

Elite Student-Athlete Program Investment

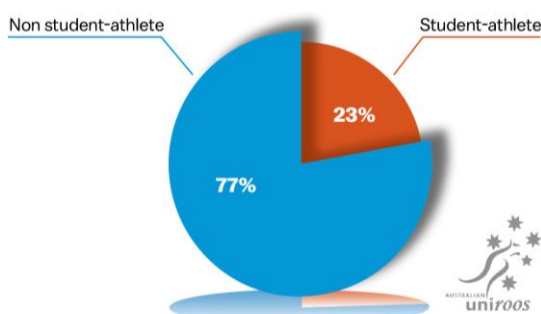
Universities' higher elite athlete program investment sees student-athletes' Olympic performance soar

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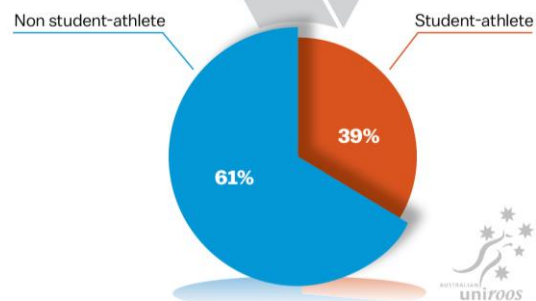
Don Knapp

Australian University Sport began tracking the performance of student-athletes at Olympic Games in preparation for its Winning Edge funding submission to the Australian Sports Commission in 2012. At the 2004 Athens Games, 104 student-athletes were selected in the Australian Olympic team, or 23% of the total. The 23% student-athlete cohort won 39% of Australia's medals in Athens (Knapp, D., & James, S., 2012). A revelation of findings at the time.

2004 Australian Olympic Team



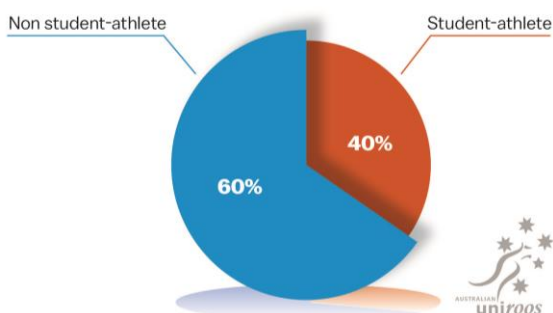
2004 Australian Olympic Medals



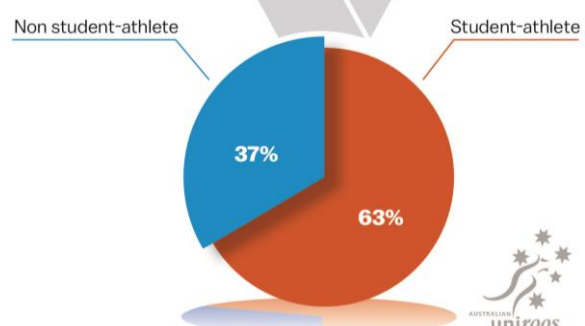
For the 2012 London Games, there were 164 student-athletes selected in the Australian team, or 40% of the total. The 40% student-athlete cohort won 63% of Australia's medal in London (Knapp, D., & James, S., 2012).

Flash forward to the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. Of the 82 medals brought home by Australian Olympians, student-athletes won 50 of those medals, or 62% (James, S., 2017). How do we explain the growth in both the number of student-athletes selected in Olympic teams, and the fact that student-athletes win medals at a higher rate than non-student-athletes? A logical correlation does exist.

2012 Australian Olympic Team



2012 Australian Olympic Medals



The growth of elite athlete programs on university campuses sector-wide is remarkable, particularly since the London Olympics. In 2013, the median number of elite student-athletes supported by the AIS Elite Athlete Friendly University Program and/or financial support on university campuses was 57. By 2017, the median number of student-athletes supported on university campuses grew to 105 (CERM, University of South Australia, 2017). This represents a growth rate of 46%. As nearly all universities also support elite-athletes with financial or value-in-kind support, one can safely assume that universities have increased investment in elite athlete programs on campuses by approximately 46% since 2013.

There are plenty of examples evidencing the growth of campus-based elite athlete programs worthy of citing:

- There are approximately 16 Olympic swimming athletes studying and training at Bond and Griffith Universities combined.
- University of Sunshine Coast has doubled the size of its High Performance Elite Student Athlete Program from 60 participants in 2015, to 120 participants in 2018.
- University of Technology Sydney (UTS) has increased its' elite athlete scholarship offering by 100% over the last 3 years, offering \$10,000 per annum benefits to top tier recipients.
- The largest known scholarship, the Georgina Hope Rinehart Swimming Excellence Program (Bond University) offers a "full ride" for recipients, valued at \$30,000 per annum.

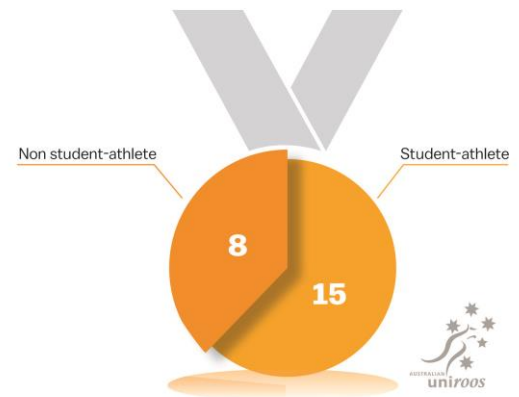
Institutions that historically produce the most Olympic and Commonwealth Games medal winners include The University of Sydney, The University of Melbourne, The University of Queensland, Griffith University and RMIT University. University of Canberra, University of Technology Sydney and Deakin University also do well. These universities are big contributors to elite support in Australia.

It is not only elite athlete programs having an impact on our campuses today. There is an increasing body of evidence supporting the value of sport in the higher education context, including links between sport participation and positive impacts on student experience in core areas such as student recruitment, retention, achievement and graduate outcomes. Sport generally is making a substantial contribution to the objectives and outcomes of our universities, as well as Australia's national sporting goals.

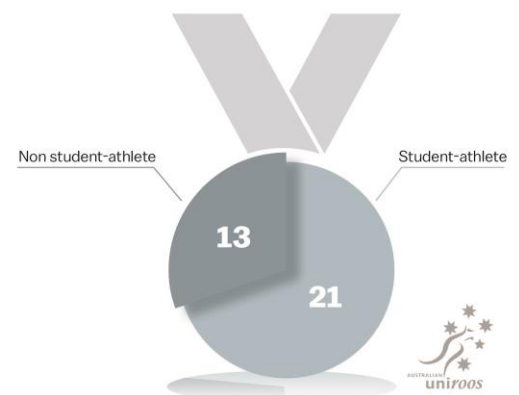
References:

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Australian University Sport Business Analysis Survey – 2017 Summary Results – CERM, Adelaide, University of South Australia, (2017).
 Knapp, D., & James, S., (2012 – (updated 2017)). *The Performance of Student-athletes at Olympic Game*. Milton, QLD: Australian University Sport Ltd.

Australian Olympic Medals - Rio 2016



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