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Dr. Lightfoot: Our next speaker is a local legend here at Texas A&M, so please give her a warm welcome as she returns to the stage here, Dr. Lisa Langston. Your fans are here.

Dr. Langston: Howdy. Using athletics to optimize the academic and learning experience of student-athletes. Let me start off with a little of my beginning and my athletic background. When I was a 4th grader and my brother was a 5th grader, we were latch key kids, meaning that my mom worked evenings. And so the rule was we were supposed to go straight home after school. But I wanted to try out for a musical, and so my mom allowed me to do so. Well, I found out very early that singing was not my giftedness. And so I asked my mom. I said, "Hey. You let me stay after school to try out for the musical. Why can't I stay after school for sports?" And I had her. And so that's how I started my career. I went out as a 4th grader. I earned my first letter in track. Well, the next year, I went on to play volleyball, basketball, and again ran track. And my 5th-grade math teacher was also my coach. And in his math class, we had an award system that whoever had the highest grade on a test, you got a blue ribbon. And so yours truly was always trying to get that blue ribbon. And then in basketball, whenever we won a game, he would take the team out to Dairy Queen to get a small ice cream cone. And so early on, I had this connection with academics and athletics. They just went together.

But I was extrinsically motivated. I either wanted that blue ribbon, which I'll tell you, the prize was whoever had the most blue ribbons at the end of the year, he took us to a movie. And I still remember, I got to see Benji [laughter]. And I'm aging myself on that one. Okay? So I was extrinsically motivated. Medals and, like I said, blue ribbons and things like that. But as a 7th grader, I read a article about one of Coach Blair's players at South Oak Cliff High School. And in this article, she was talking about being a-- she was an all-American basketball player at Stephen F. Austin University. And she talked about an athletic scholarship. And from that article, I took two things. I knew that I had to be the very best student I could be, and I had to be the very best basketball player I could be. And that's the path I set myself out on. And to be honest, as a 7th grader back then, I really didn't know what an athletic scholarship was, but I knew that I wanted one because it sounded pretty good.

Okay. But in my present position as an athletic administrator, I know that I was one of the fortunate ones. If you look at the NCAA fact sheets or recruiting sheet, you'll see that it's a very small number of student-athletes that go on from high school sports to collegiate sports, only 6%. And only 2% of them actually get athletic scholarships. So in my role as an athletic administrator, it has to be more than trying to get students to the next level. So what we have to do in interscholastic athletics is we have to align what we do with the district and admission of the district. And Fort Worth ISD where I work, our mission is, "Preparing all students for college, career, and community involvement." And I also put what we are trying to accomplish here in athletic here at Aggieland. "Dedicated to building champions through academics achievement and athletic success." And I think we're doing fairly well on that.

So I'm just posing a question. What is the purpose of teaching a young or a [noveless?] basketball player how to dribble with their non-dominant hand or to do a layup with their non-dominant hand? And how does it relate to the classroom? Well, just think about it. Have any of you ever tried to learn a foreign language? Took Calculus? Public speaking? They're all challenges that you work on, and as you work on them, you

develop this ability to get better and it's confidence. And it's a confidence that can carry on to other areas. For me, I remember when I was working with my dissertation - you guys, as an athletic administrator, I put in a lot of hours. I wrote my dissertation on Saturdays and Sundays. And I remember one time where I actually had this thought when I was struggling in my writing. I said, "Don't be lazy in thought." And I thought about it, and it's like, "Man. What a peculiar thing to think." But I thought back to my time here at Aggieland. Every single sprint that we ran in basketball practice from my freshman year to my senior year, I finished first in. And that was because I was the fastest person on the team. And I knew if I didn't finish first, the coaches would think, "There's something wrong." So I took that field, that sense of, "I can do this," and I pushed forward in my writing.

Right here, this is the Fort Worth ISD learning model. And as an athletic administrator, I have to be focused on what our mission is. And as you can see, we got outcomes for learners. We got our return on investments from an academic standpoint. And you see, I circled student achievement. So as an athletic administrator, I still have to be focused on that. But what I saw was interesting is you look at some of the best practices. These are researched best practice for 21st learning. And some of them are so related to athletics that I thought, "Are we integrating athletics and academics? Or are academics integrating into athletics?" Looking at collaboration and communication. I was at a middle school volleyball tournament last week, and I watched this 8th grade. And the ball came to one player, and she said, "Mine." And then you saw the setter look over at the outside hitter. Nonverbal communication. She sets her. The hitter hits it. And they score a point.

Goal-setting. I was a fairly decent student, but sometimes you get off track. And so my junior year, Lynn Hickey was my coach. And I just remember her telling me, "Langston, just like you set goals for yourself on the court, you got to do that in the classroom." And so my last two years as a student-athlete here, my grades were pretty darn good. If she had started out that way with my freshman year, I'm pretty sure I probably would have been an academic all-American only because I loved a challenge and I loved to compete. And I would have been working towards that.

The growth mindset. This one is funny to me. I was talking to a principal, and she said, "I wish my faculty had a growth mindset for all our students." Hmm. Hmm. Because I was thinking, "As a coach, who ever goes to practice not to get better?" So that growth mindset - and I know it's a buzzword now - but that's something that coaches have been doing-- that's what we do. That's what we go to practice to do is to get better. And right, there is an example of some of our student-athletes that have done well in a classroom. This 70 to 1, I heard an athletic director who was speaking on another topic, but he said, "As far as academic to athletic scholarships, it's a 70 to 1 ratio." 70 to 1. I read somewhere where the amount of money spent on academic scholarship versus athletic scholarship was nine times greater. So it would behoove us as athletic administrators to focus on the academic side.

Jacqueline was the valedictorian, also the state champion at 102 in wrestling. These are the things that we celebrate. In the middle, that's Bailey. Bailey's dad is a principal for us, and I can guarantee you her focus right now is where she's going to go to college. She's an excellent volleyball player, but that probably is not what she's going to be. She's going to be that 94% that played high school sports and probably will not play collegiate sport. On the right there is Maddie. Maddie is a good old fighting Texas Aggie now. And the thing about Maddie was her freshman year at the district cross country meet, she actually finished that race with a broken foot. And I knew right then. I said, "This is a kid that has some gumption about her. She is going to do well in life." And like I said, she's a salutatorian. She only got beaten out by the guy she was

dating. And she would have been upset with me if I put James picture up there, so that's when I put Maddie's [laughter].

And so when you think about learning experiences, it's the intangibles. Lynn Hickey, like I said, came in my junior year. And her very first game that she coached-- she didn't have a lot of rules, but one of her rules was, "Do not get a technical foul. If you do, you won't play the rest of the game." And what happened her very first game? We were playing at Abilene Christian, not even a D1 school. And yours truly get a technical foul. And I'm pretty certain that I didn't like the call. I know I didn't say anything because I wore a mouthpiece back in the day, and it was one of those where you couldn't talk. But I'm sure I was demonstrative and said-- the officials knew I didn't like the call. Anyway, I get a technical foul. She takes me out of the game. I'm sitting there with my knee pads because that's what we wore back in the day. And I'm waiting for her to put me back in the game. And at some point, it dawns on me. I'm not going back in. And so after that game, I remember reflecting. And reflecting goes back to one of those best practices that they talk about in the 21st learning. Reflecting. And I reflect on what happened and how I felt after that game. And you talk about collaboration. Winning a ballgame takes collaboration between teammates. And being on a team, you always have a role. And I had a role that day, and I did not fulfill my role. And I let my team down, and we weren't successful. Because I remember in the first half, I had 13 points. And I ended up still being the leading scorer for that game. And so that stuck with me. My role on the team is important.

And then the other thing was Coach Hickey needed to win that ballgame. This is her first game. New coach. But she did not put me back in. And so what it taught me was-- it was a lesson in integrity. She meant what she said, and she carried through on that act regardless of the consequences. And that's a lesson that has stayed with me. And I often thought, "Where would I have learned a lesson about integrity in a classroom setting?" I just don't know where that would have occurred. And so when you think about athletics and optimizing it in academic and learning experiences, it is a lot of times the intangibles. And one of my friends, she shared a story on Facebook, and the title of it was Hire College Swimmers. And I was a little offended because I was a college basketball and track athlete. But I read the article. And in it, it challenged you to Google Hire Student-Athletes. And so I did. 34 million results. And these in here are just some of the things that they said about student-athletes and why to hire them. And knowing or being a part of the team. They know hard work. Strong work ethic. They're prepared. Will sacrifice for team and things like that. And work towards a goal with others. And all those things that employees want and things like that.

But really the key to all this happening, it is the coach. It goes back to Mr. Mitchell and what he taught me and made that connection for me early on. It goes to Lynn Hickey and what she taught me about goal-setting and the lessons in life that you need as-- that an employee wants. The things that prepare you for college, career, and community involvement. And so when you think-- like I said, it is the coaches. It's the quality of the coaches that will put forth that sense of working with student-athletes so they understand that they're in interscholastic athletics, in particular, to be a part of that academic achievement for our student-athletes. And so I know here at Aggieland, we have a coaching academy. And I can't wait to hire someone from that academy because I know that they are going to be a coach who will help use athletics to optimize the academic and learning experience of our student-athletes. So thank you.

Dr. Lightfoot:

Thank you, Dr. Langston. I have a few questions for you.

Dr. Langston: Okay.

Dr. Lightfoot: This question is from Monica P. at Texas A&M San Antonio. In general, given what you said, do athletic students achieve higher grades in schools and colleges than non-athletes in general?

Dr. Langston: In general, I would say at the interscholastic level in the high schools, we keep that data. And it does show that our student-athletes are performing at a higher passing rate than the general population. Collegiately, all I can say is I know when I was here, our volleyball team, I would put them against any student [at force?] their passing rate and their grade point average and things like that.

Dr. Lightfoot: Yeah. Because they're more involved. Absolutely.

Dr. Langston: Yeah.

Dr. Lightfoot: This is from David C. at, again, TAM U San Antonio. As a future coach, what advice would you give to a coach that wants to emphasize the importance of academics on a student-athletes that thinks that their only way to college is through a sport?

Dr. Langston: Oh, wow. That's a great one. Number one, you build relationship with kids. And the key is making sure that the kids understand that their value is not tied to the sport. And also having strategies that emphasize academics. I believe one of the former football coaches at this great university used to be a English teacher, and he had a word of the day that the players had to use. I have coaches that have quotes of the day, and the students have to tell, "Hey, what does that mean?" And things like that. So you just integrate it into what you do on a day-to-day basis.

Dr. Lightfoot: Those are things that are missed in the media nowadays, aren't they? I mean, whereas, when they televise college games, they would used to say what major the students were. Now they don't talk about the academic side at all, do they?

Dr. Langston: No. Not as much. Well, the NCAA had that commercial that we all go professional in other things than sports and stuff like that, so they're trying to highlight it. But really and truly, I think it's the adult leaders that are the ones that have to tell that story and make sure they emphasize it to the student-athletes.

Dr. Lightfoot: And I think we all have to continue to tell the story about how important, just as you did today, how important athletics is to academics as well both, as the other.

Dr. Langston: Yes. Yes. Yes. Hey, I have a Ph.D. because of goal-setting, something that I learned to do in sports. And so I just-- I wanted to get a Ph.D. because that was a goal. And I can tell you this. When I walked across the stage to get that Ph.D., that feeling was greater than hitting the winning shot or being on the awards stand, getting a medal or anything like that.

Dr. Lightfoot: Yeah. One last question here from Drew Flock at Queens University of Charlotte. And you spoke to this a little bit. Do you believe there's a connection between writing down your goals and ultimately achieving them?

Dr. Langston: Oh, definitely. Write it down because that way, you see it. It's like kinetics. I put it there. I can see it. And it's not just in your mind. And then you have to write action steps. Don't just write the goals. You got to have the action steps that go behind it. The people that win gold medals in the Olympics, they're looking at-- like sprinters. They're looking at what times they have to run in order to hit a certain time. And that time that they're striving for is the time that would allow them to be possibly a gold medalist.

Dr. Lightfoot: Fabulous. Thank you again, Dr. Langston.

Dr. Langton:

All right. Thank you.

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