

First Annual Intercollegiate Athletics Review

Financial Management Workshop

Panel of Presidents

Monday, August 20, 2018 10-11:30am

1. We know that in the USG, student-athletes have a higher federal graduation rate, and typically have higher GPAs. Talk about the **educational achievement value and overall best value** that athletics brings to a campus.

Let me first briefly address “**overall best value**” which athletics brings to our college. East Georgia State College is a state college located in a rural, socio-economically challenged region of Georgia. Less than 20% of adults in the region we serve have attained a bachelors degree. Our student body is about 45% African American and about 45% Caucasian. Students in our region choose to go to college at a lower rate than the state as a whole. About 50-60% of our students are first generation college students. **Our mission in this unique and challenging environment is to increase expectations about college going in our region; to increase access to college; and to increase retention, successful transfer and graduation rates in our region.** In that context, the “overall best value” which athletics brings to our college is the simple fact that **athletics brings to our college each fall semester students who, for the most part, would simply not have made the choice to go to college absent our athletics program and would not have had the means to go to college once they made that choice.** During my 6 fall semesters at EGSC, to make this concept tangible, this has brought about 450 new students to college most of whom would not have otherwise gone to college.

The next best value which athletics brings to our college is the **student engagement** and a sense of connection to the campus and pride for our student body as a whole. This must be viewed in light of the physical location of our main campus in Swainsboro, Georgia. That community has a population of about 8,000 and has extremely limited recreational facilities and programs for college-aged students. Similarly, due to our small size, the college itself has limited resources for programming of student activities. As you might imagine, the opportunities for social interaction and personal growth on our campus and in our community are necessarily more limited than would be available on a larger, better funded campus in a more metropolitan environment. For example, it is hard to persuade our residential student body of about 435 to stay on campus on the weekends or to convince our commuter students to come back to campus on the weekends when the social opportunities of larger communities beckon them. We all know well the positive impact on academic success, retention and graduation of spending time on campus and being engaged with peers and mentors. **The ability to offer students something to take pride in (Bobcat Athletics), the ability to offer those students exciting events to attend and the ability of students to organize other student activities around athletic events is priceless.**

Finally, our athletic program has a significant and positive impact on general student recruiting. I travel each year to a high percentage of the high schools in the region to talk with students about college readiness. One of the most common questions I receive from students is “what sports does your school offer.” These students, of course, really **want to know if the campus is a vibrant, exciting place with which they can identify and bond and where they can imagine themselves living in the near future.** The value of being able to tell these students that we offer basketball, baseball and softball is significant. Also, decisions by student athletes to attend college often inspire friends who are not

college athletes to make similar choices. Simply put, friends of athletes often attend the same college as the athlete.

Your question also asked me to **address “educational achievement value.”** At East Georgia, our students as a whole are every bit as bright as the students who attend more selective institutions --- but they are correspondingly less well prepared academically and have far lower expectations about their own academic success. As your question stated, **our athletes do graduate at a higher rate than the student body as a whole.** A major factor contributing to that result is that all of our athletes must spend time interacting every day with the advisors and tutors in our Academic Center for Excellence. The fact that **all of our athletes must spend a certain number of hours in the ACE helps us reinforce to our entire student body that the ACE is a key to academic success for all students** --- that there is no stigma associated with the need for advising and tutoring. It helps us create a culture in which students expect to succeed in courses and to stay in college and graduate.

2. We all strive for an outstanding experience for all of our students. Please speak specifically about **“what are the foundations for an outstanding student-athlete experience and overall student-athlete well-being?”**

There is, of course, a myriad of nuts and bolts essential to an outstanding student-athlete experience including programs specifically designed for athletes about academic integrity, substance abuse, mental health, financial health, and healthy life styles. All of these are essential elements of our program. However, the true foundations of an excellent student-athlete experience at the state college level are:

- a. Direct and personal **control of the athletic program by the President.** At EGSC, the athletic director reports directly to me and is a member of my cabinet – and not just a member on paper –

an active participant in college governance in the same manner as any other member of my cabinet. Also, I attend a high percentage of athletic events to insure that I have a hands on sense of what is happening in the athletic program;

- b. A clearly communicated and enforced bedrock concept that the **athletic program is, in all respects, subject to all of the policies, procedures and values** of the college in the same manner as any other unit of the college. Additional requirements are often placed on athletes by their coaches or the AD. However, there are no shortcuts for athletics in business policies or academic policies;
 - c. **Actual active representation and participation by the athletic program staff (i.e., coaches and assistant coaches) in all major activities of the college** such as Cabinet meetings, strategic planning meeting, accreditation activities and service activities. For example, coaches and athletes play an active role in general student recruiting as do all of our other units; and play an active role in community service activities as do all of our units.
 - d. **Integration of the athletes into the life of the college in ways beyond athletes.** For example, we have a policy about athletes living in the residence hall, athletes regularly compete for selection and are regularly chosen as members of our Correll Scholars program and play a prominent role in our college's annual college readiness tour of high schools in our region.
3. As a president, financial pressures are a challenge in higher education, **in addition to financial challenges**, what **other challenges are out there for athletics**? In other words, what keeps you up at night about athletics?

It is **hard, if not impossible, to separate this question from financial challenges.** EGSC has a student athletic fee of \$100 per semester and about 3000 students. If you add in another 15% from private fundraising, this means that the college has a total of about \$700,000 per year for

four programs – two men’s programs and two women’s programs - to pay its coaches’ salaries, travel to games, purchase and maintain equipment, buy insurance, conduct drug testing, provide an athletic trainer and pay a share of the institution’s overhead. This means that there is very little money available to address the things which keep me up at night. Having said that, the other things which keep me up at night are:

- a. **Substance abuse.** Maintaining a **drug testing program and preventing substance abuse** and dealing with it when it arises
 - b. **Responding to athletic injury.** Maintaining an **adequate training program to assure that short and long term physical and mental health risks associated with athletic competition are addressed**
 - c. **Maintaining a climate of integrity.** Assuring that academic integrity is understood, valued and maintained
 - d. **Maintaining focus academic success.** Assuring that our athletes keep their athletic experience in perspective, i.e., remembering that they are at EGSC first to earn a degree and second to participate in athletics.
4. Let’s look at the different Divisions and the realities of being Junior College, NAIA, NCAA, NCAA Division I and NCAA Division II and NCAA Division II with football. Each president, please respond to **how the athletic organization/division you belong to is “right” for your institution.** Talk about the realities associated with your institution as the result of your athletic affiliation (For example: alumni expectations, opportunities for underserved populations, etc.)

EGSC is a member of the GCAA, a region of the NJCAA. Other members include ABAC, Georgia Highlands, Gordon State College, South Georgia State College and various other Georgia technical colleges.

This is the “right fit” for EGSC for a number of reasons:

- a. Most **competition is in the state of Georgia**. This keeps transportation costs, a major component of our budget, under control. It also reduces the risks of travel accidents;
 - b. It allows us, for the most part, to **compete on a level playing field** in the sense that most of the competitors in our region view athletics with the same philosophy as EGSC and are playing under the same financial constraints. There are exceptions to this rule because USG state colleges and TCSG colleges face somewhat different financial structures;
 - c. We can **participate even though we offer only 4 intercollegiate sports**;
 - d. It provides a **structure providing an additional level of control** and oversight over the academic and safety climate for athletics at the state college/community college level.
5. Final comments that presidents would like to add.