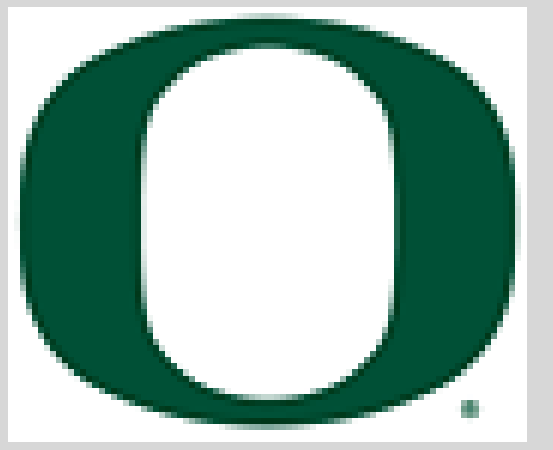


University of Oregon

Improving the Student Athlete Experience: A Proposal to Better Support the Freshman Population



University of Oregon

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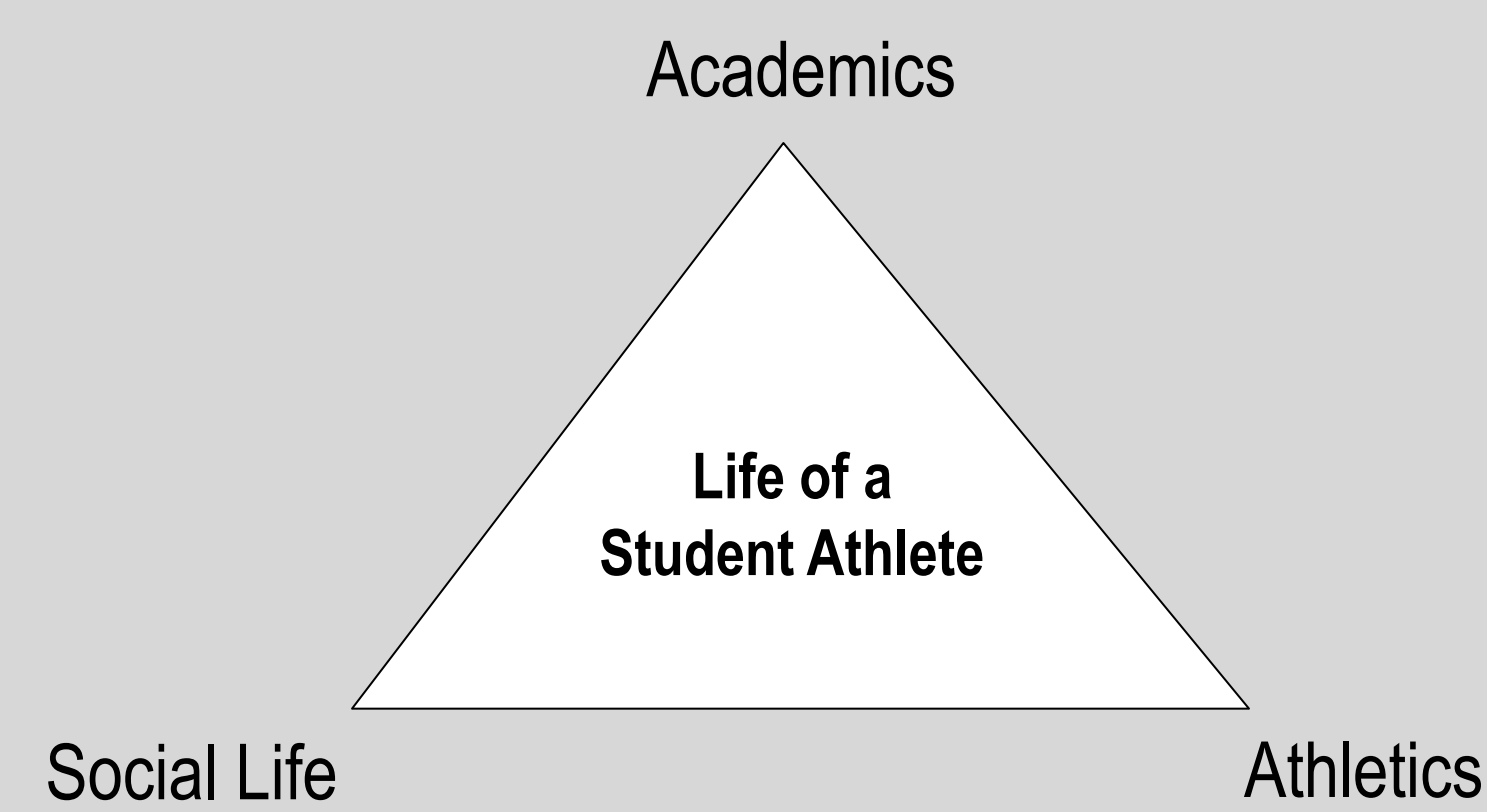
Introduction

Services for Student Athletes (SSA):

Services for Student Athletes (SSA) ensures that students who are currently or have been affiliated with University of Oregon Athletics, regardless of athletic eligibility, are provided every opportunity to accomplish academic goals and earn a degree. The NCAA mandates academic services as well as rules and policies to ensure the academic commitment of student athletes and to increase the likelihood that they will earn degrees. SSA runs more of a conservative academic support program, which required all student athletes with a GPA under 3.0 and all newcomer student athletes to have mandatory tutoring and study hours. The under skilled or under motivated student athletes are also required to meet with learning specialists to build their learning skills as well as organizational management. The academic advisers also hold weekly meetings with the student athletes they are responsible for to check-in on how their classes as going. This is a high stakes job because you are dealing with a student athlete's eligibility to compete in their sport, as well as the hope to graduate.

Pressures of Being a Student Athlete

Being a collegiate athlete is not an easy task. Having to deal with the pressures of both competing at a high level athletically as well as doing well enough academically to stay eligible (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). An average day of a student athlete involves: practice, lifting, film, treatment, class, tutors, homework, and maybe a little socializing. Besides the basic stress of school student athletes are also dealing with things like playing time, injury, nutrition, skill building, and getting along with their coaches and teammates. Student athletes are always trying to find balance in their life, as illustrated in the triangle below.



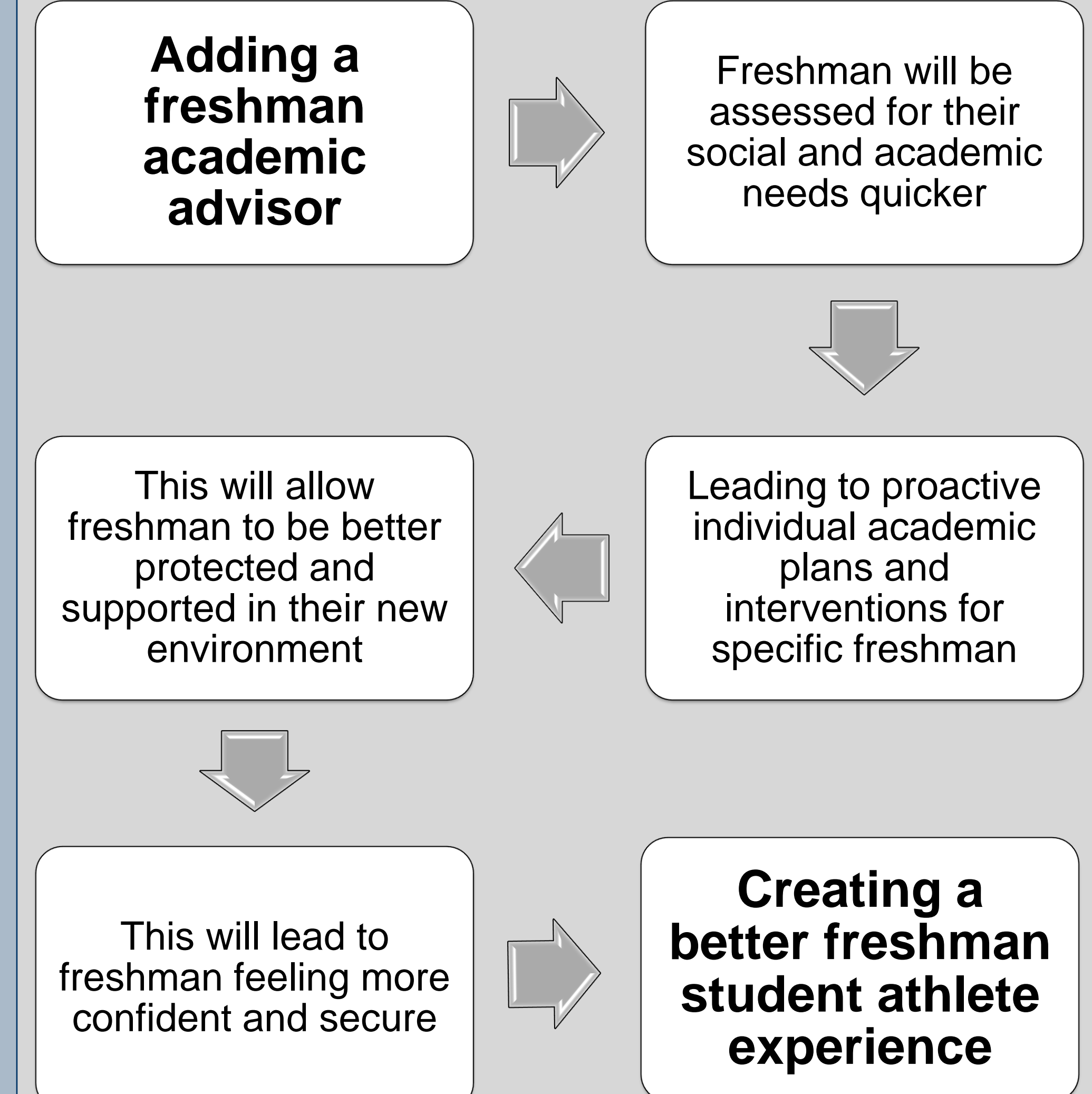
This identifies the balance struggle of a student athletes life. It is important to keep everything in control, because when one angle of the triangle gets out of balance, the whole triangle gets out of balance.

High School to College Transition

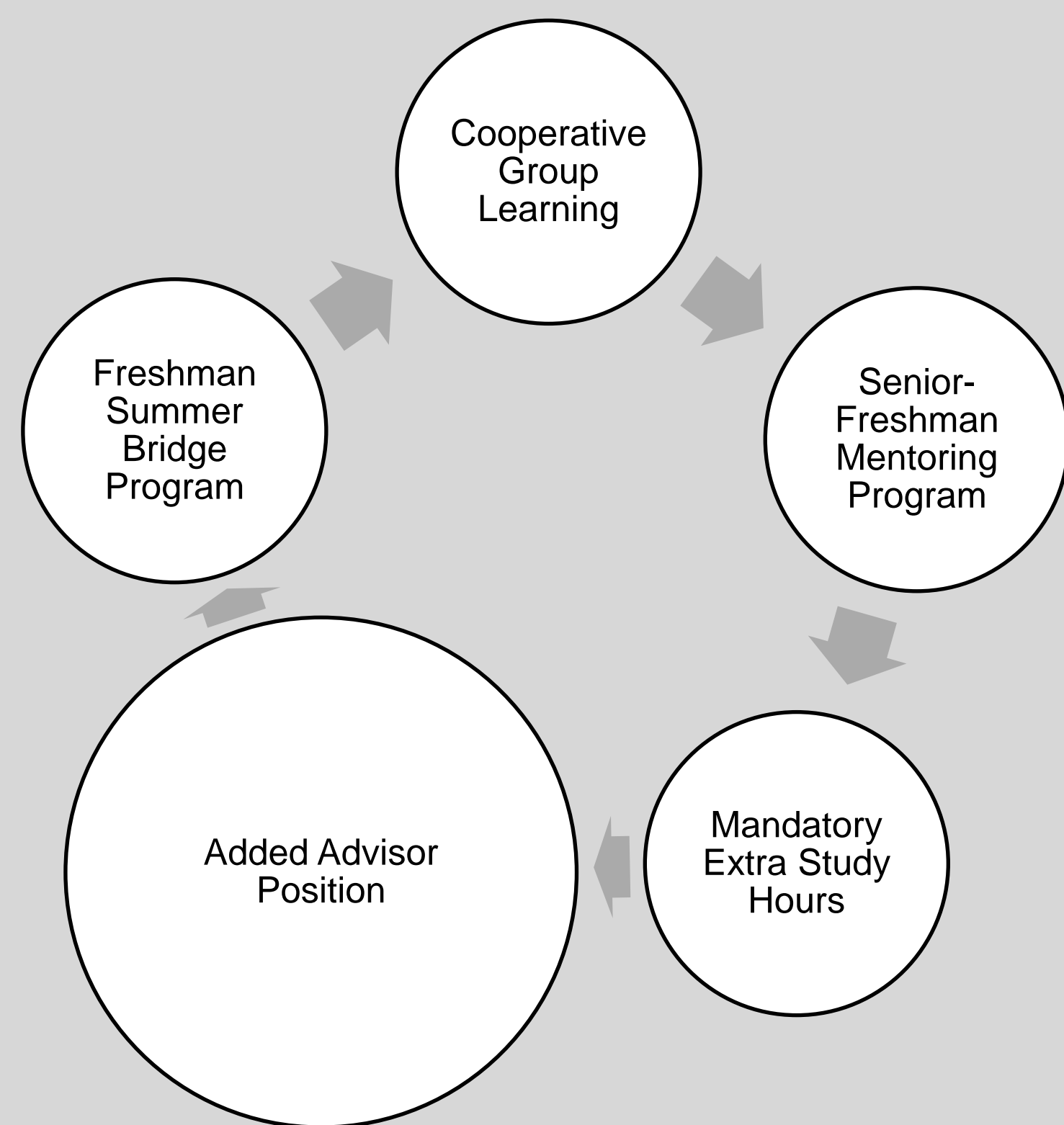
More students are enrolling in college then ever before, but graduation rates are not increasing with the enrollment demand. One of the main reasons why more students are not graduating at a higher rate is because of their lack of preparedness for college. This has become a major concern for the federal government, which has led to a shift in educational policy towards college and career readiness. One problem that needs to be addressed is that "many first-year students find that their college courses are fundamentally different from their high school courses" (Conley, Aspengren, Stout, & Veach, 2006). College freshman are expected to know how to conduct research, analyze and interpret results, as well as build a supported argument. These are skills that are not ways taught at the high school level at either the rigor or depth that is required in college (Conley, 2007).

College is already a huge transition for high school aside from the academics. Freshman are away from their parents and are learning the ins and outs of adulthood. For many this is the first time in their life where they are responsible for making their own decisions on when to go to sleep, what the eat, when to do homework, and how to do laundry. A college freshman has enough to worry about and adjust too even if they are prepared academically for college. Adding on the stress of being underprepared for college in a students freshman year, could be almost unbearable. It is not easy task to figure out how to improve ones skills and know where to go for help, when you are new at having to take care of your own business. This is one of the main reasons why so many freshman struggle to stay afloat and continue on to graduation when they are underprepared to begin with.

Outcome Predictions



Ways of Improving Freshman Support



Added Academic Advisor Position:

Adding an extra academic advisor to the Services for Student Athletes staff, would allow more support to be given to the freshman student athlete population. This would allow for a staff member to focus primarily on issues that arise in a student athletes freshman year. This advisor would be able to council and mentor these student athletes, and help bridge the gap between high school and college. They would be in charge of over seeing all freshman athletes, through supporting them both academically and socially.

Weighing an Added Advisor Position

Advantage	Disadvantages
1. Increased supervision and support for freshman both academically and socially.	1. Student athletes will then have to change advisors their sophomore year, after already building a relationship with their freshman advisor.
2. Eliminates the possibility of someone falling through the cracks.	2. There could be up to 80 freshman student athletes a year, which is a lot for one person.
3. Allows someone to be more specialized on the needs of the freshman population.	3. The advisor may just feel like a babysitter at times.
4. Allows the other academic advisors to focus on a smaller case load.	4. This could put a lot of stress on one person to act as a academic advisor as well as a life coach.
5. Could be talked about when recruiting student athletes.	5. The fiscal implications of adding another staff member. → Salary (approximately \$40,000) → Office space → Training → The hassle of the hiring process
6. They could help with the freshman student athletes success class, and basic life skills.	
7. It would help this population feel like someone was looking out for them.	

Contact Information and Acknowledgements

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Job Description-Freshman Academic Advisor

- Coordinating and carrying out appropriate support and interventions strategies for freshman student athletes.
- Monitoring academic progress of freshman student athletes.
- Assessing academic needs of freshman student athletes.
- Help teach the "college success" class for freshman orientation.
- Assist freshman student athletes with class schedules and registration.
- Mentoring freshman student athletes.

References

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