SUCCESSFUL STUDENT ATHLETES

Human Biology, Health & Society (HBHS)
Nutritional Sciences – CHE (NS-CHE)
Nutritional Sciences – CALS (NS-CALS)

Being a college athlete can make school more fun. Being involved in athletics also can be a good way to relax and decrease stress. At the same time, during competition athletes are expected to perform at high levels of competence in stressful situations. Being responsible for key situations helps many athletes learn how to handle stress. Student athletes who transfer the wisdom they gain on the playing fields to their academic experiences succeed at both athletics and academics. Transferring that knowledge is not always easy, so we have asked successful student-athletes to share their strategies with you.

Time Issues

The biggest challenges to the student athlete are time issues. These issues arise at the level of daily planning, semester-long planning and even planning your four years at Cornell. Athletes have to use the same discipline they use in their sports to ensure that they use the time available to them between classes and before and after practice and competitions to complete their assignments and prepare for exams. In addition, athletes (and others) can increase their efficiency by taking advantage of computerized processes, such as email and electronic databases. With careful planning, athletes have been able to participate in undergraduate research, field experiences, the Honors Program, and to volunteer as Teaching Assistants.

Take Charge of Your Academic Progress

One of the biggest changes from high school that many athletes experience here is the expectation that they will be actively involved in the planning of their course of study and their future careers. Set academic goals for yourself just as you set athletic goals. Seek and use the advice of academic advisors like you do with coaches. Learn what your special academic strengths are, as well as those areas that are weak and need to be strengthened. Learn how to use your strengths and improve your weaknesses.

Top 10 Ways to Balance Athletic Responsibilities & Schoolwork:

10. Take advantage of resources, such as tutors, that the athletic department can make available to you. Academic support and assistance are also available throughout campus from the Learning Strategies Center, the Math Support Center, the Writing Workshop and the Bio Center, among others. The student services and career development offices of your college can provide another layer of personal and academic counseling and advising.

9. Understand the requirements of your major as well as the graduation requirements for your college. Read the notices about changes.

8. Don't assume that advice and rules that apply to your teammates also apply to you and your program (but do ask them how they planned their schedules, how they study, etc.)

7. Develop a four-year plan that integrates your athletic demands with your academic schedule and your career plans. Try to take very academically-demanding classes in semesters when your athletic responsibilities are lighter.

6. Plan manageable course loads. Try to take about 12-15 credits - especially in your first semesters. Freshmen may delay taking intro biology until the sophomore year. Consider auto-tutorial classes - they can ease scheduling pressures and provide an efficient way of getting the required number of credits. Consider summer classes.
5. Build a strong relationship with your faculty advisor and work closely with him/her throughout your program. Make appointments to discuss your plans and be "up front" with your advisor about issues that concern you, such as the number of credits per semester and the difficulty of specific courses that you are thinking of taking.

4. Speak individually with all instructors and notify them early in the semester about your required absences because of competitions. Some instructors will be more flexible than others, but most will agree to slight adjustments in schedule. Expect to turn in all assignments and take all exams.

3. Learn how to succeed in each class - how to study, what to read, how to prepare for exams. Get to know the teaching assistants (TAs). Join or create an informal study group of students. Do not wait until the night before an exam to begin studying for it. Take early action when you are having trouble in a class. Go to office hours or email your TA with specific questions about the course material. Make an appointment with the instructor to discuss additional concerns (such as strategies for specific kinds of exams, test anxiety, etc.).

2. Do not get behind. Look ahead through the entire semester. Identify deadlines for assignments and exam dates. Then make a personalized plan that includes time for reading and homework (daily) as well as studying for exams and attending review sessions and office hours. Purchase and use a daily planner. Make a large copy of your time commitments and hang it on the wall of your room. Stick to your plan as best you can.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY

1. **MANAGE YOUR TIME.** Other students with the same academic schedule as athletes have fewer constraints on their time. Athletes who practice every afternoon must find time in the rest of their daily schedules for reading, homework, library work, writing papers and studying. This requires planning ahead.

**Comments From Recent Successful Student Athletes:**

- Demands for balancing the time commitments for athletics and academics have stayed pretty much the same in my four years at Cornell. I have been able to fine-tune things like time management and not getting behind in class work.

- Try to keep things in perspective. Being too stressed out doesn't do anything good for you.

- You are intelligent enough to choose Cornell, so take advantage of the academic as well as the athletic opportunities. Pay close attention to your GPA. Consider alternative careers and use your undergraduate choices as a foundation for that career.

- In the Fall, all athletes including those who will participate in winter and spring sports should contact Chris Wlosinski (cmw32@cornell.edu, 254-7472), Director of Athletic Student Services, for information about combining athletic and academic work.

Finally, to help us help other athletes, please send us your advice for future student athletes and we’ll share it with them! Thanks so much.