

Constructing Your Career Plays: A Career Advisor’s Approach to Life Designing With College Student-Athletes

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The evolving landscape of job opportunities has led to increased concerns around life-career success of college student-athletes while and after they balance their academic and sport performance. At Kent State University (Division I) located in Kent, Ohio, Tracy Montgomery serves as the student-athlete career advisor liaison between Career Exploration & Development and the Department of Athletics. With more than 10 years of secondary education teaching experience and seven years of career advising/education, Tracy has identified and continues to apply Mark Savickas’s (2012, 2013) Career Construction Interview (CCI) as her most valuable tool in creating conversations around career development. In a sit-down interview with Tracy, she breaks down the life design technique (Savickas, 2015) so career practitioners and other intercollegiate athletic personnel may adopt the approach to support student-athletes to (a) identify *what* their intentions are toward life-career transitions; (b) realize *why* they perform their actions and closely hold their beliefs toward making life-career decisions; and (c) move forward with *how* they can empower themselves to move in and out of “going pro.”

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Introduction

The career development and transition of college student-athletes from their collegiate experience into the workforce remains as a topic of interest and exploration for the sake of attention and interventions provided by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and higher education practitioners. Student-athlete scholars have explored career readiness (August, 2018; Fisher, 2020) to assess how skills can be put into practice, otherwise assessing the competencies that prepare college graduates for the workforce. Additionally,

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career decision-making self-efficacy has been investigated to determine student-athletes' confidence in making career decisions (Brown et al., 2000; Burns et al., 2013; Huang et al., 2016). These areas of research have served as main foci in college student-athletes in tandem with academic performance and athletic identity; however, career development must be addressed at the root of these external and internal abilities, respectively.

Due to the multiple spheres of influence in which college student-athletes engage (i.e., athletic personnel, faculty, family), intercollegiate athletics and academic/student affairs professionals must bring career development into the picture as a guiding framework to matriculate, involve, and support this student population as they realize their career aspirations. In his foundational conceptualization of vocational development, Super (1990) created the Life-Career Rainbow, "including the notions of life stages, life space, and life-style, helping students and adults to see the interactive nature of the variety of roles constituting a career, and showing how self-actualization can be achieved in varying combinations of life roles" (p. 296).

Such an approach has informed how we work with college student-athletes. According to the NCAA (2022), "student-athlete" is a career in and of itself during one's time in higher education comprised of high expectations of academic excellence while demonstrating their talent and prowess in their athletic performance. Between these two areas that have been tackled by higher education and sports researchers, today's student-athletes' life-career success becomes an even bigger area of concern. This is where the dual role in a career services unit and a university's athletics office, utilizing life designing through the Career Construction Interview (CCI) created by Mark Savickas (2012, 2013), comes into play.

Framing the Problem: Using Life Design for College Student-Athlete Narratives

In lieu of a model or theory, life-design counseling for career construction (Savickas, 2015) serves as a narrative discourse, facilitated by the practitioner, where the student sets the stage to deconstruct and reconstruct their own stories toward intentional and meaningful career goals. Career construction, informed by Super's (1990) theory of vocational development in its initial and final structure, places the importance of individuals experiencing a reflexive journey they are undergoing through a transition, shift, or change that dislocates them from the path they have been following. For example, student-athletes realize that they may not "go pro" in their designated sport. Life-design interventions are transformational in nature, helping to paint an autobiographical picture so an individual may identify, practice, and rehearse their self-concept or purpose (Savickas, 2010).

This approach to career development has been adopted into advising, counseling, and coaching contexts for adult populations from as early as high school (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2016), yet emerging research remains around life-design counseling for career construction for college student-athletes, a population continuously faced with life-career challenges. Navarro (2014) conceptualized Division I student-athletes' career construction from their exploration to choices and preparation, then to outcomes around their (mis)alignment of academic major choice and career aspiration, such as choosing a graduate program (Haslerig & Navarro, 2016). Such a model derived from student experiences operationalizes determinants that influence college student-athletes' career outcomes; however, it is necessary to gain the perspective of professionals who work with this population to determine how intercollegiate athletics and career practitioners support student-athletes. Tracy Montgomery, a career advisor for student-athletes at Kent State University (Division I), structures her work with students using the CCI and life-design techniques. This article will highlight the one-on-one interview I conducted with Tracy so readers may gain practical knowledge as she breaks down the CCI to help practitioners adopt the approach to support student-athletes to (a) identify *what* their intentions are toward life-career transitions; (b) realize *why* they perform action and have their beliefs toward making life-career decisions; and (c) move forward with *how* they can empower themselves to move in and out of "going pro."

Table 1. Career Construction Interview Questions

Question Order	Sample Question(s)
Entry Question	"How may I be useful to you?"
Question #1: Role Models	"Apart from your parents/guardians, who did you admire when you were growing up?"
Question #2: Preferred Environment	"Do you subscribe to or follow any particular people or accounts on social media?" "What are the television shows or series you watch regularly?" "Which websites do you often visit or apps do you use regularly?"
Question #3: Favorite Story	"Currently, what is your favorite story from a book or movie. Tell me the story."
Question #4: Favorite Saying	"What is your favorite saying?" "Do you have a motto by which you live?" "What is your favorite line from a song?"
Question #5: Earliest Recollections (optional for non-counselors)	"What are your earliest recollections from when you were three to six years old?" "If you were to assign a feeling to that memory, what feeling would it be?"

Note: Adapted from "Life-design career counseling," by M. L. Savickas, 2015.

Drafting the Play: Utilizing the Career Construction Interview

Evan: That power of that message comes through what you most commonly are known for in your work: using the Career Construction Interview (CCI). As you know, there are five questions one would ask during the CCI; however, the fifth question regarding earliest recollections is traditionally omitted during a CCI unless the advisor or counselor is trained in or can handle what can be traumatic experiences in the earliest part of a student’s life (see Table 1). For the sake of this interview, let’s just focus on the first four questions. How does that sound?

Tracy: That’s great, because I don’t ask that last one anyway when I work with student-athletes since I don’t feel like I’m trained to handle that, but I am trained for all the rest. [Laughs]

CCI Question One: Role Models

Evan: Perfect! In this first question, one typically asks a question like, “Who were three people you admired when you were growing up around when you were 3 to 6 years old?” From the storyteller, we typically want to know how they describe these role models’ character. How have these role models helped to set the scene of your advisor-athlete conversation around career?

Tracy: What I love about this question, specifically with student-athletes, is that these athletes are not used to being asked by anybody in a way that shows that people want to get to know about them individually. There’s not a lot of time for people who work with the athletes. No one is really asking young adults, in general, about the people they admired and why, and then revealing what their values are and what’s important to them in general—not what’s important to them as an athlete or what’s important to them as a student, but them as a whole person. I would also say most student-athletes have never had a chance to even think about that. When they see the truth that is revealed in that question, it also makes them aware that there’s more to them than what meets the eye. Student-athletes become believers of the CCI process and they want to know what is the next interview question and what is that going to reveal. It also keeps their interest going with a reaction of, “Wow! There’s a lot more about me than just what meets the eye!”

Evan: And when you do engage with these student-athletes around this question, what kind of overlap or “aha moment” do you find between themselves realizing that the characters they looked up to the most exist within their framework of who they are today?

Tracy: I think it’s very similar for them as much as it is for most people when asked this question. There’s this moment of, “Wow, that makes so much sense,” but then also taking it to how that has made even more sense throughout

their life. Because while talking briefly in this question, they think about it in the moment—after they have described their three role models in detail about their character and why they admired them—but knowing that when they walk away, they’re now starting to try to attribute all the things in their life and all the patterns in their life that have shown that to be true. There’s a lot of value in them revealing that and learning more about themselves. It sets the stage for any questions or information that comes next. Going back to what most student-athletes aren’t asked, “Who are you a person?” Period.

Evan: Not an athlete, but rather as a person.

Tracy: Not an athlete and also not as a student. We changed the terms. They used to be referred to as “athletes,” and then eventually it became best practice to refer to them as “student-athletes” so they would see themselves as students. But I would caution that the same problem is still there even with the term *student-athlete*. We have to make sure to remind them that they are more than that as well.

Evan: So to help break the binary of student and athlete to paint the big picture of who they are as a person—their identity—as they fashion their career journey or their career goals?

Tracy: Exactly! The big question is, “Who are you as a whole human being?” That’s really what this question comes down to, in my opinion. With all that these student-athletes experience in and out of their sport, their character reflects on the character of their heroes or heroines from when they were children. You may come across a student saying, “I looked up to my mother because she was strong.” We still can acknowledge that the student’s mother is strong, and that may play a role later on in the conversation, but we want to explore real or fictional people outside the family. We don’t choose our family, but we can choose our role models.

CCI Question Two: Favorite Magazines, TV Shows, and Social Media

Evan: That actually segues perfectly into the next CCI question—one of my favorites and I believe one of yours. The second question of the CCI asks about favorite magazines and TV shows for the sake of discovering their preferred environments, setting, and activities. I believe you have taken a different spin on this question. What and how do you recommend unearthing the student-athlete’s “setting?”

Tracy: Yes, you are correct! This is the CCI question that I use the most in all my practices, with or without student-athletes, no matter who it is. Especially with student-athletes, I have found this to be the most powerful question, and they were sort of the inspiration of digging this out to be what it is today. Let’s go with what they relate to and what their language is. If you say magazines and TV

shows—even TV shows, they get that, but it’s not the same as if you say Netflix or Hulu. [Laughs] Even though, ultimately, we know what they are referring to, I think it’s so important to keep up with what used to be magazines for people like you and me who grew up with those, and most of the students don’t really reference magazines as much as they used to do. What are the go-to sources that show preferred activities and environments? It’s podcasts. It’s what are you watching on YouTube. It’s the video games you play. If you play video games a lot, are you playing video games with adventures that have stories? Are you playing video games that are more competitive in a battle? There are just so many cool things that these students are constantly putting their faces in front of on some kind of screen, and they don’t realize that is revealing their interests. It’s revealing that “setting” that they prefer to be in and nobody has ever put that together for them.

The other reason that I love this question for most student-athletes is because the reason that many of them struggle with career development is because they have not had very much time to think about their interests. Most of them are 18 or 19 years old. It’s my goal to meet with a student-athlete from the very beginning as soon as they get to school. When we meet, most of them will say, “I don’t know what else I’m interested in apart from my sport.” Most student-athletes who work in Olympic sports have been doing this since they 3 or 4 years old. Their life has been consumed by sport and academics. For them to come to school, to expect them to think outside of that is really asinine. Most of them are convinced that they have no idea what they are interested in, because they haven’t had time. They are partially correct until we ask the question, “Hey! You might not realize what you do in your spare time is actually reflective of your interests. So, what are you watching on YouTube? What are you watching on Netflix? And why is that so interesting to you?” It has almost become like a game. They give their responses, and let me tell you that student-athletes feel comfortable talking about something they know. It’s intimidating to talk about yourself, life, and the future. It’s scary for a lot of student-athletes, but if you kind of take that time out and just say, “Let’s just talk about what you like to watch on TV, in social media, Instagram, Twitter, and the accounts you follow,” that’s easy for them because they know themselves.

After that question—to stop and then reveal to them here is what you told me that you didn’t realize you were telling me about yourself—let me tell you how those interests match up to academic majors and possible careers. Now, all of a sudden, they have given me something that they are confident about and they know for sure that has nothing to do with them as a student or an athlete, but yet we’re taking that information and applying it to what they have in front of them. You have the opportunity to choose a major and a direction in a career and it be one that fits. Now let’s look at your options and be more intentional about choosing something that fits.

Evan: The baseline of this question goes back to one's Holland code, or vocational identity (e.g., REC = realistic, enterprising, conventional; Holland, 1997), and how one manifests their interests into activity. Do you find that showing that manifestation proves to be the question that helps them to think about the practicality and the applicability of their skills and interests outside of what would be "going pro?"

Tracy: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, if I only had the time to ask one CCI question, then I would always make sure I at least explore their interests and preferred environment, because they find it most practical and relatable and it makes sense to them. Even before I reveal the meaning after they tell me their favorite shows and media, I tell them a little bit about their personality that I glean from their answer. I guess what their pet peeves are. I can tell what environments they dislike and which ones they love. They are so confused about how if I have never met them, how do I know all this in just a short time? That's when the explanation comes in. To me, it's all about grabbing their attention. You have to prove to them that (a) you know what you're talking about and (b) there's no wrong answer in here. It's all about them.

CCI Question Three: Current Favorite Story in a Book or Movie

Evan: Speaking of another source of media, the third question gives the student the strategy or coping mechanism that they need during a transition they are experiencing or will experience. One would ask the student to tell the story of their current favorite book or movie. What does this question mean in your advisor-athlete conversations?

Tracy: The options are unlimited as far as what it could reveal and go back to, but I will tell you that it has been so interesting. It's important to make sure that the student gives their *current* favorite story from a book or movie, otherwise you may hear the students' all-time favorite movie from when they were a child. You want to have the student tell you the story in detail, and you want to pay attention to the action verbs. The storyteller chooses the plot from the perspective of a particular character for a reason. For example, someone may say they like the *Harry Potter* series, but which book or movie specifically? You may also hear the student tell the story and focus on Hermione Granger instead of Harry Potter. That's the student's choice, because they connect with Hermione and what she was going through in that certain movie/book storyline. Here are a couple examples that I have experienced. One female student-athlete, in her story about her favorite movie, revealed the current issue with which she was really struggling to be the relationships with her teammates and some drama that was going on in the team

and how that drama was affecting every role in her life. Of course, looking at student-athletes' schedules, it's understandable that it's going to affect everything.

Another student-athlete—a young man in his senior year—was going into his final season. He was a phenomenal player. He knew that he was probably going to be one of the 2% “going pro,” so I was interested how this was going to turn out for him. From the storyline and the action verbs this superstar player shared, his favorite movie ended up revealing a major distrust of authority figures when it comes to his future. He talked about how race was an issue and that most of the people he had dealt with in life through the sport were a different color than himself and that they usually only helped him as much as it would benefit them. He was scared to try to trust somebody else, which was very fitting, because he realized after some time how fitting it was because he was trying to choose an agent. He was really struggling and was wanting to take advice from people but didn't know if he should, because he wasn't sure if he could trust them. For a lot of student-athletes, this question reveals that major issue that's keeping them from thinking about life after sport or life in addition to sport.

CCI Question Four: Favorite Saying or Motto

Evan: And to overcome the struggle, we turn to the fourth and final question that you would use. I think this question usually helps to fashion some type of response that comes from within the student.

Tracy: Absolutely, 100%!

Evan: This final question brings in the student's voice, yet again, focusing on the advice they give themselves from their favorite saying or motto, otherwise considered as profound words they hold onto from different outlets like songs, bumper stickers, advertisements, teachers, and family members. With their life-style balancing act during their college experience while setting career goals, what does self-advice of a college student-athlete do for them exactly?

Tracy: It seems so simple, yet the power of this question is amazing. One's favorite saying empowers them to take action and to take ownership of their story. Even with the previous question, if there are things that are standing in their way, they do have the advice within themselves. To be able to turn it back and just say, “I asked you that because that's the advice you need to give yourself right now. What does that look like? How can we take action?” I like to go a little bit past just what it means. I like to then challenge them by asking, “What action can you take now with that self-advice in hand? What can you and I do if you need help with that first step?” I think it goes back to empowering them, then again proving that just like with the previous questions, all the answers that they ever need lie within. It's a great way to remind them of that. I love being able to

end on that because it's a great way to remind them that everything they shared with me is all within. I haven't helped them beyond anything other than bringing out the answers that they already hold within themselves.

Evan: It sounds as though you continue the conversation around more than just asking, “*What* is your favorite motto or saying?” You ask for the *why*. Because the student would say, “Coach says ...” or “My mom says ...” or “My favorite shirt or song says ...”, you go back to the origin and unearth the *why* behind that favorite motto and saying.

Tracy: Yes, and even sometimes, you will get the response of, “Hmm, actually I don't really know why that stood out to me.” You give them time to think about that.

Evan: Or they say, “No, I don't have a favorite saying or something I tell myself over and over.”

Tracy: You're right! Even then, it's just a matter of giving them the time and the space to be able to think of something that has stood out to them. I've never really had a student-athlete struggle with the *why* once they put even a minute of thought into it, and then they almost say it as if it was common sense, which I love. Then, I get to turn that common sense back to them and just say, “There you go! You have your answers. Now, what can we do with this?”

Putting Play Into Action: Why Life Design Matters in Intercollegiate Sports

Evan: That's the perfect transition into my next set of questions. With these stories shared during the CCI questions, what happens next? What do you and the student-athlete do with this information?

Tracy: So, how much I can follow through with somebody is going to depend on time and opportunity. I think it's very important to me to not be somebody that they are required to see, but rather that they choose to see, which can be rough during their schedules. As far as what happens next, I do like to help them to start looking at all the separate questions and then to show them how it creates one big picture and how that picture is not something that is going to change too much throughout a lifetime, but that they are going to add more details to it. The CCI interviewer helps to paint that big picture validating that they do know more about who they are than they realize. What does that look like right now? What does that look in their academics for their sport, family, friendship, and future? I think it's so important that what we do next is not to leave them in the dark. How does this information help them not only now, but also in the future? In using life-design techniques, I help the student-athlete establish and take ownership of their narrative.

Evan: Is there some type of game plan or success formula with which the student can walk away, looking back for motivation, or to keep close as they design their life-career play?

Tracy: Great question. With student-athletes, it's not necessarily a specific success formula like I may have with some other students like with the *My Career Story* workbook (Savickas & Hartung, 2012)—not that they couldn't do it. I describe their responses as their “equipment for life.” This is what is in their tool bag that they carry everywhere they go: those values, what they're interested in, their advice to themselves, and so on. All of those things make up the tools that are unique to them so that no matter where they go in life—whether it be sport, academics, or life after—they will be happy as long as they are able to utilize those tools.

I think that making sure they understand that, having them reiterate what their tools are and those unique things, there is a lot of repeating back during the interview and processing what was said, like in Savickas's (2015) *Life-Design Counseling Manual*. There is a lot of making sure that they are owning up to what they discovered about themselves, how it proves to be true, and how to use that in the future. Personally, every time I also meet with somebody like that, I like to make sure I keep notes. A couple years later, the student and I are just like, “Oh my gosh! I wish I would've remembered what they said about their role models and favorite TV shows and go-to motto.” I keep that information, because I love being able to follow up with student-athletes. Even if it was just a brief question in asking how they are doing, bringing up something I learned about them in our conversation with each other, they would remember that I remembered that conversation too, and it helps to bring those tools and unique sense of self back to them. I think it's important to let them know that their story is an ongoing story.

Evan: Between yourself (the advisor) and the current or former athlete, it seems as though you actively look to change the reactive reputation of athletics offices and career services into a proactive relationship, laying the foundation of a university-student partnership to ensure success and meaningful work.

Tracy: That's exactly it! Sparking and sustaining that connection, that will take the student far in making intentional and personal choices.

Evan: What do you think are the implications or the benefits of career services or intercollegiate athletic offices using this kind of intervention?

Tracy: If more higher education professionals were to be dedicated to career counseling and not just career advising, and if we were proactive about it, then you would see that if a student-athlete feels more comfortable in a major that they have revealed to be fitting for them and they know the why it's fitting, then they are going to be more intentional about those academics so they are more intentional about their sport. So I think implementing such a practice—being proactive and

being intentional at the beginning so they understand the *why* at the beginning of what they are going into—then they're going to be more useful with the *what*. Right now, most people do checklist career advising. Students can get somebody to help them with their résumés and their cover letters. They can do networking. They can do all of those things, but to have a career counseling session, to go into the deep reasons that lead to the *why* behind the *what*, then college student-athletes are going to take advantage of the *what*. That's where I feel like most practitioners need to really consider a way where we can get creative to be more intentional of working with student-athletes in career counseling when they first come to us.

Having a CCI-based conversation with student-athletes develops such a level of trust and comfortability that there is a rapport that is developed in such a short time when asking so very few questions, because these questions reveal so much. I would caution athletic departments that the difficulty of having somebody provide life design needs to come from somebody who truly, genuinely cares about these students and has a reputation for being somebody that people can talk to easily and with whom people feel comfortable, because the CCI is not something that anybody should ever use if it's not coming from the heart. Especially with student athletes, they are so used to be people talking to them when they need to and then their job is done with them. Conversations like this, though, you get to know that person at a completely different level. If you are not able to provide any follow-up or if you are unable to be a presence anymore, then that's where I would even recommend a student athletic services unit to focus on doing more with just the Holland code question about the manifest interests that come from one's favorite TV shows or social media. Be cognizant of the power that is involved with the CCI, but you also have to be careful with that power.

Reimagining the Relationship of Career Services and Intercollegiate Athletics

Life-design counseling for career construction has been proven useful in Tracy's work with student-athletes as they deconstruct and reconstruct their life stories to transition into their next life-career opportunity. As indicated by Tracy, the four CCI questions explained in detail afford student-athletes the opportunity to realize how they can fashion their career trajectory by identifying *what* they do, *why* they do it, and *how* they can navigate actions and resources to move in the direction of their career aspirations. To better prepare and optimize student-athletes' career development, Tracy reflected on her experience in career services and student athletic services while addressing the relationship between this student population and these institutional agents.

Tracy: In my experience, especially around most student-athletes, career services tend to be a reactive service instead of a proactive service. Career services practitioners are so consumed with time being an issue. For career advisors and counselors, adding an additional service that is usually left for them to do on their own is even harder, especially trying to be proactive in the career development of student-athletes.

I would also say that the career development also tends to be more checklist-based. Depending on the size of the school and the institution, they may or may not even have a position dedicated to career readiness for college student-athletes. It might be that a college has a department of 10 academic professionals who address parts of career, yet another college may just have one person who tackles career-related issues in athletics. To have career development as just one little bullet point of a responsibility under many, career development tends to, intentional or not, just kind of be left to the wayside. There is not much reaching out for career development in a proactive way, even between an athletic unit and the on-campus career services office; however, I am fortunate enough to be in a situation where I get to be working in a part of both units.

Evan: And interestingly enough, we look at the statistics related to college student-athletes. The NCAA (2018) has proven statistically that less than 2% of student-athletes actually join professional ranks. What does this statistic mean for the work of career professionals working with these students?

Tracy: One of the biggest messages that I am trying to spread to professionals who work with student-athletes when it comes to career at any level, whether it's college or professional, is to not approach it as if career is part of "plan B." As a matter of fact, I take that language out. I will usually go out of my way to express to student-athletes that I don't believe in "plan B." I believe developing all your options and figuring out what fits you, for both now and in the future, is all part of "plan A," and that also fits with the true definition of one's career where they embrace all the roles that they play in life. The sooner we can get a student-athlete to see that career is a part of all your roles—who you are as an athlete, son/daughter, brother/sister—it all comes into play, and plays a part of whatever comes next, or in addition to whatever part of life is wrapped up into an athletic identity.

Evan: You said something so interesting that made me think about some research around this topic. Park et al. (2013) found four main strategies that athletes use to gauge a positive transition out of their athletic career: (a) coping strategy such as staying busy or searching for new interests; (b) preretirement planning activities for careers outside of sports; (c) support from people close to them in their network; and (d) organized systems that aid them in their transition out of

sports. With these kind of mechanisms in place that student-athletes use, what kind of career education do you bring into the picture when it comes to college student-athletes determining what's next in their life-career journey?

Tracy: Just like anything in life, I believe it's so important to keep in mind that perspective is everything. For me, part of being proactive is addressing a student-athlete as soon as they assume that role/identity and getting them to see how the big picture is actually part of what they are doing right now. If you find a major that fits with your interest and your values that can lead to potential careers that also fits who you are and your values and what you're interested in, then you are going to succeed more in the classroom, which means less stress that you take with you to your sport practice and to performances. In essence, out of all those strategies that you shared, I agree with them except for the fact that many services—the “being proactive” part—doesn't start until when we start to see athletes close to leaving the college athletic nest. We need to do it from the very beginning.

It is no different than me raising my two sons. I don't want to wait until after they graduate from high school before I teach them how to do laundry. I need to teach them how what they do now is part of practicing how to be on their own when they are no longer in my nest. We need to look at college athletes very much the same way. What are we doing to train them while they are here, career wise, so that they can take those skills that they will use the rest of their lives? Not just when they leave college or just when they find their first full-time job, but for the rest of their lives. Going back to that proactive part, let's not wait until the end of their program. We need to teach them how to cope and know themselves now so that they are intentionally choosing a major and not just because it fits best with their schedule or that it's assumed to be the easier option. Every single athlete is so different. Just because they are an athlete doesn't mean they are going to like sports administration. Luckily, I have been able to work with people in the athletics department for which I am a liaison that know the power of that message, and I have had a lot of support that backs that up.

Evan: So then, you believe that there needs to be an earlier intervention from career practitioners with college student-athlete from the start of their time at the institution? And would you say that the best way to get to know the student is using the CCI?

Tracy: There most certainly needs to be interaction and relationship development from the beginning. The nice thing about the CCI is that it can be used in many ways, like choosing an academic major, looking for the right organization or club, and exploring internship and career options where they can transplant their passion and talent from their semi-professional, athletic identity to their career identity. I have also discovered in the past couple years, there is a lack of information as far as being intentional about informing student-athletes about

their options. I don't just mean in their senior year or even the end of their junior year; their first year needs to be the deconstruction of what comes from the CCI. It needs to be this life-design career counseling approach if we want college student-athletes to act intentionally. And then each year after that, they need to start knowing what their options are, because if they don't know their options and we are not working with them to develop and see the bigger picture, we can't expect them to see themselves in the future.

Regarding knowing one's options, one of the biggest changes in the NCAA in the past couple of years has been the transfer portal. With the pandemic, most student-athletes, especially Division I, got the chance to play and be eligible for another year. For a lot of them, though, that meant having to get into graduate school in order to stay eligible and to keep that going. Most of them have never thought about graduate school years before, so there has been a lot of participating institutions and a lot of student-athletes scrambling to now partake in applying for a future that they never originally saw for themselves. With the transfer portal and student-athletes having more power for themselves to put themselves in a transfer portal to leave, I'm curious and concerned about the career development that's going into these student-athletes when they transfer halfway through their education. Yes, athletic services do a phenomenal job at checking who is eligible and the courses they have to take in a major to keep their scholarship, but I'm talking about the big picture. What are we doing to make sure that we are talking to those athletes and transfer students, especially when they come in to make sure that they can be intentional about their experience at that new school that they might have had to adjust in order to fit their athletic dreams? What are we doing to help them when they come from a different institution and it's already too late to go into the major that fits them? It's all the more reason that we have to help them discover their *why*, so we can then create a game plan around the *how*.

If you are going to get the conversation started and build a relationship with these students, I recommend using the preferred environments question—favorite TV show, podcast, YouTube channel, Instagram account, and other things like that. Speak their language first, then get to know them as a person. If not, you won't be able to fulfill that question, "How may I be useful to you?" Life design targets all the parts of who college student-athletes are at their core up to the surface. Whether it's connecting with someone who knows how to effectively use the CCI and facilitate a life portrait (Savickas, 2015), or referring to ready-to-use tools like the *My Career Story* workbook (Hartung & Savickas, 2012), this simple yet moving, powerful technique can help transform the success of college student-athletes and the support services that serve them. To me, the CCI is part of the perfect playbook for student-athletes.

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