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The International Student-Athlete Experience: A Research Study Into the Transition Process of ISAs, From Their Home Country Into Life as an NCAA Student-Athlete

Ioanna Charitonidi and Anastasios Kaburakis

This article discusses a research study undertaken in order to better understand what the NCAA, institutions, administrators, and coaches can do in order to enhance the experiences of international student-athletes (ISAs). Quantitative and qualitative primary survey data was gathered from a sample of ISAs representing several countries and a wide range of sports. One of the key findings was that when provided with a platform from which to express their opinions, the respondents highlighted concerning issues such as discrimination, negligence, and a lack of support and/or guidance. Significant findings were also reached regarding steps to be taken in order to improve the transition process, and the specific challenges that are not currently being met by the NCAA, institutions, staff, or coaches. It is recommended that the NCAA carefully considers the results found in this study and undertakes further investigation to help stakeholders in the college sport experience better meet the needs of their ISAs.

Keywords: international student-athletes, NCAA

Problem Framing

Over the past 30 years, there has been increasing coverage of issues affecting international student-athletes (ISAs) in academia and several areas of law, policy, and management (Bale, 1991; Kaburakis, 2005, 2006, 2007; Pierce et al.,

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2010; Popp et al., 2009; Rodriguez, 2014; Stewart. 2013). From amateurism, to recruiting, academic eligibility, financial aid, health, mental health, taxation, and a host of other matters, there has certainly not been a shortage of problematic areas for ISAs in college athletics participation. Continued efforts from the NCAA and institutional actors have attempted to attend to these issues, which continue to pose challenges for ISAs in transition to college sport.

As of the end of 2021, there were more than 22,000 ISAs studying in the United States (Durrani, 2021). Every one of them had to go through a lengthy transition process to earn and retain collegiate sport eligibility. In the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s, ISAs' problems were as much substantive in regard to their acculturation to U.S. norms as procedural and policy-generated, given the incompatibilities of the systems of global sport governance, conflicting with intercollegiate athletics principles. Policy evolution progressively ameliorated these conflicts, after some important policy updates ironed out kinks to interpretations of amateurism in cases of ISAs (Kaburakis, 2010). But over the past dozen years, significant problems unearthed and have been troubling ISAs, their families, their coaches, institutional administrators, and NCAA staff. Whereas policy now allows for more incoming ISAs to find their way to U.S. colleges and universities, the toll on their physical and mental health caused by the transition and increased competition is becoming more of a recurring issue (Rodriguez, 2014; Stewart. 2013). In addition, ISAs themselves point out problems encountered frequently as they transition to a new world of U.S. higher education, ranging from financial challenges and taxation to sociocultural issues (NCAA, 2022).

Relevant recent literature underscores problems ISAs document in NCAA (2022) surveys. The research at hand built on the aforementioned streams and informed NCAA research. Considering the rising numbers of ISAs in intercollegiate athletic competitions, and the additional strains on them (and U.S. student-athletes) during COVID-19 times, additional research is needed. In a doctoral dissertation, Hong (2018) conducted qualitative research to establish an extensive framework of the integration and experience of ISAs at NCAA Division I (DI) institutions. In this study, 48 student-athletes who were not born in the US were asked to complete a 36-question survey, followed by a one-on-one interview. Five main themes were unearthed, which were most striking regarding the integration and experience in the NCAA: (1) motivations, (2) recruitment process, (3) adjustment and integration, (4) development of ISAs, and (5) areas of improvement from participants' perspectives. The ISAs disclosed several difficulties they faced. These challenges included but were not limited to the following: different educational and athletic systems, the balance between academics and athletics, the relationship with coaches and teammates, cultural differences, and other challenges in life. Despite these obstacles, most ISAs noted that they felt thankful for the opportunity to become an ISA in the US.

Another recent research paper that investigated this topic was co-authored by Cenzual et al. (2021). The authors interviewed 10 ISAs on their adjustment to college in the US. This research mainly focused on the challenges the ISAs faced, what they can do to overcome them, as well as what colleges can do to help with an ISA's integration. The main concerns raised by ISAs revolved around coach/player relations and the adjustment to a new language, lifestyle, food, people, and culture.

Lastly, Manwell et al. (2021) investigated the lack of knowledge about the Hispanic ISA experience. They did so through qualitative research based on critical race theory. In their paper, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with Hispanic ISAs in NCAA DI Midwestern universities. The results revealed that the most prevalent obstacle facing Hispanic ISAs was language. Additionally, it was discovered that many Hispanic ISAs experienced imbalance in their lives due to the strains of integration into life as a college athlete in the US. Supportive social networks were found to mitigate this challenge for many ISAs.

Continuing the research and further investigating the aforementioned lessons from ISAs, during both the spring and the fall 2021 terms, NCAA Inclusion and Research staff members engaged in initiatives aiming to explore current trends, problems, and institutional and national office potential solutions (NCAA, 2021). It was deemed to be in the NCAA membership's best interest for the transition and assimilation process to be as seamless, efficient, and as enjoyable as possible for ISAs. Thus, more of them would continue pursuing their studies in the US, and attrition and retention problems would be managed. This article synthesizes the key results from a mixed methods approach, to understand the ISA experience and to frame the most important problems that key stakeholders should innovatively solve.

Methodology

During the first part of 2021, the NCAA Inclusion and Research staff sought counsel from academic and industry experts embedded in ISA-related research and practice. The NCAA then convened key stakeholders at the June 2021 Inclusion Forum to understand what each stakeholder can do to enhance the experience of ISAs. In the process of identifying a robust group of diverse viewpoints and multiple constituents, it became evident that the nascent group put together in view of the 2021 NCAA Inclusion Forum needed more stakeholders, including participation from ISAs. Academic researchers worked with industry stakeholders to conduct research with "real-world" outcomes and consequences. While the NCAA's own research team is annually gathering data from ISAs and

incorporating it in the Association's report on ethnicity and student-athletes' demographics, the forming group for this research assumed a more holistic and deliberate approach, particularly piercing into the ISAs' own assumptions, perceptions, and identified needs. Thus, it was the ISAs' (current and alumni) contributions we believe were most relevant.

To comprehensively address the charge as set by the NCAA, the experts and ISA team took several rounds developing the survey instrument. After a pilot survey was disseminated and initial data was analyzed and discussed, additional questions and methods were identified as appropriate for the purposes of the study. Importantly, it was the combined richness of experiences of both the expert researchers/industry practitioners and the ISAs in the research group that allowed the instrument to flow efficiently and effectively for participants. Namely, the combined open-ended questions in conjunction with suggested responses in detailed survey topics allowed for insightful data to be derived from this survey.

In attempts to obtain as accurate and representative a sample of the international student population as possible, the research team ran several rounds of the finalized instrument by several stakeholder groups. NCAA staff, NCAA-sponsored sports coaches' associations, faculty athletics representatives/athletic department administrators, and academic advising groups disseminated the survey over a period of two months. There were 149 ISAs responding, representing 39 countries and nine sports. Primary data was collected, both quantitative and qualitative. It is important to note, in questions pertaining to the nature of their experiences, ISAs utilized a Likert-type scale; any experiences identified as sub-optimal (any responses under the optimum 5 ranking) were explored further via open-ended texts and logic trees, to gauge for content value. Academic and industry experts on the research team held that the most valuable contribution to the research process was the input proffered by current and graduated ISAs while developing the instrument. The ISA study group provided feedback on some of the difficulties they faced, on a personal level, while going through the recruiting process, as well as reflections on their transition into the NCAA environment.

Results

In the survey, ISAs were asked: How can coaches and administrators/institutions do a better job preparing for international student-athletes' transition to NCAA sports? (Check all that apply)

Table 1 displays the levels of ISAs agreement with a number of potential improvements that could be made by coaches, administrators, and institutions. ISAs were also given the option to discuss any additional improvements they

Table 1. Potential Improvements for Coaches, Administrators, and Institutions Preparing for ISAs Transition

Statement	Number of ISAs in Agreement	Percentage of ISAs in Agreement
Tutors and English resources must be available for all students whose first language is not English	104	70%
Arrange online talks where NCAA/institution representatives provide more information about financial aid, scholarships, and stipends, where students can ask questions and be heard	98	66%
Schools must work with entities such as ACT/SAT/College Board and Duolingo/TOEFL/IELTS to provide at least one practice and one free test per student athlete	96	64%
Arrange online talks where NCAA/institution representatives provide more information about academics such as majors, classes, grading system, credits, etc.	94	63%
Provide more resources, information, and a program for strength, conditioning, and skills preparation while in transition from the home country to the US	91	61%
Provide need-based NCAA Eligibility Center fee waivers	70	47%
Provide recruited student-athletes with institution applications fee waivers	56	38%

would encourage, which were not included in Table 1. Here, four main themes were mentioned:

1. **Employment and bureaucracy:** ISAs posited the need to line up campus employment timely and navigating the paperwork required well in advance of their arrival to the US.
2. **Health insurance fees and options:** ISAs felt that it was evident they needed more options in an open market environment. The options proffered by the institutions were among the most expensive available on the market; hence, ISAs felt they needed more information and comparative data to reach informed and educated decisions on insurance.
3. **Degree certification/credentials evaluations:** ISAs expressed frustrations and confusion with regard to the many evaluation providers, lack of uniform accreditation, and the vast difference in pricing and timely completion of credential evaluations required for admission. There was a common theme and recommendation for such work to be completed in-house.

4. **The tax filing process:** ISAs expressed frustration and disappointment with regard to lack of support and knowledge about the impact of their aid/scholarship awards on their tax status, lack of information on exact amounts they would be charged, and ways to prepare for such tax liabilities, refunds, and the process required for filing. There was a common thread on a requirement to issue ISAs SSN/ITINs shortly upon arrival.

ISAs were also asked: How can coaches and administrators/institutions do a better job to enhance international student-athletes' experience during their time in the US? (Check all that apply)

Table 2 displays the levels of ISAs agreement with a number of potential improvements that could be made by coaches, administrations, and institutions. ISAs were also given the option to discuss any improvements they would encourage that were not included in Table 2. Here, two main themes were mentioned:

Table 2. Potential Improvements for Coaches, Administrators, and Institutions to Enhance ISAs' Experience in the US

Statement	Number of ISAs in Agreement	Percentage of ISAs in Agreement
Have at least ONE tax person on staff to help with international tax matters	112	75.2%
Provide health insurance	105	70.5%
Provide mental health resources (homesickness, culture shock, etc.)	103	69.1%
Provide for airfare once a year to/from home country	101	67.8%
Workshop on how to file taxes as an international student-athlete	100	67.1%
Provide help with getting an on-campus job	94	63.1%
Guide on how to get health insurance (options, competitive prices for international SAs, etc.) if the school does not provide it	87	58.4%
All ISAs should be allowed an F-1 student visa extension (either as a grad student/GA or otherwise kept on staff to help with transitions of other ISAs) and the opportunity to get OPT/CPT	82	55%
Provide help moving in/moving out of your dorm/apartment	80	53.7%
Provide academic assistance tailored specifically to ISAs	73	49%
Schools must provide career days where ISAs will be informed about internships and job opportunities as well as how to dress and what to say in an interview	64	43%

1. **Cultural diversity:** ISAs expressed a strong desire and firm belief that institutions and staff should celebrate diversity, nurture the “other,” and find ways to engage with ISAs.
2. **Filing taxes:** Intriguingly, given there already were two related response options, ISAs expressed a strong need to have specialized support and tax filing services offered by their institutions.

ISAs were then asked questions with regard to their experience with the NCAA, their institutions, and their coaches during three stages: (1) pre-arrival/enrollment/recruiting, (2) transitioning as freshmen and integrating to the student-athlete body, and (3) post-transition, in the process of graduating, and for alumni, post-graduation. These questions were set up on a Likert scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). ISAs that rated their experience less than 5 were asked to elaborate on any challenges they faced.

Table 3. Quality of ISAs’ Experiences with NCAA, Institution, and Coaches During Pre-arrival, Freshman, and Alumni/Graduation Stages

Experience	Pre-arrival			Freshman			Alumni		
	NCAA	School	Coaches	NCAA	School	Coaches	NCAA	School	Coaches
5	52.3%	69.1%	71.8%	59.1%	67.1%	64.4%	47.9%	58.3%	59.3%
4	18.8%	20.1%	14.8%	16.8%	17.4%	15.4%	16.7%	18.8%	18.8%
3	21.5%	8.1%	9.4%	16.1%	11.4%	13.4%	16.7%	12.5%	12.5%
2	4.7%	2%	2.7%	7.4%	2%	3.4%	6.3%	6.3%	6.3%
1	2.7%	0.7%	1.3%	0.7%	2%	3.4%	12.5%	4.2%	4.2%
Total N	149	149	149	149	149	149	48	48	48

Overall, it is important to note that the highest level of satisfaction from ISAs was felt during the pre-arrival stage, toward coaches, followed by institutions. One would argue that this finding indicates that coaches and institutions perform their recruiting functions exceptionally well. Thereafter, there is a drop-off throughout the ISAs’ experiences, all the way to almost half of the ISAs surveyed being less than exceptionally satisfied when reaching the (post)graduation stage, and as (soon to be) alumni. It is quite insightful to delve deeper into the ISAs’ experiences and explore their rationale and reasoning on less than excellent (or subpar) experiences.

As far as the NCAA is concerned, the ISAs outlined several reasons why they felt their experience was less than stellar. In the pre-enrollment, recruiting stage, there were two main themes mentioned. The first one had to do with procedural challenges:

- Cultural assimilation, as the very nature of the NCAA process was counterintuitive
- Unnecessarily long application process
- Extensive and unclear NCAA regulations
- Expensive process
- Language barrier
- Guidance on eligibility (confusing or lack thereof)
- COVID-19 (impact on ISAs transitioning to the US —more of an immigration issue, with certain aspects of NCAA policy also triggering problems, for example, delayed enrollment rules, standardized test scores still required until recently in certain schools despite COVID lockdowns and testing cancellations)
- More guidance from coaches needed
- International travel document requirements upon arrival to US
- Financial aid

The second theme had to do with enrollment challenges:

- U.S. credit transfer system
- Provide airfare
- Part-time job options for ISAs in the US

Closely, ISAs' experience with the NCAA as freshmen upon integration to the student-athlete body almost mirrored the quality feedback they noted as incoming recruits. Excellent experiences were only slightly higher at this stage. Here, the main theme was inattentiveness:

- NCAA was not present during the ISAs' transition period as a freshman
- No strength and conditioning transition
- No guidance on healthy eating
- No mental health assistance
- No assistance during COVID-19
- Rules and regulations remain unclear
- Arguably a disappointing finding was that ISAs who were either graduating or alumni expressed the lowest satisfaction ratings toward the NCAA. Especially distressing for NCAA purposes was the 12.5% of respondents selecting that their experiences with the NCAA were poor. Here, three main themes were displayed:
- Lack of support and guidance after graduation
- Women's sports not being treated with equality by the NCAA

- NCAA only cares about the athletes playing sports that generate the most money and neglects all others

Regarding institutions, ISAs' experiences were overall highly satisfying prior to their arrival to the US. The 30% that did not render their experience excellent brought up three main themes:

- Unclear regulations
- Institutional negligence
- Lack of communication due to slow and unclear responses

ISAs' experiences with their institutions and staff as freshmen upon integration to the student-athlete body were rated only slightly lower than the input they provided as recruits. Here, the main theme was cultural challenges:

- American teammates not educated enough about the struggles of an ISA
- Limited support
- Discrimination

ISAs who were either graduating or alumni rated their experience with their institutions and staff lower than the previous two stages, yet still higher than their responses for the NCAA. Here, two main themes were displayed:

- Job and master's education opportunities were not offered by institutions
- Paying international taxes and lack of assistance navigating the IRS process as an ISA, a common theme throughout the survey.

An area the research team, especially the ISAs, expressed great excitement to research was the experience of ISAs with their coaches during recruitment, post-enrollment, and graduating. In respect to the recruitment stage, the almost 72% gave an excellent rating of their experience with their coaches, which was the highest encountered throughout our study. The ones who responded that their experience was not excellent expressed opinions that unearthed two main themes. The first one had to do with pre-arrival challenges with the coaching staff:

- Late responses
- Negligence
- No contact
- The second theme had to do with enrollment challenges:
- Dishonesty (with regard to academic options, majors, alignment with athletics).
- Favoritism

ISAs' experiences with their coaches as freshmen upon integration to the student-athlete body were overall highly rated, with almost two thirds rendering them excellent. Approximately a third refrained from excellent feedback, including approximately 20% rating their experiences as average at best, which yielded these five themes:

- Discrimination
- No customized practice for athletes with different needs
- Pressure with keeping scholarships and performing without being given time to adapt to a new country
- Unaware of importance of mental health and well-being
- Poor knowledge on sport

ISAs that were either graduating or alumni responded with feedback on their experience with their coaches. Here, 40% felt their experiences were not excellent, with approximately a quarter of respondents declaring their graduating/post-graduation experiences with their coaches were average at best. The main theme was that the coaches kept no further contact with their players following their graduation.

Finally, ISAs were asked if there was anything else that they would like their school, coaches, and NCAA to know about their experience. The following themes highlighted the ISAs' main challenges throughout their experience in the US:

- Discrimination
- Getting a job and work experience through internships
- Applying for a Social Security Number
- Coaches and teammates being more understanding and helpful
- Transportation to and from airport
- Storage units for ISAs' belongings when they travel home
- Health insurance options
- Filing taxes
- Mental health resources
- Help with optional practical training (OPT) and curricular practical training (CPT)
- Orientation of majors available
- Guidance on financial aid and tax resources

A general observation might be reached regarding the findings of the survey. ISAs entering the NCAA recruiting process are quite thankful and appreciative of the opportunities they have been granted to pursue higher education and sports in the US. They are most prone to issue positive feedback for their coaches and

institutions. Conversely, they appear to be most demanding of the NCAA, and progressively become more dissatisfied and discontent with NCAA provisions on matters they consider essential and necessary for their experience. As they reach graduation and provide feedback as alumni, ISAs' data yield a more nuanced and arguably informed position on critical items impacting their lives after college sport. It is at that stage, presumably more mature and seasoned, during which ISAs appear less willing to issue positive feedback, and expect more from all stakeholders in the process—coaches, institutions, and above all the NCAA and its constituents.

A Call to Action

The results of this study indicate some encouraging signs and some significant concerns in the transition process for ISAs leaving their home country and beginning life as a student-athlete in the US. First, it must be said that the majority of ISAs rated their transition experience as either 4 or 5 out of 5, whether it be with the institution and staff, with the coaches, or with the NCAA itself.

Upon further inspection, there are certainly areas for improvement. In this study, ISAs were given an anonymous platform from which to express their opinions of the transition process. In many of the survey questions, ISAs were given the freedom to discuss specific challenges they faced. Here, several concerns were mentioned, which should be considered, in view of upcoming initiatives and NCAA policy changes.

How can the NCAA reimagine the ISA journey from initial recruitment to graduation and beyond?

The NCAA needs to consider some key findings in this study, coming directly from the ISAs. Unifying themes pertain to an entangled, protracted, and expensive process to obtain eligibility and certification, and barriers to entry appear insurmountable to some prospects. This study could not answer a key question: How many international prospects do *not continue* with recruitment? That may happen either before or after registering for the NCAA Eligibility Center, having paid their \$150 fee because they may run into issues they feel are too high-maintenance to resolve, and absent help from NCAA or institutional staff, they cease their pursuit.

According to the ISAs, the NCAA was not present during the ISA transition period as a freshman; they felt there was no national support with regard to resources understanding the rigors and demands of the strength and conditioning transition, no guidance on healthy eating, no mental health assistance, and no assistance during COVID-19.

Perhaps most importantly, alumni respondents remarked that there was lack of support and guidance after graduation; ISAs also felt that women's sports are

not being treated equally by the NCAA, which “only cares about the athletes playing sports that generate the most money and neglects all others...”

One would argue that the NCAA makes resources available to ISAs via its member institutions, has programs to which they can apply for funding assistance like fee waivers, and the seeds from the NCAA’s initiatives in 2021 should bear fruit along the lines of national resources, best practices, and a common body of knowledge in the service of ISAs.

How can institutions reimagine the ISA journey from initial recruitment to graduation and beyond?

ISAs’ experiences were overall excellent with their institutions and support staff. The ones who struggled somewhat with issues during their transition reported areas of internal procedures that felt inconsistent and difficult to navigate for ISAs, institutional negligence regarding important items that needed timely attention (health insurance, travel home, tax preparation, etc.), next to a general lack of communication due to slow and unclear responses by certain staff. Occasionally, one can observe this is due to turnover, which as in most areas of economic activity through and post-COVID-19, is the hard and sad reality. Still, it is evident that institutions can be significant actors in the successful transition of ISAs.

ISAs’ experiences with their institutions frequently entail cultural challenges. ISAs reported U.S. teammates not educated enough about the struggles of ISAs, limited support, and discriminatory attitudes. Upperclassmen and alumni underscored the need for institutional help and infrastructure support regarding campus work, career services, and the one topic most frequently encountered in this survey, tax preparation assistance.

Judging by the fact many ISAs reported having outstanding experiences at their institutions precisely on matters where others struggled, as per above concerns on taxes, health insurance, mental health support, and various resources ISAs required, one can foresee forming collaborations among institutions (possibly under the auspices of the NCAA) for such best practices to be shared. Conversely, they can be used as areas of competitive advantage in the constantly more challenging and demanding international recruiting landscape.

How can coaches help ISAs in their transition from recruits to student-athletes, to graduation and beyond?

In reassuring fashion, confirming established the norm that coaches are the critical decision-makers and the most important contributors to ISAs’ successful transitions into and out of college sport, this research yields some insightful results. The survey data showed the highest level of satisfactory experiences from coaches over institutions and NCAA, from the stage of recruitment to graduation. Some interesting findings should be juxtaposed with literature and

decades of ISA research showing coaches as key in establishing pipelines for institutions recruiting international students and having a significant impact on their institutions beyond their mere contributions in each sport program. And as always, some ISAs did report issues with some coaches in areas such as late responses by coaches to crucial eligibility matters, academic transitions, negligence by coaches regarding key steps of immigration and travel to the US, health insurance, and injury prevention or rehab. Some ISAs even reported that they had minimal contact with their head coaches, which is problematic, as they are the chief executives of their teams, and recruiting coordinators, compliance staff, and other administrators can only do so much without the participation of the head coach. Some ISAs also discussed favoritism and dishonesty on the part of some coaches, causing some of them to transfer; on the latter, the NCAA's own findings in 2022 show that ISAs transfer at higher rates per sport compared to their US counterparts, which is somewhat alarming, considering rapidly increasing transfer rates overall, influenced by the advent of the transfer portal and a nascent free agent market.

ISAs' experiences with their coaches as freshmen were highly rated. Concerns were raised regarding discriminatory attitudes, lack of tailored practices, pressure to win without regard to health, mental health, and threatening scholarship retention at times. An area where U.S. coaches have been criticized and occasionally chastised internationally, ISAs did confirm some coaches displayed poor knowledge of their sport regarding teaching and overall fundamentals. It was disappointing to observe that a high number of ISAs noted they did not maintain contact with their coaches upon graduation.

Thus, ISAs' overall positive experiences notwithstanding, college coaches have the most important task at hand regarding ISAs' success. Education is key for them as much as the ISAs themselves, which is also an area identified with respect to the role of the NCAA and institutions. Stated otherwise, coaches can both learn more, and hire more expert staff to tackle issues that are instrumental for ISAs, on health, mental health, tax preparation, diversity and multicultural training, and learning more about the game they manage as well. Coaches are the modern general managers of the college sport enterprise, and much like MBAs and experienced executives, they have a multitude of factors to address and problems to solve.

Conclusion

Concluding the survey, ISAs had a chance to express themselves in open-ended fashion, and it was in that section where the last few important themes of this study were encountered. Discrimination was reiterated as a concern by several ISAs, who were hoping and expected to have coaches and teammates who

would “get” the “other” and show understanding, inclusion, and genuine care. Most of the issues raised in the open-ended section revolved around systemic, institutional, and immigration issues, some of which go beyond the narrow confines of coaches/institutions’ purview and the NCAA. However, getting a job and work experience through internships can be areas where ISAs may find support by NCAA member institutions. Applying for a Social Security Number, having help with filing taxes, securing affordable health insurance options, accessing mental health resources, and related issues may be areas where all stakeholders in the management of ISAs may contribute further service in the future. Hence, more work is required for problems to be identified, preemptively treated, or resolved.

Moving forward, this article suggests that the NCAA and its member institutions take the time to consider innovatively solving the three problems framed above. Several deeply concerning issues were highlighted and some strong themes were displayed regarding the shortcomings of institutions and staff, coaches, and the NCAA itself. To rectify these problems and improve the transition process for ISAs, the NCAA should investigate further the topics identified in this article. The NCAA can provide ISAs with a platform from which to speak, and everyone should then listen. Once the problems are truly understood, steps can be taken to improve this vital transition period and ensure that ISAs are provided with the appropriate information, support, and guidance to succeed.

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