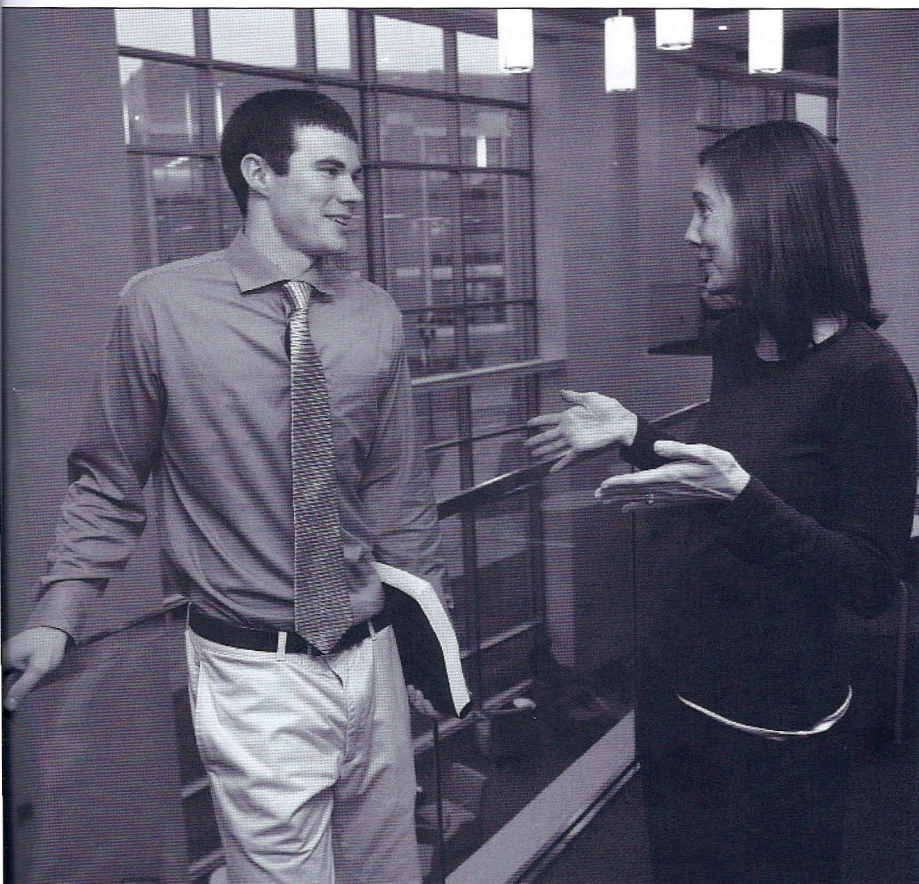


Editor's Note. Lacking from our recent issue on excellence was an article on the relationship between athletics and academic advising. Here is a response.

Developing the Athlete for Academic Excellence

By Rose Ann Fleming



Ann Schmidt, academic and career advisor for the Williams College of Business, speaking with Kevin Feeney, basketball player and marketing major. Xavier University.

Excellence for student athletes at Jesuit universities must be developed in the inner core of their being. Their experience at our institutions must be holistic; they are trained and practiced on a daily basis to perform at the highest standard in competitive athletics. This means totally committing their human energy to perfect execution in practice for achievement of their goals – a win over their opponents. These same student athletes can respond to a call to excellence in the academic area of their lives if we build a program which gives them an opportunity to approach scholarship with a recipe for success, much as their game-day plan points them confidently to strategies to overcome their opponents. What is this recipe? It is largely developmental advising which helps the student athlete toward maximizing his learning experiences through relationships with faculty and professional programs like mentoring

There are several components to this

Sister Rose Ann Fleming is coordinator of academic athletic advising at Xavier University.

Talking Back

developmental program: First, the recruited student athletes must come to understand that their university experience is two-fold in nature: academic as well as athletic, and that their athletic opportunities are conditioned upon their attaining at least a 2.0 grade point average, amassing 24 credits a year, choosing a major before beginning their junior year, making measured progress toward their degree in what we know as the 40/60/80 rule.

This level of success – the eligibility level—is reached through careful monitoring by their academic advisors, and by participating in an academic support program – two hours study hall, Sunday through Thursday evenings; tutorial sessions in every area to help athletes analyze assigned readings, write with clarity and precision, master formulae for solving problems and math and science; spend lab time in speaking and writing in a foreign language, and learning to critique music or art.

This study environment is highly structured and disciplined and is focused on completion of assignments. At Xavier, the academic athletic advisors help the new freshmen student athletes, set academic goals weekly based on the syllabi of their four to five core courses. Each student athlete knows exactly what is due, when it is due, and has access to an evening tutorial staff who can enable him or her to reach the goals, class by class, week by week. This orients student



Johnny Mazza, accounting major and basketball player, speaking with professor of accountancy, Dr. John Surdick. Xavier University.

athletes as freshman toward a system of managing their academic assignments in a timely manner.

But athletes are capable of much more – an approach to excellence as scholarship. Athletes have a learned experience from athletics of giving that hundred and ten percent, of never giving up, of playing until the

buzzer rings, of emptying themselves to attain a greater good. Why not transform these athletes as students into goal seeking scholars? Is not the heart of academic excellence seeking to know the truth as a goal in life itself? What gets the student athlete to do that?

The next step in the process is to orient the student athletes into setting their own academic goals. This is best developed in their relationship with the faculty. This relationship transforms that structured academic experience of their transition to college into a human academic experience. The student athletes who develop relationships with their professors have found the key to developing a conscious self-regulation to approach scholarship. ■



Spring Hill College student Keli Mazza captured this action shot of the Spring Hill rugby team's match against the University of Alabama.