



# STUDENT-ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

2024 - 2025  
ANNUAL REPORT



**Connect. Equip. Collaborate. Serve.**

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# About Us

**Clemson Student-Athlete Development supports student-athletes by offering comprehensive resources and opportunities in four key areas: leadership development, career development, personal development, and community engagement.**

*These pillars guide our approach, ensuring that student-athletes are equipped to succeed not only in their time at Clemson, but in life after graduation. We are aligned with the Clemson University strategic initiative and mission to deliver the number one student experience, and we fulfill the mission of Clemson Athletics to provide life changing experiences through sport as we operate from our four core values daily; equip, connect, collaborate, and serve.*

*This report highlights the impactful initiatives and programming within each of these pillars and outlines how they collectively contribute to the holistic development of our Clemson student-athletes.*

**01****Leadership  
Development****02****Career  
Development****03****Personal  
Development****04****Community  
Engagement**



# Message From The Director

## Tori Niemann Lukens

### Assistant AD/Student Athlete Development

Hello!

It has been an extraordinary year in Student Athlete Development. We had a record number of professionals and employers engage with our student-athletes through career workshops, micro internships, and off-campus visits. We completed year four of the POWER Leadership Academy, culminating in our largest-ever attendance at the annual Summit. Our UPIC Beyond the Game student-athlete interns earned \$112,000 in wages this year – just one example of the real-world impact we're seeing across the board.

A few standout highlights from this year:

- Hosted over 100 events focused on career readiness and leadership development.
- Welcomed over 200 employers and professionals to campus for career events.
- Completed 3,200 hours of community service, including a service trip to Costa Rica.
- Conducted 459 one on one meetings between student-athletes and the Student Athlete Development staff.

We look forward to sharing even more highlights and insights throughout this annual report.

Clemson student-athletes continue to impress with their commitment to excellence, both in competition and in their personal and professional growth. Their willingness to invest in themselves while competing at a high level is what sets them apart to future employers and community leaders.

None of this would be possible without the support of our donors, coaches, staff, and campus partners. Thank you for investing in our student-athletes.

We're already looking forward to the year to come. Thank you and Go Tigers!

*Tori Niemann Lukens*



# Strategic Initiatives

The mission of Clemson University's Student-Athlete Development program is to **holistically develop and empower student-athletes** by offering opportunities that span leadership, career readiness, personal growth, and community engagement. Specifically, our objectives include:



## **Preparing for life after Clemson**

by providing the tools, skills, and experiences they need to thrive in their post-athletic careers.



## **Fostering Leadership**

through experiential learning and involvement in leadership-focused activities.



## **Supporting Career Readiness**

with a structured series of career development programs, one-on-one advising, and internship and shadowing opportunities.



## **Promoting Personal Responsibility**

through training including financial literacy and community-building.



## **Encourage Community Involvement**

by providing the tools, skills, and experiences they need to thrive in their post-athletic careers.

# Total Engagement Overview

Clemson's Student-Athlete Development team maintained strong and meaningful connections with the student-athlete population throughout the 2024–2025 academic year. We tracked a significant number of interactions with student-athletes this academic year through various channels, including one-on-one appointments, group sessions, and career programming.

## *Engagement & Impact with Student-Athletes*

# 4057

## Total contacts including one on one meetings and event attendance

Over the course of the 2024–2025 academic year, the Student-Athlete Development team hosted a total of **103** events focused on networking, education, professional development, and leadership-building opportunities.

### **Key Highlights:**

- Total Individual Student One on One Meetings: **459**
- Total touch points through events: **3,598**
- Community Service Hours: **3,200**
- Wages earned by student-athletes through UPIC Beyond the Game: **\$112,000**

## Programming Events and Breakdown

Over **100 events** were facilitated across four key development pillars, engaging student-athletes in intentional programming that supports holistic growth.

A cumulative **attendance of 3,598** reflects robust engagement and strategic alignment with student needs.

Personal Development events saw the highest total attendance (**1,449**), with an average of **66 attendees** per event, underscoring high interest in self-awareness and wellness.

Leadership Development accounted for the greatest number of sessions (**43 events**), reinforcing the department's investment in sustained leadership pipelines such as SAAC, TLA, and POWER.

Career Development included **21 events with nearly 600 total attendees**, preparing student-athletes for life after playing sports.



# Key Achievements and Milestones

Throughout the 2024-2025 academic year, the Student-Athlete Development Office achieved several key milestones that reflect our commitment to student-athlete growth and success:



53

**SAAC members** actively participating in leadership and community outreach.

60

**Tiger Leadership Academy participants** engaged in leadership development workshops and initiatives.

20

**POWER members** participated in personal responsibility programs.

\$112,000

**UPIC wages** earned by student-athletes through the University's Professional Internship and Co-op (UPIC) program.

3,200+

**Community service hours** contributed to the local community through outreach programs.

90

**Recruits** met with Student Athlete Development staff this academic year.



# Program Description

Clemson University's Student-Athlete Development program is organized around four core pillars, each designed to support and empower student-athletes in different facets of their lives:



## POWER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

POWER is one-year, cohort model leadership program. The eight-session curriculum is rooted in ownership and focuses on: leadership skills, building confidence, networking, and community building. The program concludes with a five-day experiential learning trip and finally a student-led leadership conference. The five-day trip includes site visits with companies and organizations and attending networking opportunities with professionals in the city. The half-day leadership summit is led by the POWER cohort and had 130 participants in 2024 and includes attendees from across the athletic department, campus, student-athletes, and local partners and employers.

### **Key Highlights:**

- **20** student-athletes completed the POWER Program this year.

## Leadership Development

### TIGER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

This is a two-year, multisport program designed to refine the student-athletes' leadership abilities to gain skills and perspective to enhance team culture, promote high performance, and prepare them to successfully lead in any phase of life. Student-athletes complete 10 workshops over the course of two non-championship semesters. Student-athletes must apply, interview and be endorsed before being selected.

### **Key Highlights:**

- **60** student-athletes participated in the TLA this year.
- **27** graduated from the program.



## STUDENT-ATHLETE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAAC)

Composed of 50+ student-athletes, SAAC serves to amplify the voices of student-athletes to serve their community, advocate on behalf of their teams, and unite and connect with athletic staff and administration through leadership and commitment.

### **Key Highlights:**

- **53** members participated in the SAAC this year.
- Advocated for improved student-athlete welfare policies such as transportation throughout the athletic district and eco-friendly and sustainable practices in the student-athlete bistro.
- Facilitated multiple community outreach initiatives, enhancing the student-athlete experience at Clemson.

”

## SAAC has taught me so much about leadership.

I have had an amazing experience, SAAC has given me very valuable life skills that I will use in the future. I also have made such great friends! I am so grateful for the opportunity to be a part of SAAC and represent my sport.”

**ROSE IMBESI, ROWING**



## STUDENT-ATHLETE LEADERSHIP TEAM (SALT)

SALT is composed of one student-athlete from each team and meets quarterly with the athletic director and Clemson Athletics executive staff. Student-athletes provide feedback and engage with upper administration on topics impacting Clemson student-athletes and college athletics as a whole.





## Career Development

Student-athletes have many opportunities to build professional skills and network with over 200 industry professionals in our six-program career series. We connect student-athletes to internships, job shadowing experiences, full-time jobs, and offer individual career advising to each student-athlete. We maintain a database of professionals with a desire to connect with Clemson student-athletes, as well as a database of our current student-athletes' career interests in order to intentionally connect our student-athletes to the right people and potential opportunities.

”

**I have attended multiple personal and professional development events for student-athletes**

from focus on the etiquette of business interviews to practicing my elevator pitch. Clemson Student Athlete Development has impacted my experience both personally and professionally, encouraging my progress as I prepare to accomplish my career and life goals.”

**LILLY LIPPEAT, GYMNASTICS**

## Four-Year Career Development Series

A mandatory career preparation program consisting of six key events aimed at increasing career readiness beginning in the spring semester of their first year and ending in fall semester of their fourth year.

### CORE VALUES

#### *Spring semester of first year*

Introduces student-athletes to the importance of aligning personal values with career goals and decision-making. Of the surveys completed, **97.8%** of first year student-athletes reported that the session helped them reflect on whether their actions and decisions align with their personal values.

Biggest takeaways reported from student-athletes:

- “It is important to know and understand what your values mean to you so you can build your life off of them in the direction of where you want to go.”
- “My biggest takeaway from today was being able to see what I truly cared about. I have a general idea what some of my core values were but when we narrowed it down it became more clear to me.”
- “Being able to see on paper what my values are just helps me to reflect on why they are so important.”



### ELEVATOR PITCH CONTEST

#### *Fall semester of second year*



Provides student-athletes the opportunity to hone their personal branding and deliver concise, impactful elevator pitches.

- Of the surveys completed, **97.9%** of second year student-athletes reported a 3 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest) when asked how helpful this was for their professional development.
- Of the surveys completed, **92.6%** of second year student-athletes reported a 3 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest) when asked how confident they feel in the execution of their elevator pitch.

### ETIQUETTE DINNER AND FASHION SHOW

#### *Spring semester of second year*

A unique event designed to teach professional dining etiquette and proper attire for career-related events.

- Of the surveys completed, **100%** of second year student-athletes reported feeling confident in their ability to determine what is appropriate to wear to a professional event.
- Of the surveys completed, **100%** of second year student-athletes reported a 3 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest) when asked about their ability to dine over a business or professional meal and navigate table settings.
- **30** campus partners in attendance.





## TIGER NETWORKING SOCIAL

*Fall semester of third year*

Brings together student-athletes, alumni, and employers to foster connections and professional relationships based on career interests.

- Of the surveys completed, **98.1%** of third year student-athletes reported a 3 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest) that this event was helpful for their professional development.
- **40** employers and professionals were in attendance.



## MOCK INTERVIEWS EVENT

*Fall semester of second year*



Simulates real-world job interviews to provide student-athletes with hands-on practice and constructive feedback. Interviews are conducted by company hiring managers and career center professionals.

- Of the surveys completed, **100%** of third year student-athletes reported a 3 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest) when asked if they felt more confident in their interview skills after the event.
- **75** employers in attendance.
- **150** mock interviews conducted.

## TIGER PRO NIGHT

*Fall semester of fourth year*

- A dedicated event where student-athletes meet employers offering internships and post-graduation job opportunities.



## One-on-One Career Advising

Personalized guidance on resume building, cover letters, LinkedIn optimization, interview prep, job searches, salary negotiations, and graduate school.

## UPIC Beyond the Game Internship Program

This unique initiative offers **90 paid, on-campus internships each year**, allowing student-athletes to gain valuable work experience while balancing academics and athletics. UPIC Beyond the Game is a semester-long paid internship program that is a partnership with Clemson University's UPIC office and Clemson Student-Athlete Development to place student-athletes in internships across campus. Student-athletes complete five professional development sessions throughout their internship that focus on identifying and articulating their transferrable professional skills in addition to their internship work.

### Key Highlights:

- **56** paid internships completed this academic year, providing student-athletes with real-world experience.
- **\$112,000** earned by student-athletes in wages this academic year through the UPIC program.

## Micro-Internships

Short-term internships that provide flexible, hands-on work experience, broadening career exposure for student-athletes.

### Key Highlights:

- **12** Student-athletes participated in Micro Internships across the country.



# Personal Development



## Financial Literacy Workshops

Programs designed to teach student-athletes the essential skills needed to manage their finances, including budgeting, saving, and investing.



## Tigers Unite

A dedicated space for student-athletes to build community, foster engagement, and provide support for student-athletes with shared experiences and identities.



I spent four days at the NCAA Headquarters **learning from professionals in the sports industry, practicing professional skills, and meeting student-athletes from a wide variety of NCAA member institutions.** I learned about finding and pursuing my purpose, how my experience as a student-athlete has taught me skills that are transferable to the workplace, and how to form authentic connections in professional settings. It was a very valuable



experience for transitioning from collegiate athletics to the workplace and I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to attend!"

**TARA WALSH, GYMNASTICS**



## Gender Violence Prevention Training

This initiative provides education on the prevention of gender-based violence, helping student-athletes understand the importance of respectful relationships and personal responsibility.



## Conference and Networking Opportunities

Student-athletes are encouraged to attend conferences such as the Black Student-Athlete Summit and NCAA Career in Sports Forum which offer valuable networking opportunities and insights into critical issues impacting athletes.

### Key Highlights:

- 7 student-athletes attended the 2025 Black Student-Athlete Summit.
- 2 student-athletes attended the 2025 NCAA Career in Sports Forum.



# Community Engagement



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The experience in Costa Rica was so amazing. This trip gave me the opportunity to step outside of my comfort zone and do things I would not have done before like, trying new foods, staying with host families, learning to communicate in another language, and so much more. My favorite part about this trip was going to the elementary school for 4 days. Being someone who is thinking of going into the educational field, being able to go to the school and seeing how it functions along with being able to contribute to the kids education as well as learn from their culture was just an amazing experience!”

**RILEY BURTON, SOFTBALL**

## PAW PALS

This mentorship program pairs student-athletes with local elementary school students to foster positive relationships, academic support, and mentorship during weekly meetings throughout the semester. It emphasizes leadership development and community involvement.

### Key Highlights:

- **50** student-athletes participated as Paw Pals mentors this academic year

## BE A TIGER FIELD DAY

A community service event that takes place on the day of the Spring football game. Student-athletes volunteer at five different stations that spell out “TIGER” which represents the Tiger traits of teamwork, integrity, gratitude, education, and respect. They connect with and lead children from the community through activities at each station focused on these traits.

### Key Highlights:

- **430** attendees from the community

## TIGER TREK

An international service trip providing student-athletes with a unique chance to gain global perspective, understand civic engagement, and connect across diverse backgrounds. Participants will collaborate on community outreach and will immerse themselves in the culture, history, and traditions of the country and community they will serve.

### Key Highlights:

- **9** student-athletes attended in 2025

# Conclusion

The Student-Athlete Development Office continues to support our student-athletes' growth in every aspect of their lives. With a focus on leadership development, career readiness, community service, and personal wellness, we are proud of the impact we've made this year. We remain committed to providing resources that ensure our student-athletes excel both during their time at Clemson and in their lives after.

We are excited about the ongoing support from our stakeholders, and we look forward to continuing our mission of Equipping, Connecting, Collaborating, and Serving our student-athletes.





