Dear incoming first year student athlete,

Welcome to Eastern! We hope you are looking forward to your first semester of college. We can’t wait to welcome you to campus in just a short while! This fall you will take a course called INST 150 “Introduction to Faith, Reason and Justice.” Twenty hours of service learning are required as part of the course. Service learning makes up 35% of your grade and is directly linked to the course content. (Please disregard this letter if you are a transfer student with 24 credits or more or are part of the Templeton Honors College.)

As you might imagine, the service learning assignment is especially difficult for student athletes who are balancing a sports schedule on top of academics. However, since service learning is a required part of a first semester class, it cannot be put off until the spring nor can the hours be decreased.

Therefore, all incoming first year student-athletes should complete twenty hours of service before arriving at Eastern in August. This allows you to meet course requirements without compromising your academics or athletics. Service learning is not the same as volunteering or community service and only certain types of service qualify. Approval is needed before you start serving. The following conditions apply:

- Only service done apart from high school requirements and after graduation can apply. You cannot “double dip” by using high school service for collegiate coursework.
- First, locate a nearby organization you can serve for a total of 20 hours. The types of organizations that qualify typically work with under-served populations in areas of poverty, including soup kitchens, homeless shelters, urban schools and low income housing. What does not fit or qualify are mission trips, summer camps or VBS programs, most hospitals, sports leagues, painting a building, or working with the church youth group. The essential question to answer is, “Does this organization address an issue of injustice?” Note that the organization does not necessarily have to be Christian or “religious” to qualify. Examples of sites near Eastern can be found here: [http://www.eastern.edu/student-life/office-faith-practice/service-learning](http://www.eastern.edu/student-life/office-faith-practice/service-learning). A list of previously approved sites can be found here: [http://www.eastern.edu/student-life/office-faith-practice/service-learning-information-athletes](http://www.eastern.edu/student-life/office-faith-practice/service-learning-information-athletes)

If nothing comes immediately to mind, call local community organizations, government offices or churches to find contacts in your area. If that fails, then the Coordinator of Student Ministries and Service Learning, Megan Acedo, may be able to help you with ideas as well.

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• Next, contact the organization to see whether they could use your service and for what kind of work. Make sure their schedule works with yours and ask about any required orientation sessions.

• **Before you start serving you must have your site approved by Megan Acedo to ensure that it will qualify.** Only students who have received this approval will have their service count. Contact Megan with five things using this Google form:
  1. Your name and the sport you will be playing.
  2. Your Eastern email address.
  3. The name, brief description of the organization you’d like to work with (remember, it must address an issue of injustice), and a link to their website.
  4. The city and state where the organization is located.
  5. A brief description of the work you would do there.

• If approved, Megan will email a Verification of Hours form so you can document your service. Someone at the site will need to initial and sign the form as you serve; this is generally a volunteer coordinator, supervisor, or the person you contacted to start your service. When you come to campus in the fall you will give the filled out form to your INST 150 professor (not to Megan). **Only students with pre-approval and the properly filled out Verification of Hours form will be credited the hours.** If your site is not approved, Megan can give you suggestions on other places to serve in your area.

• Since you will be reflecting on and writing about your service throughout the semester (including a major final presentation in December), we strongly recommend that you journal while serving in the summer to keep your experience fresh. We’ll send some reflection questions along with the Verification of Hours form.

• Those who do not complete 20 hours over the summer will be required to complete their remaining service hours during the semester and will likely miss practices and/or games.

• **The deadline to get approval for your service learning site is July 10, 2015.** Requests after that point will not be approved.

“Definitely continue to tell ALL athletes to do their hours ahead of time—because if I didn’t I would have been stressed beyond belief.” -field hockey player

Please don’t hesitate to contact Megan or Heidi with any questions or concerns. Again, don’t wait until the end of the summer to start this.

We look forward to meeting you in the fall!

Blessings,

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