

Athlete Transitions:

What the Global Sport Institute is seeking to do and how you might join us

The [Global Sport Institute](#) has made athlete transitions such as education, counseling, degree completion, entrepreneurship, and certificates, a priority since its inception. This is a primary task of our [Global Sport Education and Research Lab](#). Like many, we evolved from being focused on athlete degree completion, especially online. Early in that phase we conducted a roundtable in Washington D.C. focused on athlete degree completion. After that work we evolved to *meaningful* degree completion, to where we are now, a realization that a degree alone may not be all that a given individual needs. There is a considerable gap in knowledge (what works and what would be best) and we believe that we can bridge this gap with research while simultaneously providing an array of common programming and guidance on what programs and resources exist elsewhere. This will help us to gain understanding and build capacity rapidly.

What we have come to understand is missing in sport, is a thoroughly researched system to assist athletes at making the determination of what they should transition to do once that moment arrives and at the end of sports participation at a highly competitive level. We are also clear that transition can happen for everyone that enters sport at different times. In fact, many of us—maybe even most of us—have transitioned. It may have been the end of the major league dream in the 10th grade when you could not hit the curve ball, or in the 5th grade when you were always the last one chosen, even though you were the one who brought the ball to the court.

Collegiate and professional athlete transitions are not like other transitions out of other fields due to the intense level of identity and connectedness that goes with being a serious athlete and those who focus *entirely* on being an athlete (identity foreclosure). There is a sacrifice of their education and additional identity options/career aspirations, that make this type of transition more difficult. We know that the earlier you transition out of the dream, the more time you have to focus on the dream of the traditional working life. Similarly, transition is eased for athletes that engage in learning continuously and when they have a plan in place before their athletic experience ends.

After several meetings with professional and national sports organizations, along with years of engagement in this space, [GSI's Global Sport Education and Research Lab](#) has developed concrete research questions that need answers:

- How can we decrease the time it takes for athletes to transition to new careers?
- How can we lessen the number of transitions (finding the career that sticks) and mitigate the stress that athletes experience?
- How can we be proactive in improving the number of athletes who finish their education and/or get credentialed/training for both sports and non-sports careers?

We can still provide the items listed above: education, counseling, degree completion, entrepreneurship, and certificates. However, we now are clear that the Global Sport Institute can play a much bigger role by developing the intake tools and systems responsive to these research questions. What we also know is that such a tool cannot be “one size fit all.” We are building it with a flexibility, but we can only do so by working with sports entities interested in accomplishing that same goal.

Our research will:

- Build on existing research in the area, including the comparison of military personnel and athletes’ transitions, commonalities, and dissimilarities.
- Refine and create instruments for assessment and test the delivery of existing instruments.
- Explore mental and social well-being, particularly, how athletes develop new purpose and meaning, and the role of others in athletes’ transitions.
- Describe and investigate intake/assessment processes to develop a customizable model for sports entities and individuals.

Arizona State University is uniquely qualified in this space because we have started the work of understanding athlete transition nationally and internationally, we have a long history of looking at the transition of the fighting men and women from our military, and we have an innovative slate and variety of educational programs, certificates and degrees, and types of learning environments.

Our Global Sport Education and Research Lab is actively seeking to engage with sports entities and individuals that will collaborate with us in this important work.