

Kyla Irwin

Hello everyone, my name is Kyla Irwin, I'm a senior from State College, Pennsylvania and I have had the opportunity to create my own major by participating in the Individualized Major program. The title of my major is Youth Development and Sport. I want to thank the assembly for allowing me the opportunity to speak tonight and for all of the past support, it means more than you know.

My junior year of high school I came on my first visit to campus. I was extremely excited to say the least. I knew that this was the perfect school for me the moment I stepped on campus. With the history of hard work, excellence, and perfection, I knew this was the school that was meant for me. Academically and athletically, UConn is known around the world.

Due to the opportunities that UConn has provided for me, our research programs in the Psychology Department have been a tremendous help, great experience and chance to gain knowledge that is deeper than the classroom. I have been able to be a part of studies and run studies that have provided the insight that has allowed me to dive deeper into what I plan on doing in the future. I am thankful for the opportunity to grow more in my academic fields.

Another academic opportunity that has been extremely beneficial to me would be the access to tutors. With my vigorous athletic schedule, the ability to schedule tutors and have the chance to enhance my knowledge has been something I am forever grateful for. It has allowed me to be driven in the classroom as well as on the court, and if it weren't for the academic staff and tutors we have available, my success here would not be the same. The staff that is involved with our athletics program grants us the convenience of flexibility and success all in one. Without my academic advisors, SAAC advisors, and leadership teams on campus, there would be a direct correlation to a decrease in my academic success.

Upon graduation, I plan on continuing my basketball career overseas. As an athlete, I know my time to play is limited, but because of the education I have received here at UConn, I know that I have an amazing chance of getting back into grad school to get a masters degree in Occupational Therapy. A program that has been offered here at UConn that has impacted what I want to do in my future and has touched my heart, is the program called Team Impact. Now that UConn is involved with Team Impact, I have been privileged to be the fellow here on campus. This program has truly inspired me to work harder and be a greater influence on the lives around me. For those of you who do not know about Team Impact, it is an organization that pairs children with chronic illnesses up with college athletic teams with the hopes of building confidence and friendship along the way. This organization has surely done so.

Lastly, after a bittersweet four years here, I am graduating under the individualized major program. With all of our traveling and missed school days, this program has given me the opportunity to be successful in the classroom. I was able to pick courses that suited my future desires and had the flexibility of choosing the method that I perform best in. With my last course being my capstone project, I get to leap into what drives and motivates me on the court and in the classroom and learn more about how sports impact youth development and boost confidence, resiliency, and grit throughout a lifetime.

**UConn has been able to produce champions on the court and in the classroom, and with your help we can continue to live up to our legacy and win championships every year. Thank you, have a wonderful evening.**

