Los Rios Community College District

THE IMPACT OF ATHLETICS AND KINESIOLOGY PROGRAMS ON STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY INTRODUCTION

Athletics and Student Success at Los Rios

The Los Rios Community College District includes American River College, Cosumnes River College, Folsom Lake College, and Sacramento City College. Together, these four colleges annually enroll nearly 90,000 students. Each year, nearly 1,200 student athletes participate in one or more of 23 sanctioned intercollegiate sports offered at Los Rios colleges. All student athletes are required to maintain a "C" average in coursework, a 2.0 grade point average, and maintain a minimum of twelve (12) units each semester. Student athletes are prohibited from receiving scholarships (except those services available to all students, including Board of Governors waivers, Financial Aid, grants, etc.) and often are faced with balancing part-time employment with academic and sport team responsibilities during their two-years as a student athlete. Despite these numerous restrictions, across numerous core indicators associated with educational attainment, student athletes at Los Rios colleges perform better academically than the general student population. For example, the table below represents a sampling of nearly 350 students athletes enrolled at Sacramento City College in fall 2009 semester. Student athletes at Sacramento City College were enrolled in a higher number of academic units/classes, dropped classes at a lower rate than general students, succeeded in completing the course(s) at a higher rate than general students, and more than nine-in-ten re-enrolled (persisted) in the following semester.

	SCC Intercollegiate Students	All SCC Students
Headcount	344	27,028
Average Units Attempted	13.96	7.92
Average Units Completed	11.15	5.56
Average GPA	2.51	2.59
Course Success Rate	77.9%	65.5%
Fall to Spring Persistence	93.6%	59.7%

Note: Data collected by Los Rios CCD Research Office in December 2010.

DID YOU KNOW....the PE/Athletics sector supports nearly 24,000 jobs and had a $1.8 Billion economic impact on the Sacramento region in 2008?

Los Rios statistics on student athletes' academic success is not an anomaly. A recent study of middle and high school students investigated the predictive value of physical activity and sports participation on academic performance (Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Wall, 2010). The results showed that for high school girls, physical activity and sports participation predicted higher GPA and both activities independently predicted higher GPA (Fox, et al., 2010). For high school boys only sports participation served as an independent predictor of higher GPA (Fox, et al., 2010). Others have found that the study of dance also enhances student learning (Gazzaniga, 2008). Participation in dance has been shown to increase observational learning skills via neural substrates that organize complex skill sequences and this ability may transfer to other areas of learning (Gazzaniga, 2008). In response to naysayers who refuse to discard old models of thinking which undervalue all but the "core curriculum," Jensen gives the following response:

Kinesiology students and student athletes pursuing their educational goals are better citizens as a result of their participation in Kinesiology programs and athletics. Many of these successful students arrived at our colleges short on personal confidence, lacking career direction, uncertain of their own academic abilities, and questioning their own self-worth and value. Participation in Kinesiology classes and, for some, intercollegiate sport classes, immensely shaped a positive direction for them well beyond their affiliation with a Los Rios college. The stories are compelling and seek to demonstrate our belief that success is readily achieved for those who are willing to sacrifice and dedicate themselves to a lifelong goal that extends well beyond the playing field, lecture, lab, or board room.

Kinesiology Programs and Jobs

According to the American Kinesiology Association, the number of undergraduate kinesiology majors grew 50 percent from 2003 to 2008, to more than 26,000 students, making it one of the fastest-growing majors in the country (Inside Higher Ed, 2010). Kinesiology professions are also on the rise. The labor market information division (LMID) indicates Kinesiology professions in the greater Sacramento area will grow 18.1% between 2006-2016 (EDD, 2010). The labor market information covers the four-county Sacramento region including: El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo counties, which are included in the service area of Los Rios.

In 2006, Los Rios colleges hosted an employer convergence summit to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by such fitness professionals. Twenty-seven (27) employers participated in the survey project, representing 91 area facilities and nearly 1,200 employees in training occupations. 68% - 71% of employers rated knowledge of anatomy, kinesiology, and exercise physiology as very important, while 60% -67% rated health screening, program design and fitness assessment as very important. Only the ability to effectively perform CPR surpassed the number one skill that employers desired, which was good communication skills (78% rated this very important).

Athletics and Local Economies

The collegiate model is not only valuable in terms of its educational function, but it also possesses substantial value to the economic health of the region as an economic driver. The Physical Education/Kinesiology and Intercollegiate athletics sector is a critical component of the Sacramento region's economy, contributing millions of dollars in economic activity each year (Center of Excellence, 2010). The sector has a direct impact on the economy by employing thousands of people throughout the region. In addition, these establishments indirectly impact the economy through two key avenues: (1) PE/athletics establishments purchase a range of goods and service to support their daily operations; and, (2) the workforce consumes regionally available products. These purchases lead to job creation, economic activity in other industries throughout the region (Center of Excellence, 2010), and provide opportunities to form community partnerships. In addition, Kinesiology and Athletics programs enrich the social and cultural diversity of the region.

Los Rios colleges' sports programs and their campus facilities are economic magnets. They reserve room nights at area hotels, fill up their vans/busses at local gasoline stations, visit local shopping malls, dine at area eateries, and access a variety of entertainment and business interests dedicated to their needs and contests. The physical space venue's at all four Los Rios colleges represent a significant economic benefit to the Sacramento region, as seen in the following table, which shows data on sport contests hosted at the Los Rios colleges in the 2009-10 academic year.

Some critics assert that sociology, physical fitness, psychiatry, nutrition, psychology, and cognitive science are not "brain-based." That assertion is old-school, "turf-based," and outdated. If the research involves the brain in any way, it is "brain-based." The brain is involved in everything we do. (Jensen, 2009)