Introduction
Grace, Sofia, and Aiden (the three members of the Athletics Services team) first hosted focus groups in Bass Café and invited varsity team captains from all the varsity sports at Yale. We had a good showing of team leaders across a variety of different sports including gymnastics, track & field, and baseball. After conducting the focus group, we worked to summarize and highlight some of the major concerns facing athletes today while separating requests into feasible and infeasible categories.

Many of the infeasible options were policy changes which would have to be solved with additional funding. Some of these suggestions included expanded dining options and times as well as expanded athletic training resources. At the same time, there were many concerns that captains raised which could be solved through reallocating resources. These included updating Dean’s Excuses and resolving some of the issues with the shuttle system to off-campus athletic fields and complexes.

Background
Aiden and Ryley met with Dean Mark Schenker and Dean Joel Silverman at the Yale College Dean’s Office to discuss updating the existing policy on granting Dean’s Excuses for varsity athletes who are away from campus. The current policy only allows for deans to grant a Dean’s Excuse when an athlete is physically off campus at the exact time of an examination. For example, if an athlete returns to campus at 2 A.M. in the morning and has a 9 A.M. examination, he or she may not be excused from the exam (within the guidelines of the current Dean’s Excuse policy).

Recommendations
Our suggested proposal was to clear up language in the policy while also expanding the time frame for when deans could grant Dean’s Excuses to athletes returning from off-campus or “away” campus events and competitions. The two ideas that we had would either be a time cut-off (e.g., athletes returning after midnight could be excused from morning exams the next day) or a time window cut-off (e.g., athletes get an eight hour “grace period” after returning to campus during which they can get a Dean's Excuse).

After meeting with Dean Schenker and Dean Silverman, we received a lot of positive feedback, especially in regards to the first proposal. Specifically, both deans recognized that athletes face a few different challenges when returning late from competitions, whether planned or unexpected. Dean Schenker proposed a new policy for athletic event Dean’s Excuses that would allow varsity athletes to possibly qualify for a Dean’s Excuse for in-class obligations when returning after midnight from a varsity athletics competition. He promised to bring this proposal to the relevant people in the Dean’s Office.
Progress
In December 2018, Dean Schenker informed the Yale College Council that he had successfully worked with the Yale College Dean's Office to secure the following policy:

“Starting with the January 2019 term, student-athletes returning from a varsity athletic competition after midnight on a day that they have an in-class academic obligation (e.g., test, quiz, presentation) may—depending upon their circumstances—qualify for a Dean’s Excuse for that obligation no matter how late in the day of their return that obligation is scheduled.”

The Yale College Council thanks Deans Schenker, Silverman, Chun, Lizarribar, and all of the residential college deans for working together to bring about this new Dean’s Excuse policy.

Shuttle System for Athletes to Athletic Complexes
Another concern that we heard from athletes was that the shuttle system to athletic fields has issues. To get from campus to off-campus athletic fields, Yale contracts shuttles that operate outside of the Yale shuttle system and are managed and staffed by a separate company. Some of the concerns captains raised included drivers being too slow or leaving before scheduled departure times, thus leaving some student-athletes behind.

We scheduled a meeting and spoke with Andy Dunn in the Yale Athletics Office, who said he would reach out to the bus company. He reassured us that the only instance in which the bus drivers should be leaving early would be if the shuttle were full, but we posited that from what we have heard, this is not the case. At the same time, Mr. Dunn also informed us that there is a recently formed working group that is focused on collecting feedback from student athletes about their experience. We recently reached out to Mr. Dunn to check in about the status of shuttle systems, and the YCC will inform the Yale student-athlete community of any further updates.

Moving forward, Sofia and Aiden will work to see whether or not they can create a new mechanism to collect feedback from varsity athletes about their experiences at Yale in hopes that the YCC can continue to serve as a link between athletes and necessary administrators in order to improve the student-athlete experience.

Communications Plan
All communications about the new Dean’s Excuse Policy will go out on January 20, 2019. The YCC Communications Team will create an infographic to share with the Yale community. Furthermore, the YCC will send out an email informing all Yale Varsity Athletes about the new policy on January 20 - this email will include Dean Schenker’s wording of the new policy as well as the infographic. In order to reach the entire Varsity Athletics community, the YCC will meet with Jason Strong during the week of January 14. At 5pm on January 20, YCC President Sal Rao will send an email to the entire student body regarding the new Dean’s Excuse policy.

Meeting with Jason Strong
We have had two meetings with Jason Strong, the Associate Athletic Director (Compliance), this semester. The first entailed going over the different topics that came up during the focus groups that the Athletics Services team ran at the beginning of the semester. During the second meeting, Jason Strong and Brian Tompkins focused on the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and potentially making a connection between the YCC and the SAAC. They are trying to build the SAAC into a fully functioning entity, modeled after the YCC, and would like to build an institutional role for a representative from the SAAC to act as an ex-officio liaison to the YCC. Jason Strong proposed that they make attending YCC meetings a mandatory part of the Vice President role on SAAC and would like our feedback soon after coming back from winter break. Going forward, we are going to try to make a lasting connection between the SAAC and YCC. We will follow up with Mr. Strong after we have received further feedback from the YCC on how to approach the situation.

**Next Steps**

The Yale College Council Athletics Services team will continue to follow up with Mr. Dunn to improve the shuttle service system. In addition, we will look for opportunities to better engage with the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) in order to hear about concerns that the student-athlete community may have. We hope that by gaining a better understanding of the issues, we may more effectively advocate on behalf of student-athletes.