

NEW
NIL
CHAPTER

"... a perfect understanding of how important it is for student-athletes to give their talents to their sport and their focus to academics."

— NCAA President Mark Emmert

SECOND EDITION

20 Secrets *to* Success *for* NCAA Student-Athletes

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Secret 6 Be Balanced in Everything

AUTHORS' VIEWPOINT

This may be the shortest “box” in the book. All of us strongly agree, and so did all the former student-athletes we asked, that Secret 6 (aka “the balance secret”) is essential, really essential, to the future success of any student-athlete in the “other 99 percent” bucket. And by balance, we don’t mean balancing academics with athletics, or balancing studying with training. We mean balance in all respects. Each aspect of your life, from sleep to partying, to relationships to a private meeting with your coaches, to television watching and video gaming, to your choices on commuting or how you spend your weekends . . . all of them require balance. Yes, we need you to dissect your entire existence and make it more efficient and more productive.

THE SECRET IN A FEW WORDS

Balance, balance, balance. Balance is a word you MUST put into your top-of-mind vocabulary. All the time, in all things. Given your two MASSIVE commitments to academics and athletics—and with the growing requirements around each from just the first four secrets—you need to really consider every activity and your use of time. Deciding to join a club to make friends, for instance, will remove a couple of hours a week from your other pursuits. You need to gauge the importance and value of each activity to your goals, your mental health, your academic success, and your athletic performance. Of course, we do understand

(and agree!) that you have to find enjoyment in life, but these decisions MUST be taken very seriously. As many athletes have learned, you can't always excel in all three areas of the student-athlete experience. Academics, athletics, and your social life are the three things you most need to balance. Our advice to you is that it is only possible to excel in two of the three, and academics is always one of them, so choose wisely and balance well.

BE BALANCED IN EVERYTHING

Secret 6 is about balance in all things. In everything. It is about reviewing all of your activities, pastimes, studies, and athletics, looking at them holistically, and determining the best way to use the most important resource a student-athlete has: time. Efficient time and effective time. In order to provide clear direction, we have organized this secret by the various activities of your student-athlete life and will provide you with direction in making these decisions.

Much of what you decide here may impact the plan you constructed after reading Secret 1. We encourage you to update your plan after reading this chapter and consider its direction.

To introduce our discussion of balance, we ask readers to imagine you're a gymnast on a balance beam. You can do many things on the beam, but lose your balance (and it can happen easily) and you fall off.

BALANCE IN ACADEMICS

Okay, so you've learned a lot about balancing academics in Secrets 1 and 2, but there is more here to consider:

1. *Focus on your most challenging class first.* Just as athletes always work on their weakness (for example, a decathlete who is amongst the best runners but a weak thrower puts the majority of his efforts into his throwing), so should you. That class you are worried about (perhaps statistics or accounting?) should be your priority and where you put any extra time. When you plan out your life each semester (see Secret 1) and allocate study time, review your courses closely and put extra time into those courses you are worried about or those courses you know you won't like (and will have a hard time studying for). Trust us, your GPA will thank you! And, if you ever apply for grad school many years down the road, you'll enhance your chances!
2. *Study often and early.* You are an athlete. Do you stay up all night practicing the night before the big game or key qualifying race? Never! So, why do that with your studying? Sure, you can push at the end, but work out a study plan that peaks as an exam approaches but allows you to go into that exam rested and ready,

and—very important for any student-athlete—does not negatively affect your physical training. Most athletes can think back to times where they had to stop training around a major exam. It’s not good for mental health, not good for sport performance, and usually not good for grades.

3. *Access key academic resources before you need them.* This is very simple, very intuitive, and very logical, yet few do it. If you’re graduating in May 2025, don’t wait until April 2025 to talk to your advisor about a job or to set up a meeting with the career management office. Same for getting an internship or dealing with a class you might be failing. Get help (from a professor, an advisor, student services, or others) early. Universities are full of services and professionals to help student-athletes, but only if you seek them out.

BALANCE IN ATHLETICS

After academics, athletics is the second major part of your dual-focused life and a part that requires close attention to balance. A few suggestions from our collective experience:

1. *Train in the off-season.* Yes, this may seem like overkill, but many of the “other 99 percent” tend to slack off, just a little, in the off-season as they progress through college and find other interests, fall in love, get a great summer job, and so on. If you can focus on your fitness and the foundations in the off-season (regardless of your sport), you won’t experience as much of a “shock” when you’re back on campus. You’ll also have less stress and anxiety about losing your spot or scholarship. Many student-athletes choose to stay on campus each summer to advance their academics, access awesome training facilities, work with their coaches, and enjoy their college towns. If this is an option for you, consider attending summer sessions. Having time to take a few classes and get ahead academically while also maintaining a training routine can be a tremendous benefit in moving you toward a great next season and lightening the academic load during the year.
2. *Choose a practicum or internship outside of your team.* It is both a waste of an opportunity to build your resume and experiences outside of your team and a potential drag on time if you work for your coach or manager for the team where your scholarship is linked. You’ll end up working much more, losing balance and doing so for a position that will not advance your resume as much as an external one will.

3. *Take advantage of injury time or being red-shirted.* This may seem counterintuitive, as you are desperate not to lose your place on the team and want to show your loyalty and support even if you are not playing. Be strategic here. Be present and do your part but keep it to a minimum and use this time to get a practicum or internship done, join a club, connect with alumni, travel, work part-time, do an independent study with a leading professor, etc.

BALANCE IN FAMILY AND FRIENDS TIME

Balancing family and friends with all your other time commitments is especially challenging in your first year of college, and perhaps somewhat after that. Your family (parents, siblings, cousins, and all the rest) and friends (high school pals) have been a large part of your life, and now you've moved away. In the two semesters of school, you'll have precious few quiet nights and about twenty-six weekends to do "stuff." Those weekends are special for work, training, planning, volunteering, socializing, and studying. They are key. You'll want—especially at first—to head home often, to connect with friends, to go to events with them, and to uphold traditions you all had from high school. The same with your parents: you'll want to go home, they'll want you to come home, and there'll be various family events. As hard as it is, you need to make some tough decisions. Here are our top priority recommendations.

1. *Be picky.* You'll have so many opportunities and desires to go home. Many. Family events. Last-minute party invites from friends. And more. Before the semester starts, set your boundaries. One trip home per semester (even if you live close) plus Thanksgiving is a good rule. Or even less. Then pick the date and stick to it. You can make it up to your friends over holidays. But you must help your friends understand that because you are a student-athlete the demands on your time are way more than they ever were in high school.
2. *Have your parents (or grandparents or guardian) visit you or have them meet you at your competitions.* Your parents are the easiest to convince here. Your college likely has special weekends. Take advantage of these. Surprise them and book a hotel room for them and ask them to come to a game or event. They'll want to. That way you can balance their visit with school and practice. You can also have your family and friends meet you on a road trip. You'll end up with support from those you care about during the competition/match/game and they also will probably enjoy seeing you do what you love, play your sport.

3. *Put time in your schedule to call home.* This is a big one and an often unmeasured time crunch. Particularly if you are homesick. Instead of getting a great night's sleep, you stay up talking until 2 a.m. or later with old friends. So, before the year starts, set a time (say 9 to 10 p.m. on Sunday) for calls home. Try to keep them short (fifteen minutes?) so you can call three or four family members or friends each week. Mix it up. Then complement the calls with social media connections to keep in contact.

BALANCE IN SOCIAL TIME

This is a big one. Perhaps the biggest one. College life comes full of amazing opportunities to party, socialize, travel, play, chat, and more. Social life is a huge part of college and something you want to enjoy and take advantage of. But, it can also be the reason why you struggle academically, athletically, or both.

In fact, many students who are not student-athletes flunk out or struggle because they do too much socializing. This can be drinking, partying, playing too many video games, or just chatting nights away with friends. There is no parental supervision and life is easy and great. We have all struggled with this and have learned the hard way in many cases. So, our three priority recommendations here are:

1. *Figure out what you are addicted to and avoid it.* Maybe it's video games that you love or maybe it's binge-watching Netflix and snacking on junk food. Figure out your vice, acknowledge it, and either work it into your schedule in small chunks or avoid it altogether. For some people, it's an all-or-nothing proposition. If you find yourself doing anything that has a negative impact (sleeping through classes because you were up too late, gaining weight because you are drinking and eating too much pizza) on the priorities you have for yourself to achieve success, you need to get a handle on it immediately. Whatever your vice is, TV or partying, figure it out early and cut it out of your life.
2. *Put quotas on partying.* Partying not only takes away that particular night but also takes a lot out of you the next day. For a lot of student-athletes, 5 a.m. or 6 a.m. practice times put a damper on partying during the week, but with the demanding schedule you keep, you also need to put the brakes on for the weekends to catch up on sleep and rejuvenate yourself. Set a quota (once a month, once a week, etc.) for your partying and stick to it. Don't be persuaded otherwise.
3. *Choose a great living situation.* This is important. If you're in a residence hall, fine, but if you're not, choosing an appropriate

place to live is key. Live with teammates (who are serious students) or with classmates (who are serious students) and not with partiers, or in a place known as a party house, or even in an apartment building or on a street where late-night noise and partying are common. You will not last long as a student-athlete in such an environment.

BALANCE IN EMOTIONS

Emotions run high, and those who need to stay spiritually connected (whether through religion or not) to keep their emotions level must make time to do so. Not everyone needs this component in their life, but some may, and it may help others who don't currently have it.

Relationships are a big part of life. And, we're talking about romantic ones. Lovers. Sexual partners. Boyfriends. Girlfriends. One-night stands. There are many viewpoints on relationships, but the reality is that most college students engage in various relationships throughout their four years.

And unless you entered college with a supportive partner who understands your situation and gives you the time to focus on sport and school, we recommend thinking long and hard about whether a potential partner has your best interests in mind, and whether your student-athlete experience will benefit as a result of a relationship. There is plenty of time to find a partner after college. Don't think you need to be in a rush to find someone.

A few specifics from us here:

1. *Stay single, or date but do so sparingly.* A new partner typically will want a lot of your time—and you'll want to give it, too, which is hard to do while living the time-constrained life of a student-athlete. Then, if the relationship endures, stress will arise either from your declining performance (school and/or sport) or from your partner who feels like you don't want to spend enough time together.

Dating can be great, and less of a time commitment. But, date sparingly and be clear that it is for fun and not for any long-term commitment. We know that is easier said than done, but just be aware of what you are or aren't getting yourself into along with everything else that is going on in your life. Check your priority list one more time, and act accordingly.

2. *If you have a long-term partner or meet a very supportive one, establish and communicate very clear ground rules to avoid problems.* If you stray from #1 on this list because you find someone you think is perfect or your high school sweetheart has moved to town, then consider using this simple tactic: Have a

very serious talk, explain what your goals are and that you need their support for the next few years. Let them know you want them in your life and expect the relationship to last but you only have a few hours each week to devote to it. This is a very hard discussion because no one likes being told they will be “fitted” into someone else’s schedule. This talk may even end your relationship. But failing to have this discussion with someone you care about can lead to disastrous results.

3. *Connect spiritually if that is part of you.* Over the course of a semester, year, or years, a lot will happen, and a lot will be thrown your way. Keeping your emotions in balance is extremely important throughout your experience, and if staying connected spiritually or religiously helps ground you, then continue to do so and don’t slack. Make it a routine for yourself if you know it is a big part of your life.

BALANCE IN DOWNTIME

Downtime is important for anyone’s mental health. Chilling with friends. Lying on the couch watching your favorite team, movie, or concert. Playing your favorite video game. All are part of your downtime, and downtime is valuable. But you have to manage it. If you are practicing the time management strategies already provided in this book, you have this nailed already. Some simple steps.

1. *Set a maximum time for any activity.* If you love watching football on Sunday, pick one game (not three) and plan study and training and other commitments around that game. Even better, don’t turn on the game until the paper that is due is complete, your assigned readings are done, you have gone out for a run or done whatever it is that is important to achieve that day.
2. *Cut out “useless” downtime.* Quite simply, things like aimless web surfing, staring at your Twitter feed, checking out the latest Snapchat features, television watching without a purpose, and other mindless activities need to go. These are not only unproductive but often leave you feeling stressed and more tired. This takes discipline.
3. *Try to double-dip downtime.* Use your downtime wisely—stretch during television or movie watching, play an online game with a friend from home, invite your mom and dad to a golf day, etc. By double-dipping, you achieve two or more things at once and save yourself time that you can use for other things later.

MATT VANSANDT

(former track student-athlete, now Assistant Commissioner of Championships at the Big South Conference)

Make school your 9-to-5 job. Being efficient and focused during your day will allow you to enjoy a work-life balance. When I was at school, I made it my 9-to-5 job. While you could be napping, playing video games, or going out with friends, you can be working efficiently to prepare yourself for a routine you may have when you get that first job. In college, you have so much free time, that your transition to work is difficult because you are by yourself for the most part, and you have this bulk of time during the day to get work done, and if you don't get your work done, you won't be successful.

BALANCE IN ANNUAL PLANNING

When you plan your year, think balance. There is really one general strategy here: you need to have balance over the twelve months for each of the four years of your student-athlete career. Periods of push (academic and athletic), periods of downtime/friends/family, periods of push—academic only, periods of push—athletic only, periods of work experience and life experience, and be sure you don't develop periods you can't handle. Some suggested tactics.

1. *In peak competitive season, cut back on everything else except school.* Do not plan weekends or visits home, cut out extracurricular work, parties, etc. This is your time to shine athletically and keep everything rolling academically.
2. *At exam time, only staying fit matters.* Yes, for the period of exam week and before it, school is number one with just enough time set aside to stay in shape for sport. As in #1, remove everything else from your life. Be insanely focused!
3. *Use summers and winter breaks very strategically.* One of the great things about the academic calendar is that you receive periods of time out of school. This is when you can really catch up with friends and family, get work experience, do career planning, be social and more, while concurrently maintaining your fitness and sporting form and staying healthy via sleep and nutrition. Do NOT use these breaks as “benders” where you go on a party tour. Sure, you might kick back a bit more than during the tight academic year, but you have so much stuff to do when academic responsibilities are low and athletic competition is not happening.

BALANCE IN EXPERIENTIAL CHOICES VERSUS FINANCIAL CHOICES

Student-athletes sometimes make decisions based on very small amounts of money. We've seen some turn down an internship with a blue-chip organization so they could go home and work another year at their old (and non-career-forwarding) job. And the reason was mainly \$'s. Which, in the long term, makes no sense. A career-forwarding internship (which may cost you a few thousand dollars as compared to your former job) has the ability to set you on your way to making hundreds of thousands of dollars more. Ask any professional in their thirties or forties if \$5,000 more would change their lives and the answer will be "no." They wouldn't mind it, but it really is not a big factor. So, our tactics here.

1. *Make important life decisions based primarily on what moves you toward your goals instead of on cost.* As we noted above, a few thousand dollars now versus the opportunity to make much, much more later is something to remember. Think about your earning potential over time, not today's rate of pay.
2. *Prioritize experiential opportunities with career upside.* Yes, you know the term "opportunity cost." This is key to think about when you have options for practicums, internships, projects, summer jobs, work-study terms, and other work experience. Ask yourself, "Where will this lead me?" or "Could this organization hire me long term in a full-time role?" or "What are full-time salaries like in this industry and this job?" or "Which gets me to where I want to be (see Secret 1) faster?"
3. *Find a way to make things work financially in the short term.* This may sound obvious, but you don't need a fancy apartment for a summer internship or a cool car when you get your first job. Get a roommate. Stay in a cheap apartment on the subway line. Sell your car and bike to work. Do whatever it takes to get started and get the experiences you need. Money, mortgages, and stuff you "want" will come later.

MAKE A PLAN FOR RESILIENCE IN CHANGE

Michelle Pride, PhD (Embedded Psychologist, Ohio University Athletics)

After working with hundreds of college student-athletes as the embedded sport psychologist for the Ohio University Department of Athletics, I have learned that change and transition can be tough for student-athletes. Change is part of life, and in the immortal words of Sam Cooke, "change is gonna come." It's gonna come whether or not you want it to come. It's gonna come whether or not you've prepared for it to come. It's gonna come

whether or not you feel like you can handle it. And change results in serious psychological consequences. At points of change and transition, people can experience increased feelings of anxiety, depression, grief, self-doubt, and worry. They can feel overwhelmed and out of control. In 1969, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a famous psychiatrist, identified emotional stages that people progress through when they experience change or loss: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Some people are more likely to use strategies that allow them to escape their feelings, like drinking, using drugs, or excessive video game playing. Others are more likely to use strategies that give them the illusion of control, like restricting calories or overexercising. There are some changes you can't predict, like a season- or career-ending injury. There are other changes you can predict, such as graduation or moving to a new location after college. Whether you have control over the change or not, you have some control over your response to it. Having a plan helps to respond to change with resilience and reduces the likelihood that you will rely on unhealthy coping strategies. Use the following steps to make a plan for resilience in transition:

1. *Assess your coping and self-care skills.* Review the information in the box in Secret 10 titled "Create a Mental Health Self-Care Plan" and take some time to actually create your self-care plan. Think about how you generally cope with challenge and change. Are you someone who tends to avoid/numb or confront/control? How can you use your resources to be proactive and healthy in your approach to inevitable challenge and change?
2. *Break it down.* Change often feels overwhelming and insurmountable, especially when you focus on the big picture or the end goal. However, if you break a situation down into its components and set smaller, more manageable goals, it allows for a greater sense of control and efficacy. For example, end-goal focus sounds like, "I need to get a job after graduation," while breaking it down sounds like, "I need to (1) contact the career center, (2) work on my resume and cover letter, (3) identify places I might like to apply to, and (4) reach out to contacts in the alumni network to get information on the industry." Breaking it down all of a sudden seems doable! If you are struggling with this step, reach out to someone, a friend, a teammate, a counselor, a trusted faculty member, or a coach, and ask them to help you break it down.
3. *Find your why.* Friedrich Nietzsche, a renowned philosopher, said, "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how." Figuring out why you are on a certain path can help you to stay grounded, focused, and motivated. What is your reason for following a certain path? What are your values? Priorities? Goals? What is really important to you? How is this change an opportunity to manifest your values, priorities, or goals in life? How can change help you become more skilled, knowledgeable, or experienced in a particular area? How does change help you

grow as a person? What parts of the change are interesting or exciting to you?

4. *Be mindful/present.* Anxiety occurs when you worry about things that have already happened, which you can't change, or about things that haven't yet happened that you can't do anything about. The antidote to anxiety is staying in the present. The present is where you can make change. When you start to feel yourself worrying about the things you can't change, bring yourself back to the present. Take a deep, slow breath and slowly release it. Ground yourself. Focus on five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. Make a list of things you can do today (self-care should be on that list).
5. *Check your self-talk (if you don't, that voice in your head can be a jerk).* How do you sabotage yourself when you talk about change? Do you tell yourself that you don't do well with change? Do you tell yourself that you ALWAYS or NEVER do certain things in change situations? Do you procrastinate or engage in avoidance behaviors, hoping that the situation will just go away on its own?

When you are stressed out, it's easy to fall into traps of all-or-nothing thinking, learned helplessness patterns, and negative self-talk. Often-times, you don't even realize you're doing these things until someone else points it out.

Once you're aware of the negative thought patterns, what can you do? Try focusing on your strengths, your successes, your accomplishments. Reminding yourself that you have been successful in the past helps you feel more resilient and empowered in meeting the challenges of the future.

CHAPTER SUMMARY: ADVICE FROM TEN PEERS

We felt the best way to summarize this chapter would be to provide a Top Twelve list of advice on balance from ten peers—fellow student-athletes. We asked a large number for their input, reviewed the list closely, and selected these as the most helpful.

1. “You still have to balance your academics with your athletics because you do have obligations to your team. I get that, but ultimately, you have to stay focused on what's most important. Those three things: athletics, academics, social life. What is most important of the three is your academics. You either believe that or you don't. If you believe it, then you're going to act on it. If you don't believe it, you are going to have a really hard time getting through it. You probably won't get through it because you're not giving it the commitment that it deserves. What

happens with many young men and women is that they realize this, but not until they're maybe a Junior or Senior. At some point, the lightbulb is going to come on and it needs to come on as early as possible."—*Oliver Luck*

2. "My first day in college, our head coach told us that there are three aspects to college when you're a student-athlete; baseball, school, and your social life, and you only really have time to be great at two of those. I tried my hardest to balance all three of those and it took dedication, time management, and a great work ethic that has transitioned well into my career. Any sustained success in life requires these traits, and seeing these things transition to success in college showed me that doing the same in my career would have similar results."—*Kevin Hurd*
3. "It's important to figure out your daily schedule. Figure out when all of your things can take place during the week and don't procrastinate, don't push things off. Look day-by-day or look week-by-week to figure out when you have time to enjoy your friends and have fun, and know when you really need to buckle down."—*Oliver Luck*
4. "You have to be very disciplined. That entails learning to say no. 'Sorry guys, I'd love to. Maybe I can catch up with you guys later or something. I've got three hours of studying I have to do. I got a test I have to prepare for. I got to write a paper.' The earlier that lesson can be learned, the better for a student-athlete because there are more time demands for a student-athlete than there ever were before."—*Oliver Luck*
5. "If you can be disciplined in anything that you do—and I'll just define discipline as doing the right thing when no one is watching—when it's just you, if you can maintain that discipline and that routine, that will help serve you long term. For athletes, being disciplined, having a routine that's consistent, that will ensure a lot of success because your time management skills are going to be put into that routine. Your fitness, your training, it's going to be a part of your routine, it's a part of your schedule, it's a daily thing, it's a habit, it's a positive habit. It's a continual learning curve. For student-athletes, I would say, 'Hey, you can be disciplined and you can have a routine that includes these elements and if you're disciplined about maintaining that, you'll be successful, and you can apply that to every area of your life whether you're a player, a coach, or a professional, or whatever role you have.' The thing that is difficult is managing boundaries and managing other people's expectations, because you can't

manage their expectations. But, you can manage your own boundaries.”—*Jeff Rodin*

6. “Redshirting isn’t something that anyone really wants to do. Truly, it’s a reality check for some and for some, it’s a way to get better. It’s basically a year of working out. Whether that’s in the weight room, on the field, or whatever it may be; dieting; in the classroom, it’s a year for you to get better. It helped me get a little stronger, get a little experience with our team and with our coaching staff and helped me fit in.”—*JR Reynolds*
7. “If you are a player that gets redshirted, take advantage of it, don’t shut yourself off. I’ve seen more kids that redshirt that waste the extra year than utilize that year. When you have a year that you can step aside from competition and focus on the process, it can sometimes be a blessing. I think you even see that with players who get injured. They are forced to focus on the process, and they come back a way better player because they are able to step back and see a different perspective on things. When you are always in competition mode, you can become very narrow minded, and you can lose sight of the process sometimes.”—*Rob Smith*
8. “Social life, in my opinion, is very, very important. I don’t necessarily mean like going to parties, socials, or the bars. I’m talking about getting to know your peers, whether that’s on a team, in the classroom, or in your dorm. So many people come from a variety of backgrounds, different life experiences, different nationalities, everything. In college, learning about other people is vitally important for your growth, and understanding different points of views and perspectives. Being able to understand everyone’s point of view, talk to people, and show a genuine interest in their background I think is extremely important particularly as it translates into sales, and interacting with people professionally. Without that experience, I would have a hard time getting into sales from the very beginning. In my opinion, having that social life is just as important as academics, as long as you can balance it, and get the grades you need to get to accomplish what you want to.”—*Brooks Neal*
9. “Quite honestly, I still struggle with balance. It’s easier at certain times of the year and at certain times of the season. There are certain times where that’s all that you do, and you have to understand that, and the people close to you have to understand that. You’ll end up spending more time with your team or with your job than you will with any other relationship. Understanding

that as a collegiate athlete, it's very different than high school sports. Being a student-athlete forces you to manage your time almost to the point where it's done for you. It can be difficult when someone transitions out of that lifestyle because you now have a lot of free time and it's not managed for you. Therefore, it's really important to have that understanding and application of time management, and when it's time to do certain things, whether it's training, studying, sleeping, you have to do it at that time. Otherwise, it's not going to get done."—*Jeff Rodin*

10. "You have to manage your own life. There is no one to hold your hand anymore and schedule everything and map everything out for you. Understanding how to create balance in your life and recognizing that the balance amongst your various interests will change over time. A lot of athletes are very focused, driven, and goal-oriented, and that's good because they achieve their goals and they understand it takes steps to get there. There is a bigger picture sometimes that people miss out on, so how you figure out how to navigate that path is important."—*Chris Dawson*
11. "You have to find a balance with friends. There are so many perspectives that you can gain from all the different people that you can meet on a college campus. If your career path isn't in sport, then you really have to branch out."—*Kelsey Cermak*
12. "It is extremely important to have balance while you are in school as a student-athlete. There has to be some balance between the athletic side, preparation, getting ready for games, being successful, and being part of a team. There also has to be a balance with your academics. You've got to hit the books; you've got to make the time that you put into it count. You've got to have some level of social life too. Interactions with people are something that we all need. If they get out of balance, if any of those three things become dominant, I don't think that's going to lead you where you desire to go."—*Steve Cobb*

This chapter draws upon the experiences of the authors and the input of more than a dozen interviewees to provide some direction to student-athletes about balance and keeping your lives, objectives, and time in synch with your priorities and goals. However you read this chapter, we hope you take away from it the critical importance of balance in all you consider to how your four to five years will unfold. Seek balance. Find your balance. Be Balanced.