

The Office of Institutions Effectiveness (OIE) partnered with the Kinesiology, Athletics and Health division to assess the student athlete perspective and experience at Pasadena City College. After completing listening sessions with nearly 50 student athletes from Men's Basketball, Track and Field and Women's Volleyball, we found that the Athletic Zone is a crucial space that provides academic support, key information, and community, that serves as a primary hub for studying, gathering, and receiving advising from staff who understand their unique needs.

Although student athletes value the Zone, several indicated that when they attempt to use support services from other areas on campus, they are often referred back to the Zone due to their athletic status, reinforcing the Zone's role as their primary point of support. While student athletes generally value the Zone, they also experience challenges related to limited counseling availability, inconsistent information and cancelled or delayed sessions which ultimately impacts transfer timeframes.

### **Findings & Recommendations**

Key findings emerged from the listening sessions, leading to recommendations focused on ensuring student athlete needs are adequately met.

Student athletes expressed challenges related to counseling availability, inconsistent information and cancelled or delayed sessions which ultimately lead to extended transfer timelines.

***Increase the number of specialized athletic counselors to increase appointment availability and ensure accuracy in transfer and eligibility requirements.***

Student athletes juggle the demands of their sport with academic obligations and experience significant physical and mental exhaustion from long days, leaving them with little energy to complete academic work in the evenings.

***Create professional development for faculty and staff to discuss the challenges of student athletes and create a workgroup to ensure concerns are being addressed.***

Student athletes reported strategies for managing academics by selecting courses based on faculty who are flexible and understanding. They rely on platforms like Rate My Professor to identify professors who will understand their athletic commitments.

***Faculty Advocacy: Develop a formal communication protocol to better inform faculty of student athlete travel schedules and encourage "athlete-friendly" flexibility.***

Most student-athletes report limited awareness of campus resources unless actively promoted through the Zone, they rarely use platforms like LancerPoint. Consequently, if information is not shared directly by the Zone or its social media, student athletes remain unaware of available support.

***Communication & The Zone: Utilize the Zone's social media presence to inform student athletes about resources, events, scholarships, and other news for the college.***

Consistent with broader student needs, food and nutrition emerged as a significant concern for student-athletes. Several athletes noted that finding and affording quality food and nutrition is a challenge with packed schedules and long days.

*Restore basic needs to The Zone by providing nutritious snacks and/or lunch for student athletes. The Zone provided food to student athletes but discontinued this service.*

Student athletes reported concerns that certain sports are prioritized over others, resulting in limited transportation, delayed uniforms, restricted access to training facilities and late locker assignments.

*Equity in facility access: Standardize locker room and training room access across all sports to ensure non-football athletes have adequate access to change, train, and recover.*

## Detailed insights

### The Zone as a Lifeline for Athletes

Across all three groups, athletes named The Zone as their most crucial support space for academic help, priority registration, and finding a sense of community. Many students find it a sanctuary where students feel seen by staff who understand their specific needs. It serves as their primary study hall, lounge, and advising center. While most students spoke highly of The Zone, some students indicated that when seeking services elsewhere on campus, they are often referred to the Zone as they are viewed as a special population by general student services. Students also noted that the Zone's social media was their main source of news and events from the college. A point of tension for students was the lack of counselors and the inconsistent information students receive. Students reported having counseling sessions canceled or delayed and receiving information that resulted in delayed transfer timelines.

*"I feel supported in the Zone; took like 15 minutes to change my major. You get instant help if you need it." – Basketball Student*

### Time Management & Exhaustion

Every group of athletes emphasized that physical exhaustion from practice and long days makes evening homework extremely difficult. A recurring reality for these students is a schedule that begins early in the morning, is fully scheduled out, and ends late at night with little to no cognitive energy left for academic work. Many described a cycle of waking up, attending class, practicing for hours, and then working or studying while physically drained.

*"By the time the day is over, I'm exhausted, I don't even want to look at a screen." – Track & Field Student*

### Strategic Enrollment & Faculty variability

Because of their rigid schedules and the physical toll of their sports, student athletes report relying heavily on the website [ratemyprofessors.com](http://ratemyprofessors.com) to find instructors who are perceived to be lenient, flexible, or athlete friendly before registering for classes. Rather than selecting courses based on interest, they select courses whose faculty are shown to be understanding and accommodating to athletes. Students also reported that while some faculty are highly accommodating, other penalize them for travel or refuse to offer flexibility.

## **Resource Accessibility and Self-Advocacy**

Many students are unaware of campus-wide resources unless they are specifically advertised within The Zone. Many students understand vaguely that the college has resources, but athletes rarely access them because they are typically confined to athletic spaces (the field, gym, or Zone) and do not often check LancerPoint. Many students indicated that if they are not told about a resource by The Zone or the Zone's social media, they often do not know it exists and must self-advocate to receive support and resources.

*“Outside of The Zone it’s hard to see what we have. They don’t promote it...They don’t push the scholarships to the athletes.” – Track & Field Student*

## **Desire for Basic Needs**

Food and nutrition were highlighted as a major need for student athletes. Because athletes are on campus for long durations, often over 10 hours, many athletes are without access to affordable and high-quality nutrition needed to perform. Students noted that previously The Zone provided food and snacks and want that practice to return.

*“Finding time to eat the food and digest the food. One pack of crackers will fuel the whole team” – Basketball Student*

## **Prioritization Issues**

A significant issue that arose was the feeling that certain sports, such as football, are prioritized above other sports. This issue includes a lack of transportation to meets, delayed uniforms, and being forced out of the training room for other sports. A lack of access to the lockers also resulted in some students reporting having to change in corners because they weren't assigned lockers until mid-season.

*“They close [the training room] right when practice is over, so we don’t get treatment. And if we try to come early, we have to wait for football even though they’re not currently in season.” – Track & Field Student*

## **Final Notes**

Data from this study is based on qualitative data using a small sample that does not capture the experiences of all student athletes. Therefore, a quantitative study with a larger sample is recommended to quantify and validate these results.