



FOLLOW-UP NOTES

“What is the Cost of College Athlete Mental Health?”

The Drake Group Education Fund Webinar Series – Critical Issues in College Athletics

Hosted by



Thanks for attending or registering for our October 19, 2023 webinar on critical issues in intercollegiate athletics. A regular feature of our webinar series is “Follow-Up Notes” which provides links to the recorded webinar, answers to questions from the audience which panelists did not have the time to address or those emailed to us from telephone participants, and information on our next webinar.

1. Webinar #28 RECORDING

In case you missed any part of the October 19, 2023 webinar, you may access the recorded video here:

“What is the Cost of College Athlete Mental Health?”
[ACCESS RECORDING HERE](#)

2. UNADDRESSED QUESTIONS FROM WEBINAR ATTENDEES

Following are answers to questions from the audience symposium that panelists did not have time to address. Responses are from Drake experts and/or panelists.

Q1: I recently read Olympic swimmer Elizabeth Beisel’s autobiography, *Silver Lining*, in which she revealed that her coaches’ efforts to realize her full potential as an athlete, by having her practice with boys or older girls, contributed to her feeling socially isolated. How does one deal with this kind of mental health issue where coaches’ methods, well intentioned,

may have unfortunate effects on mental health? Is this yet another indication that coaches in the US need to be certified and properly educated?

A1: I think training decisions need to take more of a holistic approach, especially when developmental readiness needs to be included in the decision-making process. I do think that it is essential for coaches to have access to training opportunities that will help them support and develop athletes.

Q2: As we are talking about mental health service providers embedded into athletics, are there ways that we can start helping D-I, Power Five schools to create, fund, and embrace sport psychology within their organizations? I am thinking there are many schools that do not have mental health within athletics and this is the expectation of their Counseling and Psychological Services (“CAPS”) team.

A2: It really depends on the program, as some schools like Northwestern have a strong CAPS/ sport psychology model. The same was true for PSU until in-house providers were hired. I think when we look we need to examine costs, PPE data, and the research to ensure we have accessible providers who are specifically trained in mental health and sport performance assessment and intervention.

Q3: Specifically addressing the social, racial, and intersectional identities of athletes, is there capacity in collegiate mental health budgets to engage practitioners who are expert in alternative mental health and wellness modes (i.e., nature, ancestral, spiritual). And, by capacity, I mean are any dollars directed to non-western medicine?

A3: Not yet, but we hope that athletic departments can be flexible enough to be open to alternatives.

Q4: There are D-I colleges whose budgets do not allow a dedicated mental health professional in athletics. Athletes must depend on the student counseling center. How do you support athletes’ mental health in that case?

A4: If a budget is NOT being provided, then there is a violation in NCAA policies that needs to be addressed. Prevention work, including educational materials, apps, and wellness groups, can be effective at a rather low cost for athletic departments.

Q5: Thank you, Aaron for bringing up the culture of college sports, and not just the mental health symptoms of athletes who are powerless and embedded in this culture. A very easy cost-effective contribution to changing this culture would be to enforce a REAL 20-hour time limit on an athlete's weekly labor. Why can't we do that simple thing?

A5: You are very right about the 20-hour limit. Many D-I coaches focus on teaching skills that are perceived to help the team win because coaches are hired and fired based on these results. This leads coaches to pressure athletes into so-called voluntary mandatory, or “voluntary” practices. In this context there is often very little time for athletes to focus on their mental health, and it overwhelms many athletes, understandably. Many quit, burn out, and some even commit

suicide. This is why we need to have a culture change to ensure that athletes do not feel obligated to give more than 20 hours per week to their sport.

Q6: Do screening programs exist or are we dependent on traditional annual physical exams? Do we have systems in place to get to those in need early?

A6: Many schools have used the NATA screening tools; however, many of us have brought the following screens into PPEs (PHQ9, GAD7, PC-PTSD, etc.). I am happy to share our screening tool that we put together at Michigan. Contact Abigail Eiler, LMSW, MSW, QMHP, IMGCA, Clinical Associate Professor, eilertherapeuticservices@gmail.com, (424) 202-4232

Q7: Having been in this profession for 40 years, I am familiar with the University of Louisville program. My question is for Pat. How did he get the funding he needed at Louisville?

A7: Our hospital system stepped up to meet our ask. They wanted the overall University contract and we included mental health with the services we were seeking.

Q8: My question is for Abigail could you please share more about the “coaches connect” program that you mentioned earlier at the University of Michigan. I am curious about the core elements of this program.

A8: Feel free to email me for a list (rowea@umich.edu)

Q9: If an academic advisor got a bonus for good academic work, what should the proportional athlete bonus be?

A9: Great point. My statement was a bit tongue in cheek. But coaches getting bonuses for academic achievement is laughable.

Q10: Cost is very important; it is obvious because this talk is taking place -- so a conversation has started. I want to point out that Lisa Miller, PhD. explains scientific links between spirituality and health. Children with a positive, active relationship to spirituality" are 40% less likely to use and abuse substances, 60% less likely to be depressed as teenager, and 80% less likely to have unprotected sex, have significantly more positive markers for thriving including an increased sense of meaning and purpose, and high levels of academic success. Remarkably, in a nationally representative sample of teens, adolescents with strong personal Spirituality were 35% to 75% less likely to experience clinical depression. No mental health intervention, clinical or pharmaceutical, for adults or adolescents has anything close to these prevention rates! So, with this data, why is this powerful tool for health not being applied?

A10: I think it is in many schools. We have a Pastor available as well as student athlete bible study groups organized through student sponsored organizations through the school.

Q11: What would you recommend as best practices if an athlete is abused? Sexual violence, interpersonal violence, stalking, coach-abuse? I'm a civil rights lawyer and some athletes want to stay on the team and some athletes need to red-shirt ...but what am I missing?

A11: I am happy to discuss this afterwards if we don't get to it (rowea@umich.edu)

Q12: Best practice models give administrators the cover they need to allocate funding/resources.

A12: Much agreed.

Q13: It's just hard to move money towards those who "just need more..." This is often the perspective of administrators.

A13: Very true, and can administrators in good faith not allocate funding to wellness and mental health?

Q14: Have you added in the cost of legal representation for bad behavior coaches, athletes that lash out because of the lack of proper mental health care, and lawsuits from parents/families who allege liability for injuries to their athletes because of the lack of access to treatment?

A14: Absolutely correct. The costs are exponential.

3. OUR NEXT WEBINAR – “COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS REFORM BILLS BEING CONSIDERED BY THE 118th CONGRESS?”

OUR NEXT FREE WEBINAR! Thursday, November 16, 2023 – 2:00-3:30 p.m. EST

A stellar panel of Drake experts will review college-athletics-related bills that have been filed or announced as “discussion drafts” in the 118th Congress (2023-2024). Is Congressional intervention in the conduct of intercollegiate athletics justified? Will proposed legislation protect the outside employment rights of college athletes, ensure fair monetization of their names, images, likenesses (NIL), deter the use of NILs as recruiting or retention inducements, and expose and penalize unscrupulous agents? Will these NIL bills address the current recruiting chaos created by boosters forming NIL collectives and the patchwork of NIL state laws? Are NIL bills calling for improvements in athletes’ medical coverage affordable? Is the determination of fair market value an essential mechanism for deciding whether NIL contracts are “inducements” and “extra benefits”? Does the NCAA require an antitrust exemption to control the cost of athletic programs? Other legislation in the House and Senate calling for changes in the NCAA’s enforcement process and gender equity in the conduct of NCAA championships and other programs will also be addressed.

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4. ACCESS RECORDINGS OF PREVIOUS WEBINARS

[CLICK HERE](#) to enter The Drake Group Education Fund Video Library for recordings of all 28 previous webinars including the full proceedings of the 2022 and 2023 Allen Sack National Symposium.

5. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DRAKE GROUP EDUCATION FUND AND 2aDAYS.com

The Drake Group Education Fund (TDGEF) is a new 501(c)(3) non-profit education sister organization of The Drake Group (TDG) whose mission is to ensure that the promise of college athletics is realized for all stakeholders. TDGEF produces *The Allen Sack National Symposium on Integrity in College Sports* and the *Critical Issues in College Sports Webinar Series*, conducts fact-based research on intercollegiate athletics and develops position papers and other educational materials that influence public discourse on current issues and controversies in college sport. To access a full library of print and video educational materials on current issues in intercollegiate athletes, visit www.thedrakegrouppeducationfund.org. All educational materials are available free of charge. If you believe The Drake Group Education Fund is doing good work, please also consider making a tax-deductible donation to support our webinars, educational research, and programs. You can donate and learn what we do [HERE](#).

The Drake Group (TDG), a sister organization to TDGEF, is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization whose mission is to educate policymakers and advance legislative initiatives that foster academic integrity and athlete well-being in intercollegiate athletics. For the most current information on The Drake Group and college athletics related bills being considered by Congress, visit TDG [HERE](#). TDG needs volunteers to contact their senators and representatives to advance collegiate athletics reform legislation. Learn about legislation and [VOLUNTEER/JOIN HERE](#).

2aDays.com. Interested in helping high school and college athletes learn more about athletic programs at institutions they are considering attending – and the ratings of coaches in these sport programs? Check out our webinar partner 2aDays.com. An important note from 2aDays: It is also important to mention, given the focus of this webinar on mental health, that 2aDays gives athletes the opportunity to rate their coaches and also view ratings of athletes of other coaches. This information could prevent an athlete from playing under a mentally abusive coach.

6. THANKS TO OUR WEBINAR #28 PANELISTS

Moderator



EMMETT GILL, Ph.D., MSW, LCSW, Founder, AthleteTalk (a wellness app for athletes). Dr. Gill formerly served as the Director of Student- Athlete Wellness and Personal Development at the University of Texas at Austin where he provided clinical services for college athletes and created signature programming including initiatives for injured athletes and substance use. Following Texas, where he was also a clinical professor in the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, Dr. Gill served as a professional sports crisis and wellness program manager – working on mental health initiatives for the NFL and NBA – including the NFL Lifeline. Gill is the past president and founder of the Alliance of Social Workers in Sports, a 225-plus member organization that promotes the social work profession in athletics. His scholarship focuses on sports scandals, the intersection between social work, sports and mental health, social justice in sports, and Black male athletes.



ABIGAIL H. EILER, Clinical Associate Professor of Social Work, Director of Minor Programs, School of Social Work, University of Michigan. Eiler is a licensed clinical social worker and educator with 20 years of experience working in tribal and non-tribal communities across the country and in Canada. She is the former Director of Mental Health & High Performance at the University of Michigan Athletic Department where she successfully supported student-athletes and coaches in their journey to record-breaking championship years through innovative and culturally responsive service implementation. Eiler is the former President of the National Association of Social Workers-Michigan Chapter Board of Directors. She also served as the first Chair of the Big Ten’s Mental Health & Wellness Cabinet.



Pat Ivey, Ph.D., Associate Athletic Director, Student-Athlete Health & Performance, University of Louisville. Dr. Ivey is the current President of the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association (CSCCa). He received his Ph.D. in sports psychology from the University of Missouri, Master Strength and Conditioning Coach (MSCC) and Strength and Conditioning Coach Certified (SCCC) from the CSCCa, Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) from the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). Ivey was named the 2013 National Strength and Conditioning Coach of the Year. Dr. Ivey is a nationally renowned speaker on sports performance and former NFL player with the Detroit Lions, San Diego Chargers, Denver Broncos, and Green Bay Packers.



AARON MILLER, Ph.D., is an educator, author, podcaster, leadership coach, and cultural consultant. He is also a Lecturer in the Department of Kinesiology at California State University, East Bay, an Associate Adjunct Faculty, Department of Kinesiology, St. Mary's College of California, and creator/host of the podcast, *The Power of Sports*. Miller has authored *Discourses of Discipline: An Anthropology of Corporal Punishment in Japan's Schools and Sports* and *Buying In: Big-time Women's College Basketball and the Future of College Sports* and numerous op-eds, essays, journal articles and book chapters about education, sports, culture, power, violence, and social justice. He has been a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University and a Visiting Professor at Waseda University. Miller received his B.A. from the University of California Los Angeles and M.Sc. and Ph.D. from Oxford University.



BRUCE SMITH, Ph.D., Director of Empowerment Strategies and CEO of the ACES Group. He has worked in K-12, higher education, and intercollegiate athletics for more than two decades as a teacher, professor, administrator, and coach. As a higher education administrator, his work focused on student life, athletics, and equity and justice at both small private liberal arts colleges and flagship state institutions in California, Arizona, Colorado, and Oregon. As a professor, his work focuses on African American life and culture; the sociology of education, sport studies, and American studies with an emphasis on developing engaging, student-centered, identity-conscious pedagogy. He earned his BA in American Civilization from Brown University, M.S. in Education from the University of Southern, and Ph.D. in Education from the University of California, Berkeley. Smith also serves as Secretary and Board member for The Drake Group Education fund.

