



UNC  
**GREENSBORO**  
Center *for* Athlete  
Well-being



# UNC GREENSBORO

Center for Athlete  
Well-being

## Athlete Mental Health

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# Agenda

- Athlete Mental Health
- Collegiate Athlete Experience
- Athlete Identity
- Best Practices
  - A Culture of Caring
    - Relationships, Communication, & Human Development
- Specific Resources



# Athlete Mental Health

- NCAA GOALS Study
  - Students coming to campus already overwhelmed
  - Experiencing “difficulties” piling up
  - Some athletes do feel comfortable talking with coaches about mental health concerns
  - Less than half of the athletes surveyed felt very satisfied with the mental health care they received on campus.
- Other research
  - Being overwhelmed, feelings of depression, and anxiety reported as most common
  - Stigma related to talking about mental health concerns or requesting professional help

# Collegiate Athlete Experience

The Stress of being a collegiate athlete and the anxiety associated with participating in collegiate athletics

Time demands:

Athletic time demands

GOALS Study indicated that student-athletes spend, on average, 30 hours per week on athletic activities

Academic time demands

GOALS Study indicated that student-athletes spend, on average, 37 hours per week on academic activities

Social/Family time demands

What's left?



# Collegiate Athlete Experience continued

## Sleep:

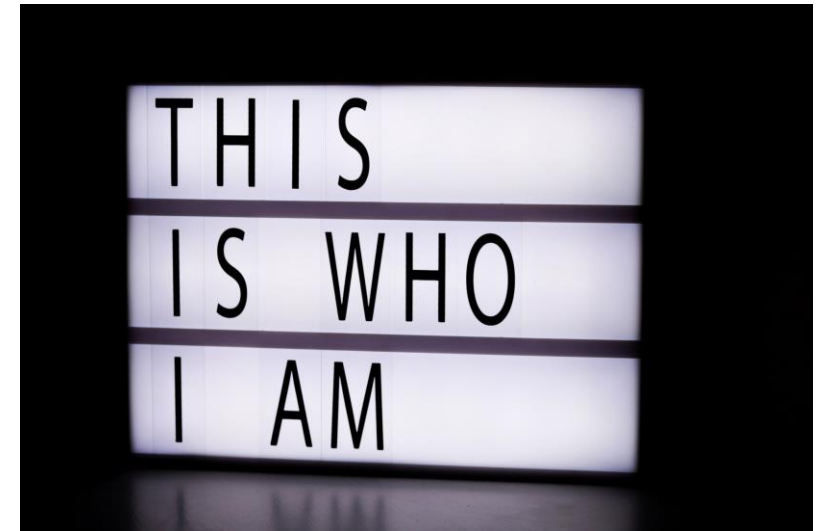
- GOALS Study indicated that student-athletes sleep, on average, 6 hours and 15 minutes

## Demographic differences in mental health outcomes:

- Some studies suggest *Female, minoritized, and Division I athletes* reported worse mental health concerns (depression, anxiety, stress) and quality of life than their *White, male, other-division peers* (Brown, B. J., et al, 2021)

# Athlete Identity

- Athlete Identity (let's not get into the weeds here)
  - Athlete views themselves as an athlete in others' eyes (Social identity)
  - A self-image exclusively as an athlete (Exclusivity).
  - Worry about poor performance or not being able to fulfill their athletic role (Negative affectivity).
  - Think about other types of identities (racial identity, political identity, professional identity)
  - Who they see themselves to be on campus
  - Who they see themselves to be in their family/social network



# Athlete Identity continued

- Loss of Identity
  - Dismissal from team or fear of dismissal from team (i.e., “being cut”)
  - Career ending injuries
  - Loss of love for the game
  - Graduation
  - Graduate school

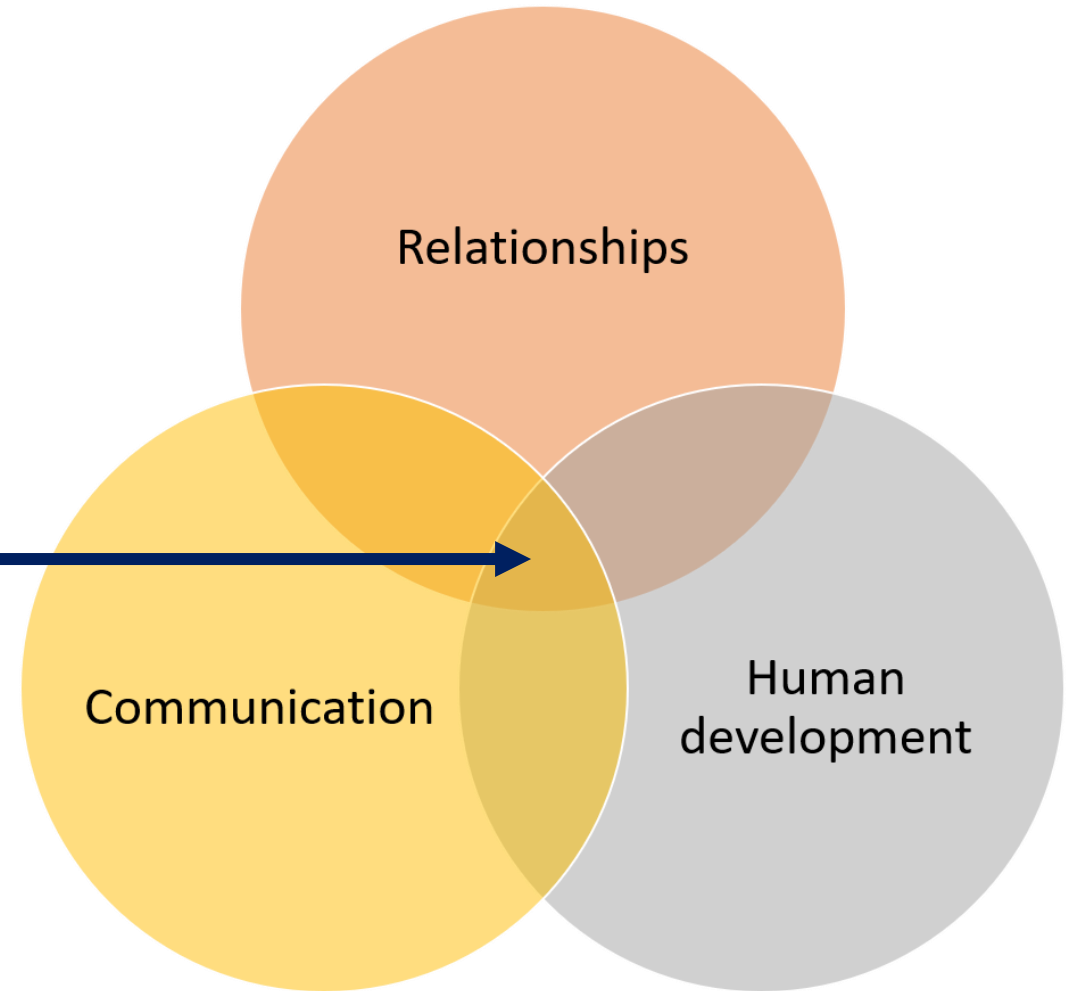




# Developing a Culture of Caring

# What is a culture of care in athletics?

- An environment that sets community members (athletes, staff, coaches, etc.) up for success
- Found at the intersection of healthy relationships, effective communication, and a focus on human development.



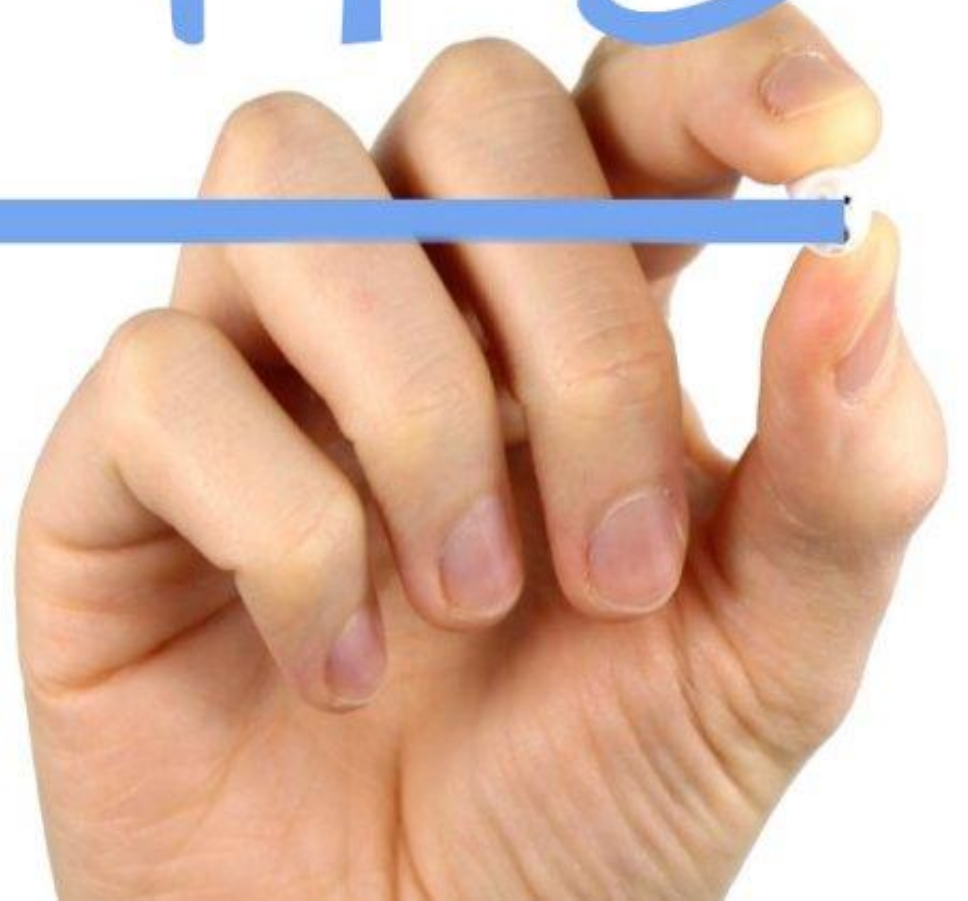
# BENEFITS

## Individual

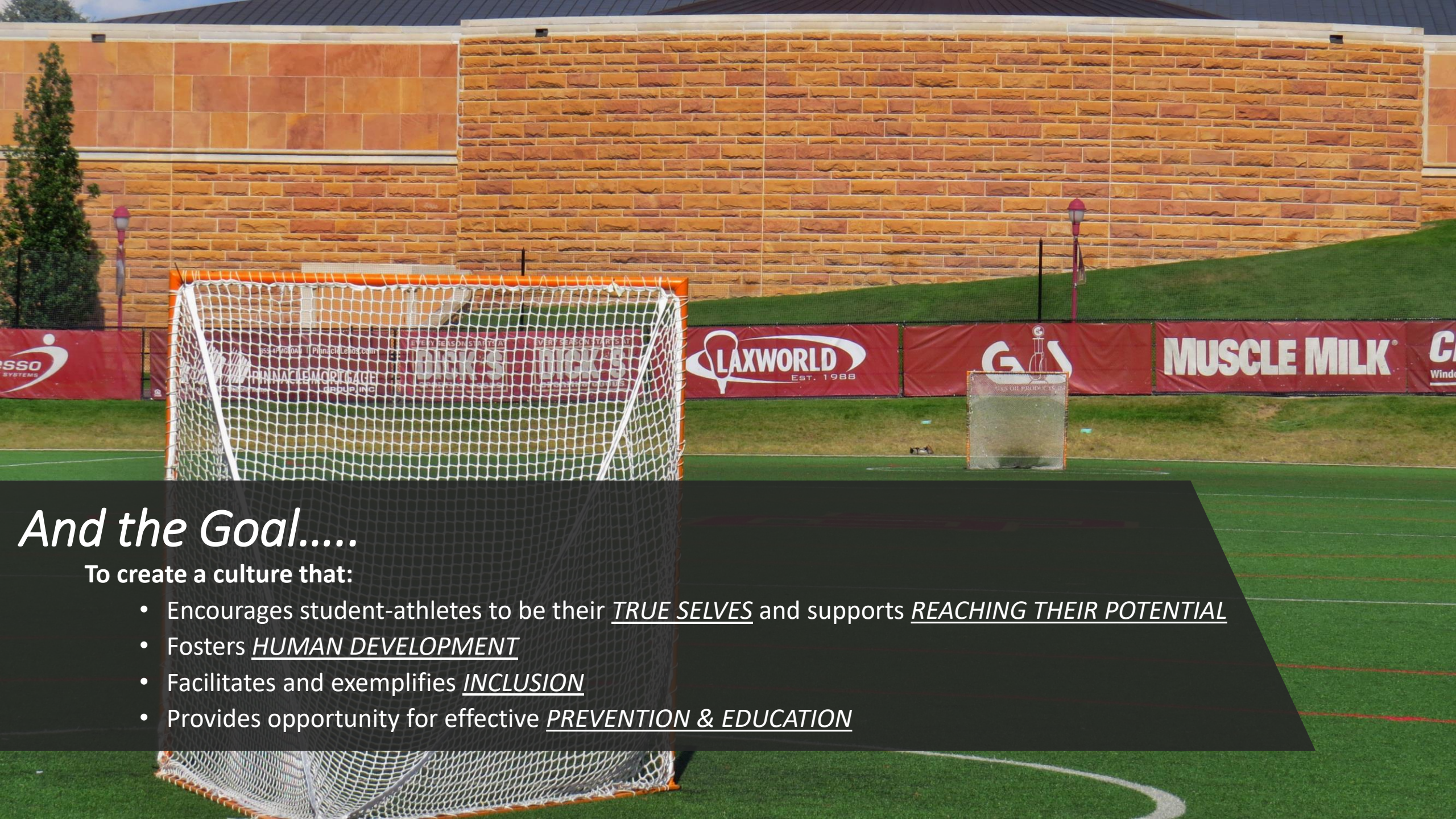
Security – to feel safe  
Belonging – to feel part of things  
Continuity – to experience connection  
Purpose – to have a goal to aspire to  
Achievement – to make progress toward goals  
Significance – to matter as a person

## Relational

Nurturing  
Mentorship







# *And the Goal.....*

To create a culture that:

- Encourages student-athletes to be their TRUE SELVES and supports REACHING THEIR POTENTIAL
- Fosters HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
- Facilitates and exemplifies INCLUSION
- Provides opportunity for effective PREVENTION & EDUCATION



# What can this look like?

Does every member of the athletics department...

- know that they will receive support if they are struggling with mentally?
  - **Example:** Train athletics staff in mental health literacy
  - **Example:** Standardized referral processes
- trust that they will receive support if they report victimization?
  - **Example:** Mandate coach training in skills re: responding to sexual violence or mental health crises
  - Staff and athlete training in communication
    - Leads to decrease in stigma related to mental health
- Policies that communicate a desire to help rather than a requirement to punish
  - **Example:** Revise sanctions to prioritize rehabilitation over punishment (e.g., alcohol violation)



# Resources

*NCAA Mental Health Toolkit, NCAA's Coaches Assist for Empathic Listening, Hilinksi's Hope, Student Athlete Voice, Half a Sorrow*

A close-up photograph of a Washington Huskies football player. He is wearing a red jersey with white stripes on the sleeves, a red helmet with a white face mask, and white wristbands. He is pointing his right index finger upwards and has a focused, slightly open-mouthed expression. The background is blurred, suggesting a stadium setting.

# Hilinski's Hope Foundation

Fighting for the mental health of student athletes.



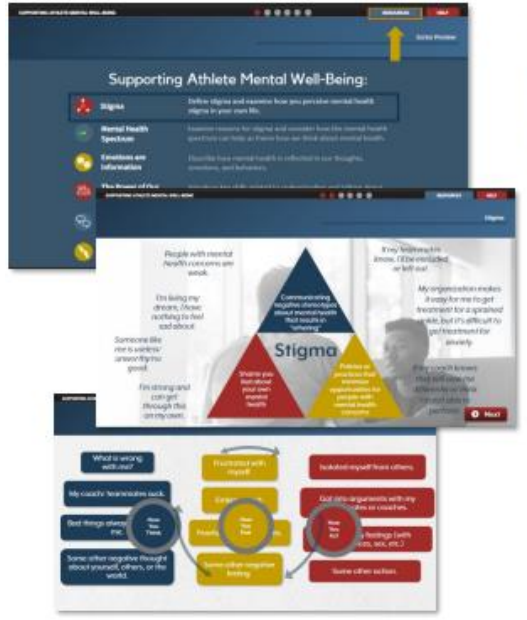
# Hilinski's Hope Foundation

- Game Plan



Created through partnership with the NCAA Sports Science Institute and Prevention Strategies, this comprehensive program helps universities save lives, eliminate stigma, and scale mental wellness programs.

- Online mental health course



A series of six modules designed to help reduce the stigma of seeking help for mental health concerns. The course provides a new way of thinking about mental health, breaks down myths about mental health treatment, builds confidence in seeking treatment regardless of one's current mental health and teaches how to advocate for others with mental health concerns who could use support.

**Stigma**  
**The Mental Health Spectrum**  
**Emotions Are Information**  
**The Power of Our Thoughts**  
**Help Seeking**  
**Being an Upstander**

- FEATURES**
- ❖ Interactive web-based instructional design
  - ❖ Engaging content and immediate personalized feedback
  - ❖ Administrative and technical assistance to facilitate program delivery





# Student Athlete Voice



- An online student-athlete survey designed to provide institutions with actionable data related to their student-athletes' collegiate experiences.
- Can be completed from any laptop, tablet, or smart phone.
- Will take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete.
- Institutions will have the option of adding up to 10 of their own questions. We'll work with you on item development.
- Participating institutions also have the ability to remove certain questions from the survey they would prefer to not be included.

# Survey Topics

1. Academic Experiences
2. Athletic Experiences
3. Time Demands
4. Well-Being
5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
6. Campus Belonging
7. NIL
8. Demographics (e.g., *gender, race, sport, year in school, scholarship status (if applicable), etc.*)

# Benefits of Student-Athlete Voice

# Benefits of Student-Athlete Voice

**Benefit 1:** Student-Athlete Voice gives the data back

**Benefit 2:** Actionable data on current student-athletes

**Benefit 3:** Able to benchmark within Conference (just 3 institutional members needed)

**Benefit 4:** Experts to facilitate the process and help make sense of your data

# How does Student-Athlete Voice differ from NCAA data collection initiatives (e.g., GOALS, Social Environments)?

	Student-Athlete Voice	NCAA Surveys
Collects data directly from student-athletes	✓	✓
Provides institution-level aggregate data back to the institutions	✓	
Allows institutions to customize their survey	✓	
Benchmarks the findings to the conference	✓	
Provides a data dashboard for the institutions to analyze findings by key demographic variables	✓	

# Half a Sorrow Foundation – Dennis Gillan

- *A Shared Joy is a Double Joy, A Shared Sorrow is Half a Sorrow* - Swedish Proverb
- Suicide prevention programming
- Multiple trainings available
  - QPR training
  - LivingWorks safeTalk training
  - LivingWorks ASIST training
- For more information visit <https://halfasorrow.org/>





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# Questions