

Student Academic Enhancement Program

Golden Eagle student-athletes understand that achieving a quality education is the most important thing in their collegiate life. However, with the demands of each athlete's athletic pursuits, balancing both is, at times, difficult to achieve.

Thankfully, the Southern Miss Student Academic Enhancement Program (SAEP) helps its student-athletes attain and maintain that balance by providing quality academic support services.

The mission of the SAEP is designed to give Golden Eagle athletes needed support to assure that academic success is realistic, not only during the athlete's playing days, but also after his or her eligibility has expired.

Southern Miss student-athletes lead busy lives. The players' schedules are filled with practices, meetings, classes and study halls, which are key components to a successful and meaningful college experience. So when the hectic student-athlete lifestyle kicks in, the SAEP is there to give Southern Miss athletes additional support in their educational pursuits.

The SAEP emphasizes making the academic career at the university one of production, by counseling student-athletes in a variety of areas, including course selection and degree plans. The SAEP also focuses on preparing the student-athlete for life beyond graduation.

Aided with the help of more than 30 tutors, the SAEP offers individualized tutoring in all courses and an academic center that includes a study hall and full access computer lab. The tutors consist of local educators who have flexible schedules, allowing them ample time to work with the hectic schedules of the student-athletes.

The SAEP places a high emphasis on the individual services it provides. The staff, led by Southern Miss SAEP Director Tracy Robinson, continues to tweak the services it is able to provide for student-athletes with special needs or for those who have disabilities that prevent them from performing at the necessary levels.

In addition, the SAEP also monitors NCAA eligibility requirements for the student-athletes, ensuring participation in their respective sports. Golden Eagle student-athletes also are involved in a variety of individual and group community service projects, along with life skills programs that further develop the overall person.

For the past few years, the SAEP program has been vital to the success of the student-athletes and those successes are netting positive results. Since Robinson and her staff have been at the University, the overall GPA of the athletic teams has steadily increased each semester.

But that success is not limited to just the football team, as the academic achievement of all Southern



Lauren Prewitt, a senior in 2004, was named to the *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-District team.

Miss athletic programs also continues to increase. In May, the program helped the largest class of student-athletes in school history graduate, a number that also has been improving each year.

The SAEP staff meets regularly with each coaching staff to evaluate the academic progress of every Golden Eagle student-athlete. The close connection with the coaching staffs and the SAEP department is a key component to the success of the teams in the classroom and on the field.

The graduation rates of all student-athletes at Southern Miss are higher than those of non-athletes. Golden Eagle athletes are consistent members on the President's and Dean's Lists, as well as among the leaders in Conference USA scholars.

In the recently announced Academic Progress Rate (APR) scores that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) released this year, Southern Miss fared very well, with every program earning a score that is above the cut score of 925. As a whole, the Golden Eagle teams tallied an APR score of 965, 40 points above the cut line and nearly 20 points better than the national average. The school did even better when it came to scoring the academic eligibility of its student-athletes, posting a 974. Southern Miss' scores proved to be the highest among Division I programs in the state of Mississippi and also ranked among the top scores in Conference USA.

But the Golden Eagles' success in the classroom isn't anything new. Through the hard work of the student-athletes, coaches, support staff and the SAEP, the Golden Eagle teams have continued to do well in the classroom. This is evident by the number of academic honors the individual athletes are obtaining on

the university, conference and national levels.

"Graduation rates are reflective of a number of factors" Robinson said. "The significant increase at Southern Miss is largely due to the personal commitment of our staff to our students. Our mission is not solely to provide support services for student-athletes, but to make sure those services are individualized to meet the diverse educational, social and emotional needs of the students we serve. While we are thrilled with the increase, we also understand the reality of the numbers and the many factors not considered in the calculation."

This past year, 114 Southern Miss student-athletes were named to the Conference USA Commissioner's Honor Roll for having a 3.0 or better cumulative grade point average. Of the 114, 28 were selected for the Commissioner's Academic Medal, displaying a 3.75 cumulative grade point average.

Southern Miss continues to be successful in the classroom, with numerous Scholar Athlete of the Year winners. In 2003-04, Southern Miss led Conference USA with three Scholar Athlete of the Year winners, while adding one in 2004-05. The winners are selected based on academic achievement (GPA), athletic achievement and service, and represent the top student-athlete in each conference sponsored sport.

Another key to the success of the SAEP is that its staff has a family-oriented, one-on-one relationship with every student-athlete outside the realms of academics.

The transition to college is usually as difficult for the parents as it is for the student-athlete. To help ease the transition and the worries a parent might have, a parent education program was developed in



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2002. The educational seminar takes place during the official visit weekend and enables the head coach and academic director an opportunity to meet with parents and guardians in an informal setting to present ideas and answer questions about the upcoming transition. The seminar addresses such topics as "Communicating With Your College Student," "The Importance of Continued Parent Involvement," "Drug and Alcohol Issues on College Campuses" and "High Risk Behaviors in College."

"The parent education component of our official visits continues to be well-received each recruiting season," Robinson said. "It is comforting to the parents to know that they are entrusting their students into the care of an entire athletic department family that is wholly committed to the personal development of its student-athletes. The program further emphasizes the fact that parent involvement continues to be an essential factor in the development of the student."

As the director of the program, Robinson works closely with a staff of qualified academic counselors for each sport in overseeing the academic progress of all Southern Miss student-athletes.

The Southern Miss SAEP department has three academic counselors, who make sure each student-athlete at Southern Miss maintains his/her academic well being.

Stacy Breazeale is the academic counselor for football. Lauren Hillman primarily works with men's and women's basketball, volleyball, softball and soccer. Jonas Taylor is responsible for baseball, men's and women's golf, men's and women's tennis and track and field. Brenda Mixon is the secretary.

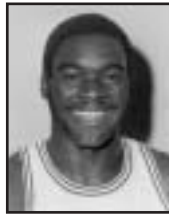
Thanks to the close working relationship between the SAEP and the Southern Miss athletic department, a student-athlete can expect to gain a valuable academic experience that will allow him or her to be productive members of society long after their Southern Miss playing career is over.

MISSION STATEMENT

To enrich the growth of students through academic guidance, encouragement of personal accountability, mentoring of responsible citizenship, development of independence, and the acceptance and appreciation of individual talents and abilities; thereby, empowering students to be positive contributors in a global society.

SOUTHERN MISS' ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS

SPONSORED BY THE COLLEGE SPORTS INFORMATION DIRECTORS OF AMERICA



Joe Dawson
Basketball 1982



Mark Carson
Baseball 1991



James Singleton
Football 1991-92



Derek Reams
Baseball 1995



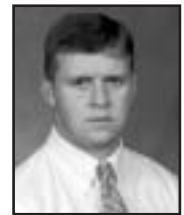
Jeremy Lindley
Football 1997



Jeremy Schied
Baseball 1998



Neil Reed
Basketball 1999



Jeff Kelly
Football 2000



Lindsay Westendorf
Volleyball 2000



Souhaila McReynolds
Soccer 2001



Clint King
Baseball 2003



Olivia Berry
Women's Tennis 2004



Auriel Jenkins
Softball 2004



Austin Tubb
Baseball 2004

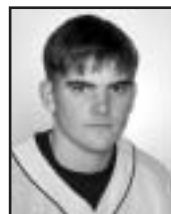


Karen Tankersley
Cross Country 2005



Charity Butler
Softball 2005

2004-05 ESPN THE MAGAZINE ACADEMIC ALL-DISTRICT



Marc Maddox
Baseball



Karen Tankersley
Cross Country



Charity Butler
Softball



Lauren Prewitt
Women's Soccer



Amy Truong
Volleyball