like me to note about Student-Athlete Success Services, the mentorship program, or about your experiences as a mentee?

Appendix D

Interview with Student-Athlete Success Services Peer Mentor

I. The first part of the interview is set out to explore the interviewee's personal and academic background.

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you been studying at San José State University?
3. What is your major?
4. Please describe yourself as a student. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
5. How do you define academic success?
6. How do you define personal success?
7. Imagine that you are writing an ad to find yourself a mentee. How would you describe yourself in the ad? What characteristics do you look for in the mentee?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself before we move on to the next section?

II. The second part of the interview focuses on the interviewee's experiences as a mentor in the Student-Athlete Success Services Mentoring Program.

9. How long have you been working with Student-Athlete Success Services?
10. How did you first hear about the program?
11. Please describe your overall experience as a SASS staff so far. What do you think about the program?
12. Please describe the effects that mentoring have had on your academic performance, social life and any other areas of your life that you feel were impacted by the mentorship program.
13. Please describe the employment process you went through to become a SASS mentor.
14. Please describe the mentor training program. What were the main emphases of the training? What did you learn from the training?
15. What are the main strengths of the SASS mentorship program?
16. Are there any areas of the program that you feel need improvement?
17. Is there anything you would like to change about the mentor employment process and/or the mentor training program?

III. The third part explores the relationship between the mentor and his/her mentees as it is perceived by the interviewee.

18. How did you find out who your mentees were going to be for the semester/ year?
19. How would you describe yourself as a mentor?
20. How many mentees do you have? Please describe them.
21. How do you start the mentoring process with a new mentee? Please describe how the first meeting with a new mentee usually looks like.
22. What are some specific characteristics and skills that you are looking to foster in a mentee?
23. What are specific attributes mentees might have that advance the mentorship process?
24. What are specific attributes mentees might have that cause setbacks in the mentorship process?
25. What do you think makes a mentor relatable?
26. Do you find yourself relatable to your mentees? Please explain why/ why not.
27. Can you remember a specific thing that influenced you and your mentee's relationship?
28. Is there anything else you would like me to note about Student-Athlete Success Services, the mentorship program, or about your experiences as a mentor?

Appendix E
Interview with Mentoring Coordinator
(EOP Coordinator and SASS Academic Support Coordinator)

- I. The first part of the interview is set out to explore the interviewee's professional background and responsibilities.**
1. Where are you from?
 2. What is your position at SASS/EOP? How long have you been working here?
 3. Please describe your professional path leading to this position. (degree(s), previous positions, etc.)
 4. What are your responsibilities and how did you come to coordinate the mentors at SASS/EOP?
 5. How do you define personal success?
 6. How do you define academic success?
 7. How do you define mentoring? What do you consider effective mentorship?
 8. Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself before we move on to the next section?
- II. The second part of the interview focuses on the interviewee's experiences at SASS.**
9. The SASS/EOP offers multiple programs for its members (exp.: mentoring, tutoring, volunteer opportunities etc.) Which program(s) do you feel are most effective in advancing students' academic career? Why?
 10. Which program(s) have you found useful in advancing students' social skills and personal relationships? Please explain.
 11. Do you feel Student-Athletes take advantage of the opportunities they get from SASS/EOP? Please explain.
 12. Please describe your overall experience at the SASS/EOP program?
- III. The third and final part explores the interviewee's views on the SASS/EOP's Mentorship program, and on the relationship between mentees and their mentors...**
13. Please describe the mentor recruitment and hiring process (exp.: who mentors are, where they come from, etc.)
 14. Do mentors go through mentor training? If yes, please describe what it consists of.
 15. What specific characteristics and skills do you look for when hiring mentors?
 16. What factors do you consider when assigning student-athletes to mentors? Is there a specific criterion you look at when matching them up?

17. Previously you explained what you mean by effective mentoring. What skills/characteristics, both from the mentors and the mentees' parts, do you think contribute to effective mentoring?
18. Do you find SASS mentors relatable for student-athletes? Please explain why/ why not.
19. Please describe an introductory session and a regular mentoring session (exp.: how often, how long, what it consists of, etc.)
20. Are mentoring sessions ever observed by a full- time staff member?
21. What steps does SASS take to assess the Mentorship program and the mentors during the semester? -Semester by semester? (surveys, student feedback, etc.)?
22. Please describe the impacts you have seen mentoring had on student-athletes' academic performance, social life and/or any other areas of their lives. How did you gather you gather your data?
23. Is there anything else you would like me to note about Student-Athlete Success Services, the mentorship program, or about your experiences?

Appendix F
Consent Form for Participation in One-on-one Interview

Title of Study

Comparative Study on Peer Mentoring Practices in the Educational Setting

Name of researcher

Timea Molnar, Applied Anthropology Graduate Student

Marco Meniketti, Associate Professor, Supervising Professor and MA Project Chair

What is the purpose of this study?

This study plans to look at interactions between college students and peer mentors at San José State University. The goal is to pinpoint the main reasons behind effective mentor-mentee relationships.

What will happen if I take part in the research study?

If you consent to participate in the study, you will be asked to take part in a 30-60 minute long one-on-one interview conducted by the researcher. The interview questions will ask about your experiences as a peer mentor/mentee, your thoughts on how mentoring impacts personal and academic development, and what specific factors you think help mentored students to succeed in college. For the researcher to accurately capture the information you provide, with your permission, the interview will be audio recorded. If you wish not to be audio recorded, notify the researcher and she will take notes instead. If you agree to being recorded but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, let the researcher know and the recording will stop at your request.

Will information about me Be kept confidential?

Yes, your identity will be kept confidential. You will not be asked for your name or any information that could identify you. In addition, you can choose your own pseudo-name (a name that will be used instead of your real name in the final report). Audio recordings will be deleted right after the researcher transcribes the interview, as soon after the interview as possible. Transcriptions will not contain your name or any information that could be used to identify you.

Can I leave the study?

Yes, you are free to withdraw from the study at any point. Leaving will not affect your academics, or your enrollment in any program.

What risks can I expect from being in the study?

There are no potential risks associated with this study. No information that could result in your identification will be released or reported

Are there benefits to participating in the study?

While there are no direct benefits to you, the results of the study may help the supervisors of the Educational Opportunity Program and the Student-Athlete Success Services to improve their mentor programs, this way serving future mentors and mentees too.

Who can answer my questions about the study?

- For further information about the study, please contact **Timea Molnar** at (408)-915-9135 or timea.molnar@live.com; or
- **Marco Meniketti**, Anthropology Professor at (408)-924-5787 or marco.meniketti@sjsu.edu
- Complaints about the research may be presented to **Roberto Gonzalez**, Anthropology Professor & Department Chair at 408-924-5715 or roberto.gonzalez@sjsu.edu.
- For questions about participants’ rights or if you feel you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this study, please contact **Dr. Pamela Stacks**, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San José State University, at 408-924-2479.

Consent

Your consent is entirely your choice. You can participate in the entire study or in a part of the study. You have the right to not answer any question you do not wish to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your relations with San José State University.

Participant’s Signature

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given enough time to read this document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You are going to receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant’s Name (printed)

Participant’s Signature

Date

INVESTIGATOR’S STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of his/her questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits, and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Appendix G
Sample Email for Coaches

“Dear Coaches,

I am writing to let you know about Student-Athlete Success Services Peer Mentoring Program at Gadway.

Mission Statement: The SASS Mentoring Program is set out to decrease early withdrawal from San José State University’s Athletics program by supporting student-athletes’ academic, athletic, and personal objectives. The purpose of the program is to facilitate relationships between peer mentors and “at-risk” student-athletes. Such a relationship can play an instrumental role in a student-athlete’s development towards becoming an independent learner and an empowered individual. While in some cases withdrawal from the program may be inevitable, often attrition from Athletic programs is motivated by lack of confidence and support in the face of internal and external expectations and the rigorous requirements of college athletics. The Mentoring program is designed to help student-athletes cope with those feelings and provide a system of support.

Mentors: Mentors foster student-athletes’ character as well as their competency. The purpose of a mentor is to provide assistance, support and encouragement for student-athletes, while guiding them to develop skills including, but not limited to, time management and organizational skills, stress management, and strategies for learning based on the student-athlete’s individual learning style. Mentors teach the ways to find an answer to a question or concern, rather than providing the mentees with the answer itself. Furthermore, mentees are introduced to on-campus resources as well as events, and encouraged to participate in a variety of social aspects of college life beyond athletics.

If you have any athletes that you believe could benefit from these services, please let your academic advisor know, so we can have them set up with a mentor.

Sincerely,

[Name
Position at Student-Athlete Success Services]”