



# ATHLETE CONNECTIONS

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

For the Ultimate Game of Their Life

Prepared by Dan Cross,  
CEO of Athlete Connections

***Focused on Meeting the Unique Skills and Career  
Development Needs of the Current and Former Athlete***

Athlete Connections is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization established in 2006 specifically to assist student athletes as they transition from the “world of collegiate athletics” to the business world. Research shows that only 1 out of 100 student athletes will have a professional career in their sport. Athlete Connections addresses the future of the 99% of student athletes who do not go on to play professional sports.

They're struggling with the fact they will no longer be playing the sport to which they have dedicated so much of their life. They're realizing they are not as prepared as they should be for life outside of athletics. They don't fully grasp how to find employment, nor do they understand how to present themselves when they do.

## We understand it can become a daunting task once reality sets in and the question becomes... **What now?**

Athlete Connections provides solutions for these athletes who have dedicated their time, talents and efforts to their respective universities and who end their college careers unprepared for life outside of sports. For many of these students the question becomes... "What now?"

Athlete Connections was founded by Dan Cross, a former All-American basketball player who attended the University of Florida, where he earned his Bachelor's degree in Communications. As a member of the first team ever to advance to the Final Four in school history, Dan was inducted into the University of Florida's Hall of Fame in 2006. Dan was awarded the Regions Bank Business Salute in 2007, which honors former student athletes from the Southeastern Conference who go on to run successful businesses. Dan was also honored in 2008 as a Southeastern Conference Basketball Legend. As a former collegiate athlete who had to make the transition to the workplace, Dan recognized firsthand that there were no organizations available to assist student athletes in their transition from the collegiate ranks to the career ranks.

We have assembled a development team that collectively has over three decades of experience in the areas of collegiate sports, sports psychology, and career exploration, development of public and

private partnerships, life skills, as well as program development and evaluation. We realize Student athletes represent a tremendous but largely untapped reservoir of young leaders who are disciplined, motivated and experienced in dealing with tough challenges and competitive situations. Our work, in collaboration with your University, is designed to advocate, expand and improve career opportunities for these young men and women, in addition to increasing the public and policy maker understanding of their needs.

We provide added value to your program by offering counseling and education for your student athlete's "gameplan for life," thereby increasing placement rates (rather than graduation rates).

Athlete Connections will develop the links between your University, professional communities and transitioning collegiate athletes for the benefit of all. Through both communication and developmental processes, Athlete Connections will equip student athletes with the tools to compete professionally. By connecting on these multiple levels, we are in a unique position to offer high quality services to transitioning athletes. We function with complete compliance, while offering complementary services to NCAA mandates to provide the highest caliber of professional to the workforce.

We will help you prepare them for the ultimate game of their life.

After extensive research and development to identify the specific professional career development needs and unique established skill set of the student athlete, Athlete Connections has identified and created the following programs available to current and former student athletes:

### **ATHLETE CONNECTIONS STUDENT ATHLETE CURRICULUM: “THE GAME PLAN”<sup>©</sup>**

Athlete Connections provides a supplemental curriculum for universities, athletic programs and student athletes with the tools, education, and training needed to enter the workforce. Athlete Connections has developed a curriculum, “The Game Plan” that teaches student athletes life skills such as resume building, interviewing, financial literacy, career assessments, and how to market yourself. In addition, our workbook curriculum includes career exploration instruction that educates program participants about the business world. Students will learn the most effective job hunting techniques. They will develop networking skills that help them communicate more effectively with potential employers. Program participants will also be educated as to what is expected of them in the workplace. Topics such as appropriate dress, behavior and the importance of punctuality are stressed. In short, program participants learn how to look for, find and maintain a career. In a survey given to the University of Florida’s CHAMPS/Life Skills Department, 88% of their student athletes felt that the “The Game Plan” is needed and they will utilize the information after their athletic careers.

### **ATHLETE CONNECTIONS CAREER DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR**

Our Career Development Seminars are conducted twice a year either on or off campus using an “open enrollment” format. Offered to current and former athletes, the seminar uses “The Game Plan” and is facilitated in four or six hour cumulative classroom workshops. These seminars can be self-pay, sponsored or funded by the University. These are offered as a supplement to established school curriculum.

### **ATHLETE CONNECTIONS STUDENT ATHLETE CAREER EVENTS**

Athlete Connections hosts regular student athlete career events to bring key corporate employers and student athletes (current and former) together. These are excellent opportunities to showcase successes, create a greater awareness of Athlete Connections, identify new community partners and raise funds to support current and future Athlete Connections career development programs. We will work with you to establish a consistent format that focuses on athlete networking, career development and job placement.

### **“MOTIVATING THE STUDENT ATHLETE FOR A PROFESSIONAL CAREER” GUEST PRESENTATION**

On request, Dan Cross will present his moving and exemplary presentation on the transition from former student athlete into today’s workforce and the special motivating factors every athlete should hear!

### **ATHLETE CONNECTIONS ONLINE SERVICES [WWW.ATHLETECONNECTIONS.ORG](http://WWW.ATHLETECONNECTIONS.ORG)**

The website provides networking opportunities, job listings and hints learned in the Career Development workshops. The website offers an opportunity for Athlete Connections to showcase its critical financial supporters as well as participating Colleges & Universities.

The NCAA reports that in the 2004-2005 academic year, there were nearly 385,000 student athletes, freshman to seniors, participating in collegiate sports in the United States.

A review of data from the 2004- 2005 Academic Progress Rate reveals that a mere 839 student athletes realized their dream of participating in sports at the professional level. However, for those who graduate, complete their eligibility or leave school, an estimated 62,000 find themselves faced with the prospect that sports is no longer a career option and leave school without clearly defined career opportunities and no support systems.

Athlete Connections intends to serve as the support system for these student athletes by providing services through a Career Opportunities Program. Our mission is to help prepare, educate and connect student athletes with employment opportunities once their athletic careers are over. We mold their athletic qualities along with other personal attributes to develop candidates who can successfully compete for their desired positions in the workforce. Athlete Connections provides student athletes with a comprehensive program that provides the skills necessary for their transition from the collegiate ranks to the career ranks. These objectives will be accomplished through an intensive and structured university-based program which includes the following five integral components to your student athletes' success:

1. Providing student athletes with classroom instruction in job searching skills;
2. Development of Individualized Career Plans for program participants;
3. Establishing connections with private sector partners to facilitate job placement opportunities;
4. Utilization of "The Student Athlete Career Planning Playbook" developed and designed specifically by Athlete Connections to address life skills, job preparation and other challenges in transitioning from school to work.
5. Utilization of an interactive website customized for employers and student athletes to provide numerous networking opportunities, job postings, financial advice and interviewing tips.

### PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION BENEFITS

- Provide Project Coordination and supervision
- Job placement assistance and referrals
- Access to of Athlete Connections extensive public & private sector partnerships (database)
- Development of a Student Athlete Mentor Advisory Committee made up of program participants who have successfully completed the program to serve as mentors and counselors to new program participants
- Encourage Student Athlete Mentors to continue their education with the University
- 4 or 8 hour Athlete Connection Career Development Workshop - classroom instruction using a customized curriculum "The Game Plan"
- Career exploration, counseling, life skills and mentoring services to program participants
- Follow-up services for program participants to ensure seamless transition to the workplace
- Program evaluation that includes outcome and best practices documentation to share with the University
- Provide, in collaboration with the University, one informational luncheon and one career seminar
- Use of and access to Athlete Connections state-of-the-art customized interactive website designed for employers to post jobs and review resumes and for student athletes to search job listings, create resumes and get interviewing tips
- Provide appropriate guest speakers who can identify with and provide direction to program participants as a complement to classroom instruction

## Development of Public & Private Partnerships through Athlete Connections Networking Events.

The key to the Athlete Connections Career Opportunities Program will be the involvement of local, public and private sector employers as full-fledged collaborative partners. These organizations will provide concrete job opportunities to our program participants based on their respective organizational labor needs that were identified by Athlete Connections prior to students completing the program activities. The development of a successful Athlete Connections Networking Program is key to these partnership successes for the athlete, the community partner and the University!

A critical element in this model is the win-win proposition: Athlete Connections provides a quality product (program participant who has successfully completed the Career Opportunities Program) and our private sector partners receive a college-educated employee who can become an immediate asset to the organizations. These public/private sector partners will also provide connections to other potential employers and will keep Athlete Connections informed about new job opportunities.

Athlete Connections management has already established relationships with many private sector collaborative partners who are interested in our efforts and have pledged their support to provide services to student athletes in the Career Opportunities Program.

Another key partner will be the University, which will serve as the training site for the student athletes. Athlete Connections' development staff will meet with representatives of the your university – such as Athletic Directors, Coaches, Life Skills and administrative staff-to discuss the most appropriate ways in which our Career Opportunities Program can be implemented.

The involvement of government agencies as an additional full-fledged partner, will also be instrumental to the project's success. The local Workforce Development Centers (WDC) will provide Athlete Connections' participants with additional job search and job placement opportunities. Athlete Connections' staff will work with WDC staff as "Labor Service Representatives." The local and regional Chambers of Commerce will also be tapped as collaborative partners in the effort to provide the broadest possible array of employment opportunities to the student athletes and other program participants. In addition, organizations such as Focus International Inc., a partner whose mission is to bring together public/private sector business owners and nonprofit organizations for the purpose

of fulfilling the needs of each organization, has committed to working with Athlete Connections. The development of public/private sector partnerships will be an ongoing process that will facilitate the integrity of the job placement efforts and will play a vital role in the success of our Career Opportunities Program.

### IN-KIND SERVICES REQUESTED OF THE UNIVERSITY

- Classroom space for up to 100 program participants
- Five interns to assist in the intake, orientation and recruitment program component
- Access to media equipment for classroom presentations and general office equipment
- Assistance in recruitment of program participants and program awareness

### PROGRAM COST TO THE UNIVERSITY

Athlete Connections has worked diligently to create the most comprehensive program options at the most affordable cost. The goal is to be able to provide any athlete the resources and training necessary for successful career preparation and job placement with supporting corporations and individuals. It is estimated that the average cost per student for the full 6 hour Athlete Connections Student Athlete Career Development Workshop is around \$285 per student with a minimum enrollment/participation of 40 students. The Athlete Connections Student Athlete Workbook "The Game Plan" is retailed at \$99. Costs may vary based upon the particular program option that best meets the University student athlete curriculum needs and the resources available from the University and will be discussed on an individual basis.

## Recruitment of Program Participants

Working with the University, Athlete Connections anticipates having 50-100 program participants identified and ready to be engaged in program activities at least one full month in advance of the program start date. A luncheon seminar will be held on your campus, along with efforts from the Athletic Directors and coaches to recruit program participants. Recruitment materials (brochures, flyers etc.) will be distributed throughout the University. In addition, ads will be placed in student, college/university and local newspapers with information regarding the recruitment efforts of student athletes.

Athlete Connections has chosen to focus attention on student athletes as the primary target for services. Students who are in their junior and senior years will serve as the first cadre of program participants. This process will also allow Athlete Connections to track an entire class of juniors through a two-year process, while ensuring the provision of continuous direct and indirect services.

## Classroom Activities

In order to maintain successful employment, individuals must not only be able to navigate the workplace, they must also be able to cope with life outside of sports so that personal problems do not interfere with job performance. Athlete Connections has developed a curriculum, "The Game Plan" that recognizes life skills instruction, helps program participants clarify feelings, values, resolve conflicts and market themselves. In addition, students will explore environmental opportunities and constraints, communicate effectively with others and most importantly take personal responsibility for career decisions.

In addition, to the aforementioned life skills, classroom activities will include career exploration instruction that educates program participants about the business world. Students will learn the most effective job hunting techniques. They will develop interviewing skills that help them communicate more effectively with potential employers. Program participants will also be educated as to what is expected of them in the workplace. Topics such as appropriate dress, behavior and the importance of punctuality are stressed. In short, program participants learn how to look for, find, and maintain a career. Guest speakers from Athlete Connections will be integrated into the classroom experience thereby providing a more practical experience for the students.

## Program Completion

At the conclusion of each Athlete Connections Career Development Workshop or Seminar, participants will take a post test to measure the effectiveness of the instruction. In addition participants will be asked to provide feedback on what they valued most about the program via a survey that has been developed for that specific purpose.

### JOB PLACEMENT THROUGH THE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

Athlete Connections recognizes that no job placement activities will take place while the current student athlete is eligible under NCAA guidelines. Athlete Connections anticipates that many of the career identification tasks will have been completed before the end of class as a result of leveraging employment opportunities from our public/private sector partners (as mentioned in the Development of Public/Private Partnership). The main task at this point is to facilitate job interviews with our private sector collaborative partners. Another feature of the Career Opportunities Program is the interactive Athlete Connections website that will facilitate an array of job placement tools such as job listings posted by our public/private sector partners. Information regarding resume writing and interviewing tips will also be available on the website

## Follow-Up Services

Athlete Connections program staff will follow-up with graduates for the first three months after program completion to ensure there are no obstacles to adjusting to the work environment. Those program participants who successfully complete the program will be asked to serve as Student Athlete Mentors (SAMs), with the goal of providing motivation, insight and direction to new program participants entering the Career Opportunity Program. SAMs could also provide valuable leads into employment opportunities in the firms they work. We look to become another integral element of your student athletes successful collegiate education by assisting them with expert and specific student athlete career preparation, education and employment opportunities as they enter into the next phase of their lives.