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## **Assessing and Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Student Athletes - A Case Study of The University of Northern Iowa**

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# Student-Athletes and Mental Health - A Case Study On How UNI Can Meet The Unique Needs Within Athletics

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## Questions

Are UNI's student-athletes indicating a greater need for mental health services than non-athlete students?

How many student-athletes are receiving services relative to how many may need them?

How can UNI increase the chances that student-athletes in need receive help?

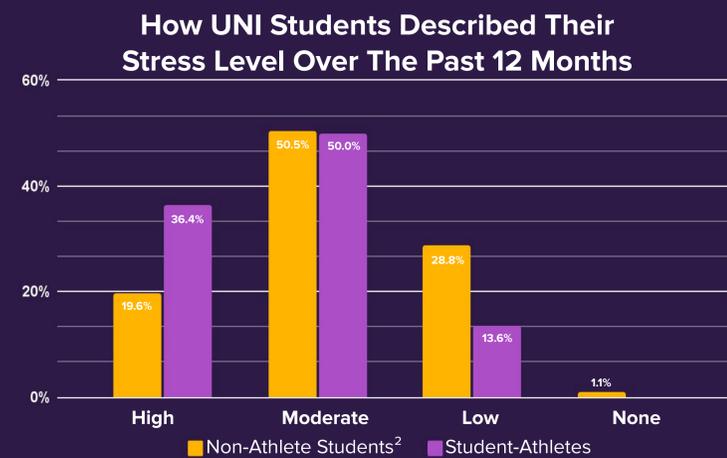
## Background

- National data<sup>1</sup> on collegiate student-athlete mental health shows increasing rates of emotional and mental distress.
- UNI survey data regarding student mental health and usage of related services includes only 3 responses from student-athletes.
- UNI's Student Counseling Center has a surplus of students seeking services, but low athletics representation amongst them.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests student-athletes have a higher need for services, meaning they display disproportionately lower usage of UNI's counseling center.

## Methodology

Distribution of a 15 question survey to UNI's student-athletes. Obtained data on stress level, self-described need for mental health services, and if student-athletes received them, amongst other related inquiries.

## Results



**13.9%** Of Non-Athlete students have used the Student Counseling Center<sup>2</sup>

VS

**8.4%** Of Student-Athletes have used the Student Counseling Center

## Of UNI's Student-Athletes...

**68.4%** Believe their teammates are struggling and in need of mental health resources

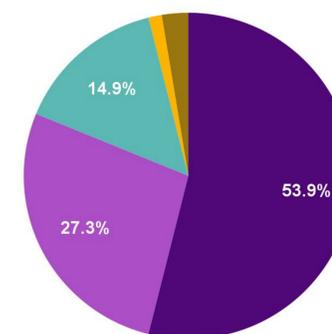
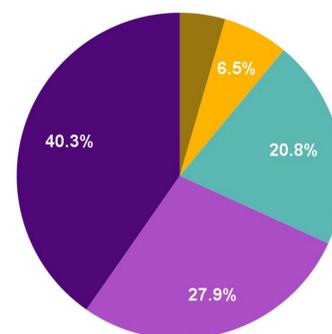
**34.9%** Are struggling and in need of mental health resources themselves

Yet only **20.9%** received mental health services in the past year

*"I would use the services of a mental health practitioner if they were made available to me"*

*"I would be more likely to use the services of a mental health practitioner if they were housed within the athletics department."*

- Strongly Agree
- Slightly Agree
- Neutral
- Slightly Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



n = 154 student-athletes

## Conclusions

UNI student athletes' mental health mirrors national trends: stress levels are heightened, and higher than their non-athlete counterparts - yet they are less likely to receive help than students outside of athletics.

**Were UNI to implement a mental health practitioner within the athletics department, the disparity between student-athletes who need mental health services and those who receive them will likely lessen.**

## Literature cited

- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2021). NCAA Student-Athlete Well-Being Study (Fall 2020).
- American College Health Association. (2020). American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment III: University of Northern Iowa Executive Summary Spring 2020.

## Acknowledgments

Thanks to senior members of the UNI Athletics Dept. for their interest in aiding this research, as well as Jennifer Schneidermann, Director of the Student Counselling Center, for her consulting work on this project.

## Further information

Please contact [bennesaf@uni.edu](mailto:bennesaf@uni.edu) for additional information on survey results, or to hear about further work being done regarding mental health support at the University of Northern Iowa.