

# Latino College Student Athletes as Nepantleras: Fostering Academic Success and Athletic Identity

RESEARCH FROM THE FRONT PORCH

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- Participants coexisted between the world of academics and the world of athletics, navigating seamlessly between their Latino and student athlete identities in a constant state of Nepantla -the Nahuatl word meaning “in-between space” (Anzaldúa, 2012; Keating, 2016).
- While Latino student athlete participants were unmotivated at times and struggled in the classroom, their motivation to be able to participate in their sport or their confidence gained from playing a sport, translated into motivation and confidence to do well in the classroom.
- Student athlete participants chose to be athletes, while their academic participation was due to necessity in order to participate in athletic competition.
- Each of the three identities of the student athlete participants (Latino, student, and athlete), had multiple influencers that played a very important role in identity navigation. Education and Orgullo (Pride) were two influencers that all three identities had in common.

*“Three different identities and their various influencers converge to form a singular identity known as Soy Estudiante Deportista and were interchangeable when Latino student athletes navigate their collegiate experience.”*

## QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. How do we build collaborations among our athletic and academic departments that narrow the Nepantla -the Nahuatl “in-between space” that Latino athletes experience?
2. How do we motivate Latino student athletes to apply the confidence from their athletic experience to their academic experience and perform well in the classroom?
3. What practices do we have that ensure Latino college student athletes have access to the influencers that will help them persist, and graduate from college, while having successful collegiate athletic careers?



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