

Excellence Beyond Athletics: Best Practices for Enhancing Black Male Student Athletes' Educational Experiences and Outcomes

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Abstract

Postsecondary institutions in the United States, including member institutions of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), are charged with the responsibility of cultivating positive learning environments where all students have an opportunity to excel regardless of their demographic backgrounds (e.g., race, socioeconomic status, etc.). However, one subgroup of students these institutions have persistently been unable to retain and graduate at rates comparable to their peers is Black male student athletes. Previous research has cited unwelcoming campus climates, inadequate academic support, and an overemphasis on athletics as key factors that contribute to Black male student athletes' academic underperformance and negative psychosocial experiences at these institutions. The purpose of this article is to present a series of strategies and recommendations for enhancing Black male student athletes' educational experiences and holistic development at postsecondary institutions in the U.S. A review of scholarly literature on Black male student athletes, college student development theories, and student athlete support programs was conducted to identify best practices related to the phenomena. An analysis of the literature led to the creation of the Excellence Beyond Athletics (EBA) approach. The EBA approach consists of the following six holistic development principles (HDPs): (1) self-identity awareness, (2) positive social engagement, (3) active mentorship, (4) academic achievement, (5) career aspirations, and (6) balanced time management.

Despite that over a century has passed since W.E.B. DuBois issued his prophetic warning about the problem of the color line and over 60 years have passed since the passage of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483. (1954). [Google Scholar]) decision, race remains an influential and oftentimes exacerbating factor in the lived experiences of Blacks in the United States (Bell, 1992 Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic. [Google Scholar]). One social institution where race continues to impact the experiences and outcomes of Blacks in the U.S. is the PreK-20 educational system (Schott Foundation Report, 2010 Schott Foundation for Public Education. (2010). *Yes we can: The Schott 50 state report on public education and Black males*. Cambridge, MA: M. Holzman. [Google Scholar]). More specifically, a major problem facing U.S. institutions of higher education has been the persistent academic performance gap between Black1 male student athletes and their student athlete peers (National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2011a National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2011a). *Trends in academic success rates and federal graduation rates at NCAA Division II institutions*. Retrieved from

<http://www.ncaa.org.gate.lib.buffalo.edu/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/PDFs/2011/Trends+in+Academic+Success+Rates+and+Federal+Graduation+Rates+at+NCAA+Division+II+Institutions>

[Google Scholar], 2011b National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2011b). *Trends in graduation success rates and federal graduation rates at NCAA Division I institutions*. Retrieved from

<http://www.ncaa.org.gate.lib.buffalo.edu/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/PDFs/2011/Trends+in+Graduation+Success+Rates+and+Federal+Graduation+Rates+at+NCAA+Division+I+Institutions>

[Google Scholar]). A common explanation for these alarming trends is the fact that many Black male student athletes, particularly those recruited to participate in football and men's basketball, often enter college academically underprepared.

Previous research has consistently found that Black student athletes (both male and female) are more likely to enroll in college with lower high school grade point averages (GPAs) and lower pre-college admission test scores (e.g., Scholastic Aptitude Test [SAT] and American College Test [ACT]), and they earn lower GPAs in college, and are less likely to graduate than White student athletes (C. K. Harrison, Comeaux, & Plecha, 2006 Harrison, C. K., Comeaux, E., & Plecha, M. (2006). Faculty and male football and basketball players on university campuses: An empirical investigation of the “intellectual” as mentor to the student-athlete. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 77(2), 277–284.[PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). In a related vein, some research has attributed Black male student athletes' academic underperformance to a lack of academic motivation and academic self-concept (Simons, Van Rhee, & Covington, 1999 Simons, H. D., Van Rhee, D., & Covington, M. V. (1999). Academic motivation and the student athlete. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40, 151–162. [Google Scholar]). Hence, the dominant narratives or explanations for Black male student athletes' academic outcomes have primarily focused on individual traits and efforts rather than on structural factors and institutional/environmental influences.

Contrary to the widespread acceptance of the aforementioned deficit-laden attributions, the academic trends associated with Black male student athletes are less reflective of individual efforts and academic motivation, but rather are a byproduct of systemic inequalities and the devaluation of educating and preparing Black males for success in life beyond athletic contexts in the broader U.S. culture (Cooper, 2012 Cooper, J. N. (2012). Personal troubles and public issues: A sociological imagination of Black athletes' experiences at predominantly White institutions in the United States. *Sociology Mind*, 2, 261–271.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]; Harper, 2012 Harper, S. (2012). Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study (pp. 137–156). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education. [Google Scholar]; Howard, 2014 Howard, T. C. (2013). Black male(d): Peril and promise in the education of African American males. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. [Google Scholar]). For example, in 2011 Educational Testing Service. (2011). A strong start: Positioning young Black boys for educational success: A statistical profile. Washington, DC: Author. [Google Scholar], the Educational Testing Services (ETS) published a comprehensive report including data from various sources that depicted a clear and alarming picture of how Black children, particularly Black boys, are being systematically devalued and neglected. Data from the report revealed that Black children were three times more likely to grow up in poverty than White children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009 U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2009). Department of Commerce. Current Population Survey. Annual Social and Economic Supplements (Table 3). Poverty Status of People, by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1959 to 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/gate.lib.buffalo.edu/hhes/www/poverty/data/historical/people.html>

[Google Scholar]), and by fourth grade Black males attending large city schools were over three times less likely to be proficient at reading and math than White children (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010 Lewis, S., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., Horwitz, A., & Casserly, M. (2010). A call for change: The social and educational factors contributing to the outcomes of Black males in urban schools. Washington, DC: Council of the Great City Schools. [Google Scholar]). These are just a few of the significant challenges facing Black children, and Black boys more specifically, in the U.S. These challenges provide a much needed context for understanding Black males' academic experiences and outcomes throughout the PreK-20 educational pipeline (see ETS, 2011 Educational Testing Service. (2011). A strong start: Positioning young Black boys for educational success: A statistical profile. Washington, DC: Author. [Google Scholar], report for a comprehensive overview of factors). Howard (2014 Howard, T. C. (2013). Black male(d): Peril and promise in the education of African American males. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. [Google Scholar]) refers to the confluence of these factors as “structural intersectionality” whereby Black males experience “political, economic, representational, and institutional forms of discrimination, oppression, exploitation, and domination” (p. 45). As such, these statistics underscore the argument that the differences in educational outcomes between Black males and their peers are institutionalized through various structural arrangements, from insidious academic tracking and high suspension rates of Black males to their concurrent under-representation in educational leadership positions, which intersect with the acceptance and perpetuation of dominant cultural ideologies (i.e., innate Black intellectual inferiority and athletic superiority) that are pervasive in the U.S.

(Cooper, 2012 Cooper, J. N. (2012). Personal troubles and public issues: A sociological imagination of Black athletes' experiences at predominantly White institutions in the United States. *Sociology Mind*, 2, 261–271.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]; Howard, 2014 Howard, T. C. (2013). *Black male(d): Peril and promise in the education of African American males*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. [Google Scholar]; Schotts Foundation Report, 2010 Schott Foundation for Public Education. (2010). *Yes we can: The Schott 50 state report on public education and Black males*. Cambridge, MA: M. Holzman. [Google Scholar]).

All of the aforementioned factors also adversely impact Black male student athletes' experiences and outcomes at the postsecondary level. More specifically, Donnor (2005 Donnor, J. K. (2005). Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African-American football student-athletes in major college sports. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 45–67.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]) argued that the exploitation of Black male student athletes at the intercollegiate level is linked to ubiquitous structural inequalities and U.S. cultural ideologies that privilege Whiteness and devalue Black students' holistic development and collective progress. Using the interest convergence principle of critical race theory (CRT; discussed in greater detail later), Donnor (2005 Donnor, J. K. (2005). Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African-American football student-athletes in major college sports. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 45–67.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]) echoed Derrick Bell's arguments (Bell, 1980 Bell, D. A. (1980). *Brown v. Board of Education and the interest convergence dilemma*. *Harvard Law Review*, 93, 518–533.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 1992 Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic. [Google Scholar]) and described how the advancement of Blacks in the U.S. was and continues to be primarily driven by meeting the interests of powerful Whites. Donnor (2005 Donnor, J. K. (2005). Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African-American football student-athletes in major college sports. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 45–67.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]) went on to buttress this argument by examining the legal cases of *Taylor v. Wake Forest University* (1972 *Taylor v. Wake Forest University*, 191 SE 2d 379 (N.C. Ct. App 1972). [Google Scholar]) and *Ross v. Creighton University* (1990 *Ross v. Creighton University*, 740 F. Supp. 1319 (N.D. Ill. 1990). [Google Scholar]). In both cases, Black Male student athletes' athletic value to their respective institutions was prioritized and coveted (largely benefitting the historically White institutions' (HWIs)² economic, meritocratic, and dominant racial ideological interests) at the expense of the former's academic needs and overall well-being. Along the same lines, several scholar-activists have suggested the practices of athletic exploitation and educational malpractice on behalf of these institutions are the primary culprit for Black males' negative educational and developmental outcomes (Brooks & Althouse, 2000 Brooks, D., & Althouse, R. (2000). *Racism in college athletics: The African American athlete's experience* (2nd ed.). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology. [Google Scholar]; Davis, 1995 Davis, T. (1995). African-American student-athletes: Marginalizing the NCAA regulatory structure. *Marq. Sports Law Journal*, 6, 199–227. [Google Scholar]; Hawkins, 2010 Hawkins, B. (2010). *The new plantation: Black athletes, college sports, and predominantly White institutions*. New York, NY: Palgrave-MacMillan. [Google Scholar]). These scholar-activists opined that Black male student athletes are not recruited to these institutions for their academic abilities or any educational purposes, but rather to provide athletic labor for revenue generation and to enhance the public visibility and reputation of these HWIs.

In addition, the campus climates at many Division I PWIs have been identified as unwelcoming and even hostile towards Black male student athletes (Beamon, 2008 Beamon, K. K. (2008). "Used goods": Former African American college student-athletes' perception of exploitation by Division I universities. *Journal of Negro Education*, 77(4), 352–364. [Google Scholar]; Melendez, 2008 Melendez, M. (2008). Black football players on a predominantly White college campus: Psychological and emotional realities of the Black college athlete experience. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 34, 423–451.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Singer, 2005 Singer, J. N. (2005). Understanding racism through the eyes of African-American male student-athletes. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(4), 365–386.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]). Within these environments, Black male student athletes encounter a preponderance of negative stereotypes associated with their race, gender, and athletic identities (Comeaux, 2010a Comeaux, E. (2010a). Racial differences in faculty perceptions

of collegiate student-athletes' academic and post-undergraduate achievement. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 27, 390–412.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; C. K. Harrison & Lawrence, 2004 Harrison, C. K., & Lawrence, S. M. (2004). College students' perceptions, myths, and stereotypes about African American athleticism: A qualitative investigation. *Sport, Education & Society*, 9(1), 33–52.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Sailes, 2010 Sailes, G. (2010). *Modern sport and the African American experience*. San Diego, CA: Cognella. [Google Scholar]). For example, Comeaux (2010a) Comeaux, E. (2010a). Racial differences in faculty perceptions of collegiate student-athletes' academic and post-undergraduate achievement. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 27, 390–412.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) found that faculty possessed lower academic expectations for Black student athletes compared to White student athletes. C. K. Harrison and Lawrence (2004 Harrison, C. K., & Lawrence, S. M. (2004). College students' perceptions, myths, and stereotypes about African American athleticism: A qualitative investigation. *Sport, Education & Society*, 9(1), 33–52.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) found that college students at a Division I PWI possessed stereotypical views of college athletes (a significant number of whom were Black) and described them as dumb, lazy, and not serious students. These sentiments illustrate the pervasiveness of the “dumb jock” stereotype that has been attributed to Black male student athletes since their integration into PWIs in the mid-twentieth century (Brooks & Althouse, 2000 Brooks, D., & Althouse, R. (2000). *Racism in college athletics: The African American athlete's experience* (2nd ed.). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology. [Google Scholar]; Edwards, 2000 Edwards, H. (2000). Crisis of Black athletes on the eve of the 21st century. *Society*, 37(3), 9–13.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Sailes, 2010 Sailes, G. (2010). *Modern sport and the African American experience*. San Diego, CA: Cognella. [Google Scholar]).

In an effort to facilitate positive developmental outcomes for student athletes, including Black male student athletes, several NCAA member institutions have established programs such as the Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success (CHAMPS)/Life Skills program (NCAA, 2009 National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2009). CHAMPS/Life Skills program. Retrieved from

<http://www.ncaapublications.com.gate.lib.buffalo.edu/p-3883-2008-2009-ncaa-champs-life-skills-program-brochure-25pkg.aspx>

[Google Scholar]) and the Scholar-Baller3 (SB) program (C. K. Harrison et al., 2010 Harrison, C. K., Bukstein, S., Mottley, J., Comeaux, E., Boyd, J., Parks, C., & Heikkinen, D. (2010). Scholar-baller: Student athlete socialization, motivation, and academic performance in American society. *International Encyclopedia of Education* (vol. 1, pp. 860–865). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Ltd. [Google Scholar]). However, both of these programs are broad-based in nature and do not exclusively focus on the unique challenges facing Black male student athletes. Given the uniqueness of Black males' experiences and position within the U.S. education pipeline, it is imperative to create programs that are data-driven and grounded in research for this subgroup of students, programs that are intentionally designed to redress the challenges they face and empower them holistically. In the next section, I highlight the guiding theoretical frameworks for the proposed approach. Next, I present a comprehensive and culturally responsive approach for improving the educational experiences and outcomes of Black male student athletes. The article concludes with an emphasis on the significance of this approach to both institutions of higher education and the broader social context of the U.S.

Guiding theoretical frameworks

Critical race theory (CRT)

Critical race theory (CRT) serves as one theoretical framework undergirding the proposed approach (Bell, 1980 Bell, D. A. (1980). *Brown v. Board of Education and the interest convergence dilemma*. *Harvard Law Review*, 93, 518–533.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 1992 Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic. [Google Scholar]; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001 Delgado, R., & Stefanic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press. [Google Scholar], Freeman, 1977 Freeman, A. D. (1977).

Legitimizing racial discrimination through antidiscrimination law: A critical review of supreme court doctrine. *Minnesota Law Review*, 62, 1049.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) along with an extension of CRT called strategic responsiveness to interest convergence (SRIC; Cooper & Cooper, 2015 Cooper, J. N., & Cooper, J. E. (2015). "I'm running so you can be happy and I can keep my scholarship": A comparative study of Black male college athletes' experiences with role conflict. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 8(2), 131–152. [Google Scholar]). CRT emerged from the field of legal studies as an analytical tool to expose the systemic nature and effects of race and racism within U.S. jurisprudence as well as within the broader society. CRT theorists argue that racism is deeply embedded in the U.S. and that embracing this reality is the first step towards attaining true equity (Bell, 1980 Bell, D. A. (1980). *Brown v. Board of Education and the interest convergence dilemma*. *Harvard Law Review*, 93, 518–533.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 1992 Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic. [Google Scholar]; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995 Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York, NY: The New Press. [Google Scholar]). Further, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995 Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47–68.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) articulate how CRT is a useful lens to examine racial inequities present in the U.S. educational system. Core tenets of CRT include the need for (counter) storytelling, the permanence of racism, the norm of Whiteness as property, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism (Bell, 1980 Bell, D. A. (1980). *Brown v. Board of Education and the interest convergence dilemma*. *Harvard Law Review*, 93, 518–533.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 1992 Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic. [Google Scholar]; Crenshaw et al., 1995 Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York, NY: The New Press. [Google Scholar]; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001 Delgado, R., & Stefanic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press. [Google Scholar]; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009 Taylor, E., Gillborn, D., & Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *Foundations of critical race theory in education*. New York, NY: Routledge. [Google Scholar]; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004 Decuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher*, 33(5), 26–31. [Crossref], [Google Scholar]). Each of these tenets serve as a means for deconstructing the ideology of White supremacy and related social structures and practices while simultaneously empowering the voices and experiences of people of color.

The focus on Black male student athletes' racialized experiences and self-empowerment in this current article is consistent with the aims of CRT. For instance, dominant narratives that view Black male student athletes as intellectually inferior and academically apathetic seldom come from Black male student athletes' own voices. Thus, providing spaces and opportunities for Black male student athletes to engage in (counter) storytelling is pivotal for their liberation from imposed deficit-laden labels (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002 Solórzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23–44.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]). Previous research on Black male student athletes at postsecondary institutions has highlighted their frequent encounters with racial discrimination, social isolation, academic neglect, economic deprivation, and limited leadership opportunities, which are connected the permanence of racism in the U.S. (Cooper, 2012 Cooper, J. N. (2012). *Personal troubles and public issues: A sociological imagination of Black athletes' experiences at predominantly White institutions in the United States*. *Sociology Mind*, 2, 261–271.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]; Davis, 1995 Davis, T. (1995). African-American student-athletes: Marginalizing the NCAA regulatory structure. *Marq. Sports Law Journal*, 6, 199–227. [Google Scholar]; Donnor, 2005 Donnor, J. K. (2005). Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African-American football student-athletes in major college sports. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 45–67.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]; Hawkins, 2010 Hawkins, B. (2010). *The new plantation: Black athletes, college sports, and predominantly White institutions*. New York, NY: Palgrave-MacMillan. [Google Scholar]; Singer, 2005 Singer, J. N. (2005). Understanding racism through the eyes of African-American male student-athletes. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(4), 365–386.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]). Gill (2015 Gill, E. (2015, January 9). *NCAA Enforcement and Black Male Student Athletes*. Paper presented at The Black Student Athlete Conference: Challenges and Opportunities, at the University of Texas at Austin. [Google

Scholar]) highlighted how Black male student athletes are disproportionately sanctioned by the NCAA for bylaw violations and thus this insidious trend reflects how a White-controlled organization institutionalizes the Whiteness as property norm. Similarly, the disparate enforcement of NCAA violations also reflects how de facto “neutral” bylaws and their subsequent enforcement reinforce racial bias and discrimination (Gill, 2015 Gill, E. (2015, January 9). NCAA Enforcement and Black Male Student Athletes. Paper presented at The Black Student Athlete Conference: Challenges and Opportunities, at the University of Texas at Austin. [Google Scholar]). The mere fact that Black males are consistently over-represented on the two highest revenue generating sports of football and men's basketball at Division I institutions while simultaneously, these same institutions fail to graduate them at rates comparable to their peers and enroll a significantly smaller number of Black males who are non-athletes illustrates the myth of colorblindness (Hawkins, 2010 Hawkins, B. (2010). *The new plantation: Black athletes, college sports, and predominantly White institutions*. New York, NY: Palgrave-MacMillan. [Google Scholar]). Lastly, several scholars have surmised that Black male student athletes' integration and current position within big-time college sports illustrates the interest convergence principle whereby HWIs' interest in securing talented Black athletes who can generate economic revenue and enhance institutional prestige converges with Black male student athletes' aspirations to gain access to a perceived educational opportunity and further their athletic pursuits (Donnor, 2005 Donnor, J. K. (2005). Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African-American football student-athletes in major college sports. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 45–67.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]; Edwards, 2000 Edwards, H. (2000). Crisis of Black athletes on the eve of the 21st century. *Society*, 37(3), 9–13.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Hawkins, 2010 Hawkins, B. (2010). *The new plantation: Black athletes, college sports, and predominantly White institutions*. New York, NY: Palgrave-MacMillan. [Google Scholar]). As in the wider U.S. society, the problematic nature of this interest convergence lies in the fact that it benefits powerful Whites (e.g., college/university presidents, NCAA stakeholders, corporate sponsors, etc.) to a greater extent than Black male student athletes who are often relegated to being athletic commodities with little, if any, true educational opportunities at all. Each of the tenets of CRT is incorporated in the proposed approach.

Strategic responsiveness to interest convergence (SRIC)

Using data from a comparative study of Black male student athletes' experiences with role conflict, Cooper and Cooper (2015) Cooper, J. N., & Cooper, J. E. (2015). “I'm running so you can be happy and I can keep my scholarship”: A comparative study of Black male college athletes' experiences with role conflict. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 8(2), 131–152. [Google Scholar] identified an extension of the interest convergence principle among a group of Black male scholar athletes who were successfully navigating the contested terrains at a Division I PWI. The Black male scholar athletes' perceptions, behaviors, and outcomes are described as strategic responsiveness to interest convergence (SRIC). The following three propositions are associated with SRIC: (1) an individual must recognize an inequitable structural arrangement that is designed to exploit them (holistic consciousness), (2) an individual must internalize or believe they possess the power to alter their personal outcome within this arrangement (internalized empowerment), and (3) an individual must actively engage in behaviors to counter the inequitable arrangement in such a way as to maximize the holistic benefits for themselves (engagement in counter-actions). The participants in the study explained how they understood how the system of big-time college sports was designed to exploit them for their athletic abilities, but they possessed a strong internal locus of control over their outcomes within the system. Participants viewed athletics as a means to an end rather than an end in itself and channeled intense efforts toward their academic achievement, intellectual development, involvement in educationally purposeful activities, post-college career readiness, and their social and cultural capital—in spite of the structural constraints placed on them as student athletes. As such, SRIC involves a level of consciousness of both one's self as well as one's position within a given system. However, consciousness alone cannot alter one's position or outcome within a specific context. Consciousness must be combined with internalized empowerment and engagement in counter-actions in order to enact positive outcomes, particularly within an unjust and inequitable system. The core framework underlying the proposed strategies in this article reflects the SRIC principle by enhancing Black male student athlete's holistic consciousness, internalized empowerment, and engagement in counter-actions.

A conceptual model of college athlete academic success

Building on Tinto's (1993 Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. [Google Scholar]) theory of student attrition/departure, Comeaux and Harrison (2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) proposed a model for college student athletes' academic success that focused on the collective influence of student athletes' pre-college characteristics and experiences in college on their academic performance and matriculation towards graduation. Tinto's (1993 Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. [Google Scholar]) longitudinal model of institutional departure includes the following phases: (1) pre-college attributes (family background, skills and abilities, and primary and secondary schooling experiences), (2) initial/pre-college goals and commitments (educational, career, and institutional), (3) institutional experiences (academic system and social system), (4) college integration (academic and social), (5) post-college goals and commitments (educational, career, and institutional), and (6) outcome (departure). Comeaux and Harrison's (2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) model possesses the same six phases with a few additions that are specific to student athletes, such as sport goals and commitments and interactions with individuals within the athletic department, and has an outcome variable of academic success rather than academic departure. These theories serve as guiding frameworks to underscore the importance of designing and implementing intentional programs and structures that facilitate Black male student athletes' academic and social integration in college and ultimately increase their commitment to academic success, particularly intellectual development and matriculation through graduation.

Excellence Beyond Athletics (EBA)

The Excellence Beyond Athletics (EBA) approach is a series of best practices and recommendations for enhancing the academic achievement and holistic development of Black male student athletes at postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Specifically, the purpose of the EBA approach is to empower, educate, and inspire students of color (including athletes and non-athletes) to maximize their full potential as holistic individuals both within and beyond athletic contexts. It is important to note the EBA approach can and should be modified to meet the needs of different subgroups of student athletes and students in general. However, the aim of the current proposal is rooted in research on Black male student athletes. As such, the application to different subgroups should be grounded in relevant research for the target subgroup and thus maintain a priority on culturally relevant approaches (Ladson-Billings, 1995 Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Moreover, the EBA approach is influenced by previous research, including models of college student development (Astin, 1993 Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college: Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. [Google Scholar]; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005 Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. [Google Scholar]; Tinto, 1993 Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. [Google Scholar]), student athlete academic success (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; C. K. Harrison et al., 2010 Harrison, C. K., Bukstein, S., Mottley, J., Comeaux, E., Boyd, J., Parks, C., & Heikkinen, D. (2010). Scholar-baller: Student athlete socialization, motivation, and academic performance in American society. *International Encyclopedia of Education* (vol. 1, pp. 860–865). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Ltd. [Google Scholar]), African American cultural values, experiences, and identity development (Boykin, 1986 Boykin, A. W. (1986). The triple quandry and the schooling of Afro-American children. In U. Neisser (Ed.), *The school achievement of minority children: New perspectives* (pp. 57–92). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. [Google Scholar]; L. Harrison, Harrison, & Moore,

2002 Harrison, L., Jr., Harrison, C. K., & Moore, L. N. (2002). African American racial identity and sport. *Sport, Education & Society*, 7(2), 121–133.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]], and the literature cited throughout the introduction section on Black male student athletes.

Another valuable aspect of the EBA approach is its anti-deficit approach (Harper, 2012 Harper, S. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study* (pp. 137–156). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education. [Google Scholar]) toward empowering students of color in general and Black male student athletes more specifically. As opposed to viewing their individual traits and cultural backgrounds as deficits or weaknesses, the EBA approach utilizes and enhances the strengths participants possess in an effort to optimize their focus on positive perceptions (of self and their position within society), language usage, behaviors, and ultimately success outcomes. As such, the EBA approach should not be viewed as a reinforcement of deficit perspectives, but as a vital empowerment tool that institutions of higher education could consider implementing to redress the challenges facing these students. Along the same lines, it is important to note that the proposed empowerment strategies are not intended to be, nor do they serve as, a replacement for the major structural, institutional, and cultural reforms needed in our society (see Cuyjet, 2006 Cuyjet, M. J. (2006). *African American men in college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. [Google Scholar], and Howard, 2014 Howard, T. C. (2013). *Black male(d): Peril and promise in the education of African American males*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. [Google Scholar], for an extensive list of recommendations for broader systemic change). In addition, EBA is not intended to replace broader structural reform recommendations for intercollegiate athletics, such as the need to address the increased commercialization of college sports and the related exploitation of student athletes, the lack of student athletes' rights, the elimination of the schism between athletics and the broader campus community, and a shift of focus towards academic integrity and the purpose of higher education as opposed to athletic success and revenue generation (see Benford, 2007 Benford, R. D. (2007). The college sports reform movement: Reframing the “edutainment” industry. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48(1), 1–28.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], for a detailed overview). Rather the EBA approach should be viewed as one component of the larger solution to enhance Black male student athletes' experiences and outcomes both within and beyond college.

Related to the data collection and analysis that led to the creation of EBA, I acknowledge my unique positionality as a Black, African American, male who is a former athlete, former coach, and current educator and mentor to Black male student athletes. This positionality possesses not only several strengths, including an insider-outsider lens on the phenomena, but also limitations. One such limitation is potential bias throughout the data selection and interpretation process. However, in an effort to offset any possible bias, I wrote a detailed subjectivity statement outlining my positionality to the topic prior to data analysis as well as supplanted all assertions with a range of scholarly literature on the topic, which reflects strategies for quality in qualitative data such as rich rigor, credibility, sincerity, and resonance (see Tracy, 2010 Tracy, S. J. (2010). *Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research*. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16, 837–851.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], for a detailed description of this criteria and Cooper, 2014 Cooper, J. N. (2014, March 24). *The value of qualitative approaches in the examination of Black male student athletes*. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, online ahead of print, 1–16. [Google Scholar], for a detailed application of these criteria for research on Black male student athletes).

Centralizing holistic development and empowerment of Black male student athletes instead of prioritizing their athletic abilities, the EBA approach enables them to attain a heightened level of consciousness of the various ways this system oppresses them and an enhanced sense of urgency to engage in behaviors that counter aforementioned forces (i.e., SRIC). More specifically, the EBA approach posits that the quality and nature of Black male student athletes' experiences and outcomes at institutions of higher education are predicated on three key factors: (1) conditions, (2) relationships, and (3)

expectations (CRE). As mentioned earlier, the current gap in educational attainment and academic performance between Black male student athletes and their peers should not be referenced as an achievement gap, but rather a CRE gap. When analyzing the CRE associated with Black male student athletes compared to their peers, it is clear why the outcomes are different. For example, campus climate and pre-college conditions are often different (more hostile for Black male student athletes), college relationships are different (Black male student athletes experience a lack of quality relationships on campus across various institutional actors), and expectations are different (Black male student athletes are inundated with high athletic expectations and low academic expectations) (Cooper, 2012 Cooper, J. N. (2012). Personal troubles and public issues: A sociological imagination of Black athletes' experiences at predominantly White institutions in the United States. *Sociology Mind*, 2, 261–271.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]).

Consistent with SRIC (Cooper & Cooper, 2015 Cooper, J. N., & Cooper, J. E. (2015). "I'm running so you can be happy and I can keep my scholarship": A comparative study of Black male college athletes' experiences with role conflict. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 8(2), 131–152. [Google Scholar]) and Comeaux and Harrison's (2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) model for college student athlete academic success, EBA strategies are designed to change institutional conditions to be more conducive for Black male student athletes' holistic development and empowerment. Similarly, EBA strategies also acknowledge the fact that the nature and quality of relationships greatly influence identity salience, self-efficacy, general knowledge acquisition, and access to key opportunities for personal and professional development. Thus, a core function of the EBA approach is to strengthen Black male student athletes' relationships with key academic and social role-set members to prevent athletic role engulfment (Adler & Adler, 1991 Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1991). *Backboards and Blackboards: College athletics and role engulfment*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. [Google Scholar]; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Additionally, EBA strategies promote and institutionalize high expectations for Black male student athletes' academic performance as well as engagement in educationally purposeful activities (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Cooper & Cooper, 2015 Cooper, J. N., & Cooper, J. E. (2015). "I'm running so you can be happy and I can keep my scholarship": A comparative study of Black male college athletes' experiences with role conflict. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 8(2), 131–152. [Google Scholar]). Based on a comprehensive review of the scholarly literature on Black male student athletes, college student development theories, and student athlete support programs, the EBA approach was created. Its key components include the following six holistic development principles (HDPs): (1) self-identity awareness, (2) positive social engagement, (3) active mentorship, (4) academic achievement, (5) career aspirations, and (6) balanced time management (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Excellence Beyond Athletics (EBA) Holistic Development Principles (HDPs) concept map.

Display full size

HDP #1: Self-identity awareness—Holistic consciousness and internalized empowerment

In the case of Black male student athletes, the over-emphasis on their athletic identity over their holistic identities (e.g., student, leader, role model, community service volunteer, family member, significant other, etc.) has contributed to their poor academic, psychosocial, emotional, and physical outcomes in college (Adler & Adler, 1991 Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1991). *Backboards and Blackboards: College athletics and role engulfment*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

[Google Scholar]; Beamon, 2008 Beamon, K. K. (2008). "Used goods": Former African American college student-athletes' perception of exploitation by Division I universities. *Journal of Negro Education*, 77(4), 352–364. [Google Scholar]; Benson, 2000 Benson, K. (2000). Constructing academic inadequacy: African American athletes' stories of schooling. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71(2), 223–246.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Beyer and Hannah (2000 Beyer, J. M., & Hannah, D. R. (2000). The cultural significance of athletics in US higher education. *Journal of Sport Management*, 14, 105–132.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) surmised the structure and practices associated with big-time college sports is reflective of broader cultural ideologies in the U.S., which have both positive and negative consequences at the societal, organizational, group, and individual levels. The culture of intercollegiate athletics at many institutions, particularly Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS),⁴ disadvantages Black male student athletes by generating economic benefits from their athletic talent while conditioning them to accept inequitable arrangements and avoid challenging authorities. Hence, many institutions that sponsor intercollegiate athletics have a vested interest in Black male student athletes' heightened athletic identities, commitment, and performance. In an effort to counter these detrimental outcomes for Black male student athletes, the recommended strategies within the EBA approach include the adoption and implementation of self-identity assessments, reflexive self-identity group discussions, photo elicitation activities, and racial microaggression discussions.

One component of the self-identity HDP involves having EBA participants complete self-identity assessments to identify key aspects of their personalities, interests, values, and skills. Athletic departments could incorporate these types of assessments, which are possibly available through various career services offices, within the structure of their current student athlete support programs. Upon receiving the results from these assessments, each participant would then be required to meet with a career services counselor on campus once a month as a part of their athletic eligibility requirements to discuss their interests and learn about various ways they can foster the development of these interests. The inter-university nature of these activities serves to enhance Black male student athletes' holistic consciousness (Cooper & Cooper, 2015 Cooper, J. N., & Cooper, J. E. (2015). "I'm running so you can be happy and I can keep my scholarship": A comparative study of Black male college athletes' experiences with role conflict. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 8(2), 131–152. [Google Scholar]) as well as facilitate their social integration into the campus community (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]).

Another component of the self-identity awareness HDP involves the organization of routine (biweekly), reflexive, self-identity group discussion sessions. These group discussion sections should be co-organized by faculty interested in this subgroup, the athletic department, student affairs office, and the multicultural program offices at an institution. As previously mentioned the core aim of these activities is to increase Black male student athletes' interactions with institutional actors outside of the athletic department and thus enhance their integration into the campus culture beyond athletics (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Group discussion sessions could include a supplemental exercise where participants write down descriptions on how they self-identify and place these identities in a ranking order (e.g., student, athlete, son, brother, friend, artist, entrepreneur, role model, leader, etc.). Next, participants would be asked to share their descriptions and engage in a group discussion on the collective descriptions, including the salience (or lack thereof) of their various identities aside from athletics. Afterwards, participants would be asked to list different personal behaviors or activities they enact or pursue to foster the development of each identity. The visualization and articulation of these processes could have a profound impact on how EBA participants conduct themselves and conceptualize their goals and commitments both within and outside of sport (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Any individual barriers that are identified should be documented along with concrete strategies to remove or navigate them.

Photo elicitation activities are another EBA activity aimed at generating insightful conversations about the prevalence of stereotypes (Sailes, 2010 Sailes, G. (2010). *Modern sport and the African American experience*. San Diego, CA: Cognella. [Google Scholar]) and their subsequent impact on self-stereotyping (L. Harrison et al., 2002 Harrison, L., Jr., Harrison, C. K., & Moore, L. N. (2002). *African American racial identity and sport*. *Sport, Education & Society*, 7(2), 121–133.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). In the proposed activity, EBA participants would be presented with different images of Black males. After viewing the images, EBA participants would be asked to document their perceptions of the image including their impressions of the individual's background (e.g., socioeconomic status, athletic ability, intellectual ability, educational attainment, etc.). Next, participants would be presented with a narrative about each image to be discussed in critical dialogue including ways EBA participants can actively combat stereotypes. Consistent with CRT, the introduction of the racial microaggressions typology (Sue et al., 2007 Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). *Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice*. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286.[Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) would enable Black male student athletes to understand the permanence of racism as well as empower them with expansive language to describe their experiences. This includes the following three categories of racial microaggressions: microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidation. A racial microinsult refers to “behavioral/verbal remarks or comments that convey rudeness, insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity” (Sue et al., 2007 Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). *Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice*. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286.[Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], p. 278). Examples of racial microinsults include ascribing unintelligence or second class citizenship, pathologizing cultural values or communication styles, and presuming criminal status. A longstanding myth facing Black males, particularly athletes, has been the dumb jock stereotype (Sailes, 2010 Sailes, G. (2010). *Modern sport and the African American experience*. San Diego, CA: Cognella. [Google Scholar]) of intellectual inferiority. Black males are additionally subjugated with the attribution of second class status, stigmatization, and criminalization (Howard, 2014 Howard, T. C. (2013). *Black male(d): Peril and promise in the education of African American males*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. [Google Scholar]). Even more specifically within the NCAA's enforcement structure, Black males have been disparately penalized and labeled as criminal even though their actions were not illegal, but merely a “violation” of NCAA bylaws (student athletes currently have no right to negotiate any of the rules under which they are governed and thus these bylaws are unilaterally imposed) (Gill, 2015 Gill, E. (2015, January 9). *NCAA Enforcement and Black Male Student Athletes*. Paper presented at The Black Student Athlete Conference: Challenges and Opportunities, at the University of Texas at Austin. [Google Scholar]; Rockwell, 2013 Rockwell, S. (2013). *Schooled: The price of college sports* [Documentary]. Makuhari Media: Strand Releasing. [Google Scholar]).

Moreover, Sue et al. (2007 Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). *Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice*. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286.[Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) defined a racial microassault as an “explicit racial derogation characterized by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions” (p. 274). Previous research on Black male student athletes' experiences at PWIs have found they experience intense levels of isolation via avoidant behavior from their peers (both White and Black non-athletes) as well as encounters with name calling and purposeful discriminatory actions including differential treatment and punishment from faculty and athletic staff (Melendez, 2008 Melendez, M. (2008). *Black football players on a predominantly White college campus: Psychological and emotional realities of the Black college athlete experience*. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 34, 423–451.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Singer, 2005 Singer, J. N. (2005). *Understanding racism through the eyes of African-American male student-athletes*. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(4), 365–386.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]). A racial microinvalidation refers to “communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color” (Sue et al.,

2007 Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286.[Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], p. 274). Examples of racial microinvalidations include the feeling of being an alien/foreigner in a particular context, the perpetuation of colorblindness and the myth of meritocracy, and denial of individual racism. Despite claims from the NCAA and many PWIs stating their policies are colorblind and they promote a culture of meritocracy, several scholars have debunked these claims by outlining the macro, meso, and micro influences of a U.S. culture that continues to perpetuate White superiority and Black inferiority (Cooper, 2012 Cooper, J. N. (2012). Personal troubles and public issues: A sociological imagination of Black athletes' experiences at predominantly White institutions in the United States. *Sociology Mind*, 2, 261–271.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]; Oseguera, 2010 Oseguera, L. (2010). Success despite the image: How African American male student-athletes endure their academic journey amidst negative characterizations. *Journal of the Study of Sports in Education*, 4, 297–324. [Google Scholar]).

The aforementioned literature and key trends could be incorporated within the racial microaggressions activity. Following the presentation of each type of racial microaggression and related concepts, EBA participants would be asked to write down and verbally express their encounters with and perceptions of racial microaggressions in society as well as within their campus community. In concert with critical and sociocultural theories, providing individuals with the language to describe their racialized experiences serves as a form of resistance to the dominant power structure as well as a source of empowerment (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002 Solórzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23–44.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]). Similarly, this approach could introduce the tenets of CRT (Bell, 1980 Bell, D. A. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 93, 518–533.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 1992 Bell, D. A. (1992). Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism. New York, NY: Basic. [Google Scholar]; Crenshaw et al., 1995 Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement. New York, NY: The New Press. [Google Scholar]; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001 Delgado, R., & Stefanic, J. (2001). Critical race theory: An introduction. New York, NY: New York University Press. [Google Scholar]; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995 Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47–68.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) and concepts of the community cultural wealth framework (Yosso, 2005 Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]) to further expand these students' lexicon on how they make meaning of their experiences and ways in which they can overcome any obstacles they face by leveraging their various forms of capital (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant; see Yosso, 2005 Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar], for detailed descriptions of these capital). In addition, the robust literature on culturally empowering theories/frameworks for Black males (L. Harrison et al., 2002 Harrison, L., Jr., Harrison, C. K., & Moore, L. N. (2002). African American racial identity and sport. *Sport, Education & Society*, 7(2), 121–133.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Wood & Palmer, 2014 Wood, J. L., & Palmer, R. T. (2014). Black men in higher education. New York, NY: Routledge. [Google Scholar]), Black males' experiences in the PreK-16 pipeline (Howard, 2013 Howard, T. C. (2013). Black male(d): Peril and promise in the education of African American males. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. [Google Scholar]), Black male collegians (Cuyjet, 2006 Cuyjet, M. J. (2006). African American men in college. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. [Google Scholar]; Harper, 2012 Harper, S. (2012). Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study (pp. 137–156). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education. [Google Scholar]), and Black male student athletes— particularly those who successfully navigate postsecondary institutions (Bimper, Harrison, & Clark, 2012 Bimper, A. Y., Harrison, L., & Clark, L. (2012). Diamonds in the rough: Examining a case of successful Black male student athletes in college sport. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 39(2), 1–24. [Google Scholar]; Cooper & Cooper, 2015 Cooper, J. N., & Cooper, J. E. (2015). “I'm running so you can be happy and I can keep my scholarship”: A comparative study of Black male college athletes' experiences with role conflict. *Journal of*

Intercollegiate Sport, 8(2), 131–152. [Google Scholar]; C. K. Harrison & Martin, 2012 Harrison, C. K., & Martin, B. (2012). Academic advising, time management and the African American scholar-athlete. In T. Stoilov (Ed.), Time management (pp. 89–106). Rijeka, Croatia: InTech. Retrieved from

<http://www.intechopen.com/gate.lib.buffalo.edu/books/time-management/time-management-academicadvising-and-the-african-american-male-student-athlete>

[Google Scholar]; Martin & Harris, 2006 Martin, B., & Harris, F. I. (2006). Examining productive conceptions of masculinities: Lessons learned from academically driven African American male student-athletes. *Journal of Men's Studies*, 14(3), 359–378.[Crossref], [Google Scholar])—could be infused into these activities to expand participants' consciousness, internalization, and engagement with positive self-images related to their race, ethnicity, sociocultural background, gender, family background, geographical location, and any and all other significant identity categories.

HDP #2: Positive social engagement—Social integration, internalized empowerment, and engagement in counter-actions

Positive social engagement involves the establishment and maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships within a given social context. Within Comeaux and Harrison's (2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) model for college student athletes' academic success, both academic and social integration—particularly interactions with faculty and non-athlete peers—are pivotal for enhancing student athletes' positive developmental outcomes in college. For Black male student athletes, these relationships include active participation in educationally purposeful activities aside from athletic participation (Comeaux, 2010b Comeaux, E. (2010b). Mentoring as an intervention strategy: Toward a (re)negotiation of first year student-athlete role identities. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 4(3), 257–276.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]). Applying an EBA approach to Black male student athletes' involvement on campus includes the promotion and facilitation of their engagement in educationally purposeful activities such as community service with a large number of ethnic minorities (e.g., local Black neighborhood, school, or church) (Cooper, 2013 Cooper, J. N. (2013). A culture of collective uplift: The influence of a historically Black college/university on Black male student athletes. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 6, 306–331. [Google Scholar]). Community service involvement has been identified through over 20 years of research on Black students' experiences in college as a significant non-cognitive predictor of their academic achievement in college (Sedlacek, 1987 Sedlacek, W. E. (1987). Black students on White campuses: 20 years of research. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 28(7), 484–495. [Google Scholar]). This community service involvement could involve mentoring, tutoring, after school volunteering, sport related activities, building homes, and so forth. Involvement could serve multiple purposes for Black male student athletes. First, it would create a strong sense of purpose at the institution beyond their athletic involvement (institutional commitment and social integration). Another benefit would be the opportunity to build relationships and partnerships with community members and campus organizations that they may not otherwise experience.

Moreover, one of the core ideas within the EBA approach for enhancing Black male student athletes' positive social engagement on campus is to establish a formal advocacy group for them. At many HWIs, ethnic minority student groups provide a cultural space for students to discuss issues related to their college experiences, perform community outreach, engage in social activities, build leadership skills, and experience individual and collective empowerment and a sense of belonging. Black male student athletes should have a similar type of organization that serves as a platform for them to voice their concerns about their experiences on campus as well as to cultivate a sense of community beyond the athletic setting (Singer, 2005 Singer, J. N. (2005). Understanding racism through the eyes of African-American male student-athletes. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(4), 365–386.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]). In addition to the community service component, this advocacy group would participate in activities described in the holistic self-identity awareness HDP section. For example, within this group, the racial microaggressions typology (Sue et al., 2007 Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M.,

Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286.[Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], CRT tenets (Bell, 1980 Bell, D. A. (1980). *Brown v. Board of Education and the interest convergence dilemma*. *Harvard Law Review*, 93, 518–533.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 1992 Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic. [Google Scholar]; Crenshaw et al., 1995 Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York, NY: The New Press. [Google Scholar]; Delgado & Stefania, 2001 Delgado, R., & Stefania, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press. [Google Scholar]; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995 Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47–68.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]), and community cultural wealth capital concepts (Yosso, 2005 Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]) could serve as common vernacular for Black male student athletes to discuss their experiences on campus. Using these categories to communicate with individuals who are less familiar with their experiences as a marginalized group (e.g., faculty, administrators, non-Black student athlete peers, etc.) could serve as a vital bridge for addressing the unique challenges they encounter at these institutions. In an effort to enhance Black male student athletes' sense of belonging and institutional commitment, this formal advocacy group could also partner with various campus organizations, student affairs offices, multicultural departments, and community and professional organizations and businesses to engage in social activism (Cooper, 2013 Cooper, J. N. (2013). A culture of collective uplift: The influence of a historically Black college/university on Black male student athletes. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 6, 306–331. [Google Scholar]; Tinto, 1993 Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. [Google Scholar]).

HDP #3: Active mentorship—Holistic consciousness, academic integration, social integration, and institutional commitment

Embedded within the EBA approach is the establishment of mentoring supports for Black male student athletes. One such approach includes the implementation of a formal faculty-student mentorship program. The recruitment of compatible mentors for the EBA mentorship program would involve the completion of a short open-ended survey to identify individuals who would be best suited for the program. Similarly, EBA participants would complete a short survey to express the specific qualities they were seeking in a mentor. The program commitments would involve the completion of a pre-mentoring training session (possibly administered by a student affairs professional or group), a minimum of one meeting per week with the mentee, and consistent communication with the mentor coordinator (Comeaux, 2010b Comeaux, E. (2010b). Mentoring as an intervention strategy: Toward a (re)negotiation of first year student-athlete role identities. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 4(3), 257–276.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]). In addition to faculty mentors, institutions should also consider expanding the formalization of expectations for coaches as mentors. Coaches arguably spend the most time with student athletes aside from their teammates. As such, coaches have a higher level of influence over student athletes than other institutional actors. Enhancing active and positive mentorship, coaches' contracts and institutional expectations should explicitly reinforce their prioritization of student athletes' holistic development. Coaches should not only receive proper training on mentoring from experts (e.g., consultants from mentoring programs on and off-campus, scholars at the institution who research this topic, etc.), but also be required to document and explain how they engage in positive mentoring that focuses on student athletes' holistic development. Tangible outcomes such as a specified number of meetings with student athletes discussing non-athletic related tasks throughout the year, involvement in community service activities with student athletes, organizing career networking events, and attending campus events that expand student athletes' holistic development should be considered.

Another recommendation consistent with the EBA approach is for institutions to adopt what Kelly and Dixon (2014 Kelly, D. D., & Dixon, M. A. (2014). *Successfully navigating life transitions among African American male student-athletes: A review*

and examination of constellation mentoring as a promising strategy. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(5), 498–514.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) describe as constellation mentoring. More specifically, constellation mentoring is “a model that incorporates several mentors that meet different needs and in a sense make up a “personal board of directors” for the student-athlete” (Kelly & Dixon, 2014 Kelly, D. D., & Dixon, M. A. (2014). Successfully navigating life transitions among African American male student-athletes: A review and examination of constellation mentoring as a promising strategy. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(5), 498–514.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], p. 509). In contrast to a traditional mentoring approach, constellation mentoring does not simply include a one-on-one mentoring strategy or mentoring from a single unit of the university or athletic department, but rather involves a “critical mass” of individuals who serve as mentors (Kelly & Dixon, 2014 Kelly, D. D., & Dixon, M. A. (2014). Successfully navigating life transitions among African American male student-athletes: A review and examination of constellation mentoring as a promising strategy. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(5), 498–514.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], p. 509). Mentors should include a mixture of family, peers, faculty, coaches, administrators, staff, and individuals from off-campus (i.e., community leaders). Within this framework, Black male student athletes would be expected and encouraged to create and document a network of mentors who fulfill their various areas of support. These areas of support could include academic support, psychosocial encouragement, career exploration, campus resource assistance, non-athletic identity enhancement, spiritual guidance, relationship confidant, and so forth. The identification and documentation of these mentors is important because it creates an expectation, as well as a level of accountability, for the participants to identify mentors as well as allow them to control the selection and definition of their mentors.

In addition, Kelly and Dixon (2014 Kelly, D. D., & Dixon, M. A. (2014). Successfully navigating life transitions among African American male student-athletes: A review and examination of constellation mentoring as a promising strategy. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(5), 498–514.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) also recommended that diversified mentoring pairings should be considered whereby mentor-mentee relationships would include both individuals who share similar characteristics with African American male student athletes (i.e., African American male or female mentor) as well as individuals who are different from them in a distinct way (i.e., White male or female mentor). The idea behind this strategy is that different types of mentor-mentee relationships yield different benefits, ranging from psychosocial support to career development to networking connections (Kelly & Dixon, 2014 Kelly, D. D., & Dixon, M. A. (2014). Successfully navigating life transitions among African American male student-athletes: A review and examination of constellation mentoring as a promising strategy. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(5), 498–514.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Topics discussed among mentors-mentees could range from positive coping skills, useful resources (on and off campus), self-efficacy, racial identity, masculinity, athletic identity, the impact of stereotypes, and career exploration.

HDP #4: Academic achievement—Academic integration, internalized empowerment, goal commitment, and engagement in counter-actions

Based on a study of African American male student athletes at Division I institutions, Person and LeNoir (1997 Person, D. R., & LeNoir, K. M. (1997). Retention issues and models for African American male athletes. *New Directions for Student Services*, 80, 79–91. [Google Scholar]) identified three models of effective retention programs. All three models incorporated inter-departmental efforts, which served to enhance African American male student athletes' sense of belonging and support in college. Additional innovative and inter-departmental academic support programs at institutions of higher education have been highlighted in previous research on Black male student athletes at historically Black colleges/universities (HBCUs) (Cooper, 2013 Cooper, J. N. (2013). A culture of collective uplift: The influence of a historically Black college/university on Black male student athletes. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 6, 306–331. [Google Scholar]). For example, Cooper (2013 Cooper, J. N. (2013). A culture of collective uplift: The influence of a historically Black college/university on Black male student athletes. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 6, 306–331.

[Google Scholar]) found Black male student athletes benefitted from having an athletic department collaborate with university-wide academic support programs to create formal relationships where student athletes were routinely able to access necessary resources and support for their academic needs. With this approach and consistent with Comeaux and Harrison's (2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) model of college student athlete success, institutions that adopted a broad-based intra-university approach to academic support would enable student athletes to be more fully integrated into the campus community and also be more knowledgeable of campus resources.

In a related vein, in order to provide culturally relevant pedagogical strategies and cultivate positive campus climates, all faculty, coaches, administrators, and academic support staff should be required to participate in comprehensive multicultural education and cultural competence training workshops (Ladson-Billings, 1995 Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Previous research on Black male student athletes' experiences at PWIs have found they encounter chilly campus climates filled with negative stereotypes regarding their intellectual abilities from faculty and peers (Comeaux & Harrison, 2007 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2007). Faculty and male student-athletes: Racial differences in the environmental predictors of academic achievement. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(2), 199–214.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]; C. K. Harrison & Lawrence, 2004 Harrison, C. K., & Lawrence, S. M. (2004). College students' perceptions, myths, and stereotypes about African American athleticism: A qualitative investigation. *Sport, Education & Society*, 9(1), 33–52.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) (also referred to as the pervasive Black dumb jock stereotype; Sailes, 2010 Sailes, G. (2010). *Modern sport and the African American experience*. San Diego, CA: Cognella. [Google Scholar]). Moreover, Black male student athletes are often times encouraged by academic advisors to enroll in “less rigorous” courses and majors in order to prioritize athletic eligibility over their personal academic interests, which also intensifies academic disengagement and feelings of resentment (Beamon, 2008 Beamon, K. K. (2008). “Used goods”: Former African American college student-athletes' perception of exploitation by Division I universities. *Journal of Negro Education*, 77(4), 352–364. [Google Scholar]; Benson, 2000 Benson, K. (2000). Constructing academic inadequacy: African American athletes' stories of schooling. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71(2), 223–246.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). In addition, the over-representation of Black male student athletes on athletic teams and the concurrent under-representation in the general student body further exacerbates the Black dumb jock stereotype by insinuating the only reason and primary purpose for their enrollment at the institution is to participate on an athletic team rather than experience a quality well-rounded educational experience (Hawkins, 2010 Hawkins, B. (2010). *The new plantation: Black athletes, college sports, and predominantly White institutions*. New York, NY: Palgrave-MacMillan. [Google Scholar]). Collectively, these practices create contested environments for Black male student athletes to learn and thrive. Hence, there is need for enhancing cultural competence and empathy among institutional actors via multicultural workshops, which could possibly lead to institutional reform strategies that redress the aforementioned insidious trends.

These workshops could be collaborative efforts across various institutional departments including the multicultural/diversity offices, student affairs, academic, and athletic departments. Additionally, it is recommended these workshops be conducted on a continual basis so institutional actors are consistently engaging in critical reflexivity and enhancing their knowledge of students from diverse backgrounds. A key focus of this training would be to enable institutional actors to identify ways in which they consciously and unconsciously engage in behaviors that may be detrimental to the holistic development of Black male student athletes (e.g., low academic expectations, negative non-verbal cues, etc.). Similar to the self-identity awareness exercises, institutional actors would be introduced to the racial microaggressions typology (Sue et al., 2007 Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286.[Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) as well as the CRT tenets (Bell, 1980 Bell, D. A. (1980). *Brown v. Board of Education and the interest convergence dilemma*. *Harvard Law Review*, 93, 518–533.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®],

[Google Scholar], 1992 Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic. [Google Scholar]; Crenshaw et al., 1995 Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York, NY: The New Press. [Google Scholar]; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001 Delgado, R., & Stefanic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press. [Google Scholar]; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995 Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47–68.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) to expand their understanding of various ways racially detrimental policies, thoughts, and practices influence the educational experiences of students of color. It is recommended that accountability be institutionalized not only through mandatory participation in these sessions, but also through annual performance reviews that could require institutional actors to document how they are engaging in actions to improve the conditions for students of color. Additionally, student evaluations of these institutional actors could be assessed to ensure positive changes are being implemented and sustained.

Coaches are another important socialization agent at institutions of higher education that influence Black male student athletes' overall experiences in college (Adler & Adler, 1991 Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1991). *Backboards and Blackboards: College athletics and role engulfment*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. [Google Scholar]; Beamon, 2008 Beamon, K. K. (2008). "Used goods": Former African American college student-athletes' perception of exploitation by Division I universities. *Journal of Negro Education*, 77(4), 352–364. [Google Scholar]). Many of these coaches' contracts are structured to incentivize athletic success over the academic achievement of their student athletes (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998 Sack, A., & Staurowsky, E. J. (1998). *College athletes for hire: The evolution and legacy of the NCAA's amateur myth*. Westport, CT: Praeger. [Google Scholar]). As a result, the pressure to win games takes precedent over the academic development of student athletes, particularly Black males, who are over-represented in the two highest revenue-generating sports, football and men's basketball (Hawkins, 2010 Hawkins, B. (2010). *The new plantation: Black athletes, college sports, and predominantly White institutions*. New York, NY: Palgrave-MacMillan. [Google Scholar]). Hence, if institutions are serious about fulfilling their educational missions and enhancing the academic outcomes of Black male student athletes, then they must incentivize these efforts within coaches' contracts. In order to create more conducive conditions for positive academic outcomes, the expectations of coaches should focus on accomplishing the following goals: (1) increasing the academic achievement of all their student athletes (3.0 GPAs or higher), (2) increasing the academic progress rates (APRs) and graduation success rates (GSRs)/academic success rates (ASRs) of all their student athletes, particularly those with a history of low graduation rates such as Black male student athletes, and (3) reducing or eliminating the racial academic performance/CRE gap among student athletes and different athletic teams. Similarly, the inverse of these incentives could be implemented whereby if coaches do not meet the aforementioned benchmarks then their compensation is deducted accordingly. If coaches were evaluated on these measures as strictly, or more strictly, than they are evaluated for athletic success, then they would change their approaches to value the holistic individual rather than just focusing on maximizing student athletes' athletic abilities.

Another relevant reform effort for improving Black male student athletes' academic achievement in college would be to reestablish the first year ineligibility standard for all student athletes. This standard has been long been promoted by academic integrity groups such as The Drake Group and the Knight Commission (Benford, 2007 Benford, R. D. (2007). *The college sports reform movement: Reframing the "edutainment" industry*. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48(1), 1–28.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). A common practice among intercollegiate athletic teams is to redshirt student athletes for athletic purposes whereas the proposed reform would allow all student athletes one year to acclimate to the campus climate (social integration) and academic environment (academic integration) without the intense pressures of managing full-time athletic responsibilities. Specific recommendations for limited athletic responsibilities during that first year would involve student athletes' required involvement in specific transitional activities organized by units outside of the athletic department (e.g., student affairs offices, health and human services, academic departments, career development services, etc.) at least half of the time spent on athletics. For example, if student athletes participated in 12 hours a week of athletic related tasks

then they would participate in 6 hours a week of transitional activities. These transitional activities would focus on setting personal academic goals, cultivating academic self-efficacy, establishing a positive academic work ethic, developing effective study habits, exploring career goals and options, learning the campus (physical locations of buildings as well as the institutional culture), and gaining knowledge about various campus resources available to them both within and beyond the athletic department. In addition, athletic time would be limited to team practices, attending home games (not participating in the game), and team meals. However, participation in games (home and away) and other organized team activities (e.g., watching game film, traveling time, etc.) would not be allowed until the completion of one academic year. Another option for time allocation would involve student athletes' spending over half (and a minimum of 12 hours a week) of the 20 hour a week allocation for athletic related tasks on specific transitional activities.

For years, many academic reform groups such as the Knight Commission and The Drake Group have called for increased academic standards in order to reestablish the academic integrity of institutions of higher education particularly big-time Division I schools (Benford, 2007 Benford, R. D. (2007). The college sports reform movement: Reframing the "edutainment" industry. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48(1), 1–28.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Along the same lines, the EBA approach argues that if the minimum GPA for athletic competition was increased, then institutions would focus their attention more on creating equitable conditions and cultivating positive learning environments for all student athletes to develop and thrive. An EBA approach would increase the minimum GPA requirement for all student athletes to 2.5 or higher. This change would signal to institutions that their first and most important goal is to enhance the academic and intellectual development of their student athletes. The minimum GPA requirement would apply only for athletic competition. Previous research has indicated that athletic participation has been associated with increased academic achievement among Black male student athletes (C. K. Harrison & Martin, 2012 Harrison, C. K., & Martin, B. (2012). Academic advising, time management and the African American scholar-athlete. In T. Stoilov (Ed.), *Time management* (pp. 89–106). Rijeka, Croatia: InTech. Retrieved from

<http://www.intechopen.com/gate.lib.buffalo.edu/books/time-management/time-management-academicadvising-and-the-african-american-male-student-athlete>

[Google Scholar]). Thus, student athletes who did not meet the minimum requirement would still have their scholarships honored and they would still be able to practice with the team and participate in team activities with the exception of participation in official competitions (i.e., games) as long as they met the other requirements associated with being a student athlete at the respective institution (i.e., compliant with the university code of conduct). In addition, student athletes who did not meet this requirement would have increased time limitations on athletic participation to ensure they were able to spend adequate time on their academic development. The NCAA and other intercollegiate governing bodies could still offer four years of athletic eligibility over a six-year period and student athletes who did not meet this GPA standard would still have their educational expenses covered through graduation even if they never competed. This EBA approach refocuses institutional priorities on what Mary Willingham, former University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) Learning Specialist, argued is the purpose of these institutions, which is to educate students to the best of the institution's abilities rather than concede that some student athletes are not worth assisting (Rockwell, 2013 Rockwell, S. (2013). *Schooled: The price of college sports* [Documentary]. Makuhari Media: Strand Releasing. [Google Scholar]).

Another primary component of this strategy is the condition that the renewal of athletic scholarships must be determined by a university-wide committee including a representative from the president's office, faculty, admissions officer, student affairs personnel, and a representative from the athletics department, rather than a single head coach. Collectively, the adoption of these education-centered (rather than athletic revenue focused) recommendations would signal a shift away from the "win-at-all-costs ideology" that is pervasive not only at many institutions of higher education that sponsor intercollegiate athletics in U.S., but also within the broader U.S. society (Beyer & Hannah, 2000 Beyer, J. M., & Hannah, D. R. (2000). The cultural significance of athletics in US higher education. *Journal of Sport Management*, 14, 105–132.[Web of Science ®], [Google

Scholar]). It is only when broader ideologies, such as athletic exploitation and social stratification that privilege and reward athletic glory over academic achievement and holistic development, are replaced that true and sustainable progress for all student athletes, and particularly Black male student athletes, will be attained.

HDP #5: Career aspirations—Goal commitments, holistic consciousness, internalized empowerment, engagement in counter-actions, and social integration

The EBA approach encompasses a concerted effort to expose Black male student athletes to a wide range of career opportunities through participation in a formal career exploration program. Black male student athletes' are often bombarded with messages from society, mass media, coaches, family, and peers that signal to them the myth of professional sports being their most viable career path (Edwards, 2000 Edwards, H. (2000). Crisis of Black athletes on the eve of the 21st century. *Society*, 37(3), 9–13.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). In an effort to enhance SRIC, intentionally designed career exploration services must be adopted. The EBA career exploration program would involve collaboration among the athletic department, career services office, academic advising staff, academic departments, alumni associations, and various off-campus organizations (e.g., National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 100 Black Men of America, etc.). Participants would complete career interest assessments. Using these data, the program coordinators (a combination of career services staff, student affairs staff, and athletic department staff) would work together to identify professionals in different occupational fields to speak to participants, thereby enhancing these participants' exposure to and knowledge of the career fields of interest. A major reason cited for the overemphasis on Black male student athletes' interest in athletics has been the lack of role models in careers other than sports (Edwards, 2000 Edwards, H. (2000). Crisis of Black athletes on the eve of the 21st century. *Society*, 37(3), 9–13.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; L. Harrison et al., 2002 Harrison, L., Jr., Harrison, C. K., & Moore, L. N. (2002). African American racial identity and sport. *Sport, Education & Society*, 7(2), 121–133.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Therefore, former student athletes, alumni, and other professionals who share similar racial, ethnic, and sociocultural backgrounds as participants would be targeted as guest presenters. However, individuals in different fields who do not possess these features also would be considered. These professionals could serve as vital mentors and resources for social and cultural capital enhancement as well as for positive development and psychosocial outcomes.

Another recommendation consistent with the EBA approach would be to allow Black male student athletes to choose their academic majors without pressure from the athletic department to pursue a major that is more compatible with their athletic commitments and goals. Along with the “majoring in eligibility” culture that is pervasive at many institutions of higher education, another problematic trend is the practice of academic clustering (Beamon, 2008 Beamon, K. K. (2008). “Used goods”: Former African American college student-athletes' perception of exploitation by Division I universities. *Journal of Negro Education*, 77(4), 352–364. [Google Scholar]; Benford, 2007 Benford, R. D. (2007). The college sports reform movement: Reframing the “edutainment” industry. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48(1), 1–28.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Academic clustering is a process whereby student athletes are instructed and placed into certain majors in order to prioritize their athletic eligibility rather than allowing student athletes to select a major of their choice. Previous research has found that Black male student athletes are often subjected to this disconcerting institutional practice (Beamon, 2008 Beamon, K. K. (2008). “Used goods”: Former African American college student-athletes' perception of exploitation by Division I universities. *Journal of Negro Education*, 77(4), 352–364. [Google Scholar]; Benson, 2000 Benson, K. (2000). Constructing academic inadequacy: African American athletes' stories of schooling. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71(2), 223–246.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Cooper & Cooper, 2015 Cooper, J. N., & Cooper, J. E. (2015). “I'm running so you can be happy and I can keep my scholarship”: A comparative study of Black male college athletes' experiences with role conflict. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 8(2), 131–152. [Google Scholar]). Along the same lines, there have been documented accounts of Black male student athletes being penalized for seeking to pursue a major of their choice (Donnor, 2005 Donnor, J. K. (2005). Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African-American football

student-athletes in major college sports. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 45–67.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]). Therefore, Black male student athletes should have an advocate outside of the athletic department, such as a faculty mentor, who can assist them with changing majors if they so desire. As mentioned earlier, another recommendation would be to establish a standard associated with athletic eligibility whereby student athletes meet with a career development advisor or attend a career development workshop at least once a month to learn about various career options they could pursue.

HDP #6: Balanced time management—Internalized empowerment, social integration, and goal commitment

Despite the benefits associated with being a student athlete, these commitments can create levels of physical and mental exhaustion for student athletes if not monitored effectively and consistently (Benford, 2007 Benford, R. D. (2007). The college sports reform movement: Reframing the “edutainment” industry. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48(1), 1–28.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Beyer and Hannah (2000 Beyer, J. M., & Hannah, D. R. (2000). The cultural significance of athletics in US higher education. *Journal of Sport Management*, 14, 105–132.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) described how coaches' control over student athletes' time creates unique challenges: “Not only do athletes have strict regimens that dictate almost every activity of every day, but they are subject to decisions of coaches on what position and whether or not they will play. They also have very limited control over other aspects of their lives” (p. 120–121). Hence, the reality that many student athletes' spend more time on athletics than non-athletic related tasks reflects the structural issue of institutions' prioritizing athletics over academics. The inherent contradiction that “student athletes are students first” when they are spending between 40–60 hours per week on athletics undermines the stated educational missions of these institutions (Benford, 2007 Benford, R. D. (2007). The college sports reform movement: Reframing the “edutainment” industry. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48(1), 1–28.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998 Sack, A., & Staurowsky, E. J. (1998). *College athletes for hire: The evolution and legacy of the NCAA's amateur myth*. Westport, CT: Praeger. [Google Scholar]). If time is a measure of commitment (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]), then institutions must ensure student athletes are spending more time on academic and social integration rather than on athletic related tasks. In other words, consistent with the EBA approach, the conditions and expectations associated with athletic participation should reflect the educational values of the institution.

The EBA approach to developing effective time management skills begins at the top institutional level with the university or college president and must be consistent throughout the athletic department. The first recommendation within the EBA approach to assist student athletes' with effective time management is the enforcement of the NCAA 20 hour a week rule. University/college presidents and athletic directors must take a more active role in ensuring their coaches and student athletes adhere to the 20 hour a week rule. Penalties for non-compliance would reinforce the prioritization of student athletes' holistic development rather than simply honing their athletic abilities. The penalties could range from written warnings to reduced practice time to suspensions and firings. In addition, student athletes should be given more autonomy over their schedules. Aside from their academic classes and athletic commitments, student athletes should have the freedom and responsibility to organize their schedules. For example, activities such as academic study times, meetings with faculty mentors, participation in community service (primarily during the off-season in the EBA approach), and personal activities should all be chosen by each individual student athlete. Within these cultures, student athletes also should be encouraged and expected to spend more time on their academics than their athletics as well as participate in culturally empowering and educationally purposeful activities (Comeaux & Harrison, 2007 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2007). Faculty and male student-athletes: Racial differences in the environmental predictors of academic achievement. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(2), 199–214.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]). Incoming student athletes should be socialized into a “student first athlete second” culture with the assistance of academic advisors, athletic department staff, and upper class student athletes (Cooper, 2013 Cooper, J. N. (2013). A culture of collective uplift: The influence of a

historically Black college/university on Black male student athletes. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 6, 306–331. [Google Scholar]). The promotion of balanced time management would not only contribute to higher levels of academic achievement but, more importantly, to holistic development in college and preparation for life after college.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to present a series of strategies and recommendations for enhancing Black male student athletes' educational experiences and holistic development at postsecondary institutions in the U.S. A review of scholarly literature on Black male student athletes, college student development theories, and student athlete support programs led to the creation of the Excellence Beyond Athletics approach. The six holistic development principles of the Excellence Beyond Athletics approach (self-identity awareness, positive social engagement, active mentorship, academic achievement, career aspirations, and balanced time management) are similar to Chickering and Gasmon's (1987 Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 39(7), 3–7. [Google Scholar]) seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education. These holistic development principles should not be viewed as necessary components for holistic development, but rather guidelines for institutions to consider when implementing or improving programs and services designed to enhance Black male student athletes' experiences in college. Moreover, the adoption of these Excellence Beyond Athletics approaches sends the message that Black male student athletes' identities are valued beyond athletics. Each holistic development principle is designed to strengthen Black male student athletes' non-athletic identities by enhancing academic and social integration. Consistent with Comeaux and Harrison's (2011 Comeaux, E., & Harrison, C. K. (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher*, 40(5), 235–245.[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]) model for college student athlete academic success, Excellence Beyond Athletics focuses on developing Black male student athletes' goals and commitments upon exposure to the institutional environment. If institutions do not accomplish the aforementioned goal, then essentially they are not fulfilling their stated educational missions. In other words, the adoption of the Excellence Beyond Athletics approaches demonstrates what Harper (2008 Harper, S. R. (2008). Institutional seriousness concerning Black male student engagement: Necessary conditions and collaborative partnerships. In S. J. Quaye & S.R. Harper (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. New York, NY: Routledge. [Google Scholar]) described as demonstrating institutional seriousness as it relates to Black male student athletes' educational experiences and outcomes.

More specifically, the Excellence Beyond Athletics approach requires institutions to change the nature of their conditions, facilitate more positive relationships for community building and sense of belonging, and enhance academic and educationally purposeful engagement expectations for Black male student athletes. Without holistic consciousness, internalized empowerment, and engagement in counter-actions (Cooper & Cooper, 2015 Cooper, J. N., & Cooper, J. E. (2015). "I'm running so you can be happy and I can keep my scholarship": A comparative study of Black male college athletes' experiences with role conflict. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 8(2), 131–152. [Google Scholar]), the oppressive system of athletic exploitation and academic neglect will continue to prevail. Institutions of higher education are already facing mounting pressures regarding the legitimacy and value of athletic participation within their broader educational missions, particularly at the Division I level (e.g., O'Bannon v. NCAA, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill academic scandal, exorbitant coaches' salaries in times of university wide budget cuts, persistent academic performance/CRE gap along racial and gender lines, etc.). Thus, empowering Black male student athletes with a strategic responsiveness to interest convergence mindset via the Excellence Beyond Athletics approach will offset some of the most scathing assertions of racial discrimination, academic neglect, and athletic exploitation toward these institutions (Benford, 2007 Benford, R. D. (2007). The college sports reform movement: Reframing the "edutainment" industry. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48(1), 1–28.[Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Cooper, 2012 Cooper, J. N. (2012). Personal troubles and public issues: A sociological imagination of Black athletes' experiences at predominantly White institutions in the United

States. *Sociology Mind*, 2, 261–271.[Crossref], [Google Scholar]; Davis, 1995 Davis, T. (1995). African-American student-athletes: Marginalizing the NCAA regulatory structure. *Marq. Sports Law Journal*, 6, 199–227. [Google Scholar]; Donnor, 2005 Donnor, J. K. (2005). Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African-American football student-athletes in major college sports. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 45–67.[Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]; Hawkins, 2010 Hawkins, B. (2010). *The new plantation: Black athletes, college sports, and predominantly White institutions*. New York, NY: Palgrave-MacMillan. [Google Scholar]; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998 Sack, A., & Staurowsky, E. J. (1998). *College athletes for hire: The evolution and legacy of the NCAA's amateur myth*. Westport, CT: Praeger. [Google Scholar]). Furthermore, these approaches could lead to enhanced academic performance levels and post-college career success, which would meet multiple interests of institutions of higher education, including the cultivation of educational attainment and a commitment to positive developmental outcomes for students from diverse populations.

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Notes

1. The terms “Black” and “African American” will be used interchangeably. The term “Black” is incorporated in the title and used prominently throughout the manuscript to refer to the socially constructed racial group of individuals who self-identify as Black and possess origins to a Black racial group within the African Diaspora including African Americans, Black Africans, Black Caribbeans, Black West Indians, etc. The term “African American” is only used when cited directly from a particular source. For example, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) uses African American instead of Black within their academic performance measure data reports.

2. The term historically White institutions (HWIs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs) will be used interchangeably depending on the source. The term HWI is used to describe institutions that were originally founded to provide educational opportunities for Whites (i.e., pre-Civil Rights era and before and during the Jim Crow era) while excluding Black student enrollment; through the early twenty-first century these institutions continue to enroll a majority of White students and have educational curricula and institutional arrangements that privilege Whiteness.

3. The SB program does include culturally responsive approaches, such as the inclusion of pop culture and hip hop language and styles, in the curricula. However, this program is designed for student athletes across racial groups with a specific focus on the unique needs of Black male student athletes.

4. FBS is defined as NCAA Division I member institutions that offer at least 16 NCAA sponsored athletic teams (including football) and participate in the postseason bowl system, rather than a playoff, to determine a national champion for football. FBS members must meet the highest standards of sports sponsorship, football scheduling, and overall financial aid. In addition, FBS members must meet minimum attendance standards for football. FBS is the highest revenue-generating, commercialized, and popular classification within the NCAA.

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