

Student-athlete support center starts 2nd year with new director

By **CYNDI BURK**
Collegian Staff Writer

The University's Academic Support Center for Student-Athletes is continuing under the new direction of Don Sheffield to try to help student-athletes maximize their academic potential.

In its second year, the center offers three major services, which are available to all University athletes. These include: helping with career development, providing academic advising, and providing access to a sports psychologist, Sheffield said.

"The sports psychologist helps the student-athlete focus on self esteem as well as get a total view of life, rather than a microscopic view through athletics," Sheffield said. University sports psychologist Dave Yukelson will lift the program to new heights, he added.

By advising student athletes, Sheffield said he hopes to pull together the academic as well as athletic needs of individuals. This goal is achieved, he said, through careful examination of the individual's educational background.

"Advising is not just looking at a catalogue and saying 'take these classes.' Students need to be advised on courses that are appropriate for them," said Sheffield, who served as the center's interim director last year.

Sheffield said he realizes students not participating in athletics have just as much of a time management problem as those who do, but because athletes have made a commitment to facilitate in helping the University carry its name, they should have immediate support.

Besides working with the University's student-athletes, Sheffield said he continues to stress the importance of helping freshmen adjust to the difficulties of balancing academics and their busy sport schedules.

While upperclassmen use the center's services on a volunteer basis, freshman athletes are required to participate in the center's programming, the director added.

"Freshmen will continue to be a

main objective of the center this year," Sheffield said.

A fourth service, provided only for freshmen, is a freshman enrichment program in which the athlete is required to take a study enrichment class, a health education course and a career development course.

"On top of these requirements, each athlete has seven-and-a-half hours of study hall per week the first semester, and the number of hours in the second semester is based on the grade-point average received in the fall," he explained. For instance, a 3.0 average would exempt the athlete from study hall.

The health class fulfills the University's General Education course requirement for health and is a full semester course scheduled during the athlete's less active season, Sheffield said. The other two courses are a half semester each, taken one right after the other, also during the less busy season.

The study enrichment program, first established last year under the direction of Sandy Meyer, freshman academic coordinator, has undergone several changes to make it stronger.

"We looked at the course evaluation from last year's student-athletes who took the course and tried to make a class that deleted the things students objected to, as well as add anything they suggested," Meyer said.

One difference in this year's program is that the career development course — now called academic career exploration — and the freshman seminar are graded by pass/fail instead of a letter grade. Meyer said this change alone should enable student-athletes to get more out of the course.

"By having the course pass/fail, the student doesn't have to worry about the class hurting his grade point average, or inflating it," Meyer said.

The classes are now scheduled during the day instead of at night, so they pose less inconvenience to athletes with busy schedules.

However, Meyer said the major

change in the classes is actual course content.

"We've focused more on familiarizing the athlete with college life, discussing topics such as the location of important help centers, the definition and importance of higher education, and the importance of time management," Meyer said, adding that study skills are still discussed because students gave this aspect of the course a very positive evaluation.

Bill Murphy (sophomore-business), a member of the men's track team who took the course last year, said the enrichment course was not very useful for him because he came to the University with good study habits. He added, however, that the course would have been helpful if he had not had such a good background.

The academic and career exploration course, under the direction of Sally Hattig, career development specialist, will have relatively few changes made in comparison to the seminar, Hattig said.

"We will still focus on decision making, goal making and the responsibilities of being both a student and an athlete," Hattig said, noting that classes will be smaller so students have a better chance for self discovery.

"In smaller groups they will get more of a chance to discuss things and see that they are not alone in their feelings," Hattig said.

Both the study hall and the career course had very good responses from the freshmen who took the classes last year.

"The career course finalized in my mind what I wanted to do in the future and it also is good to know how to write a resume," said Lara vonSeele (sophomore-broadcast/cable).

VonSeele also said the study hall was a great way to develop excellent study habits.

Programs like these are in the workings for all freshmen at the University, Sheffield said.

"We realize that this is the time to get meaning out of academic pursuits and that all freshmen have a need for a program like the one provided to the athlete in order to achieve this," he said.

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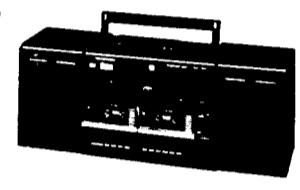


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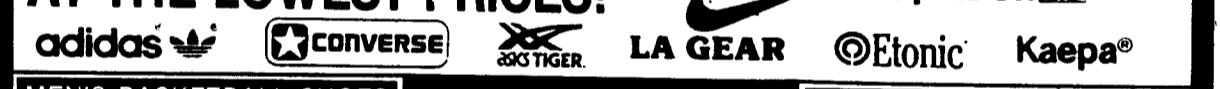
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