



VANESSA EVELETH

Six women's soccer team players pause for a moment during their off-season practice at Behnken Field House Jan. 19. The players are more than just teammates, they are close friends, roommates and confidantes, according to Elaina Pierce, sophomore geology major and player on the women's soccer team.

## WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM BALANCES ACADEMIC SUCCESS, STUDENT LIFE

VANESSA EVELETH  
STAFF REPORTER

More than half of the Westminster College women's soccer team were named to the Rocky Mountain Athletics Conference All-Academic Honor Roll for the 2021 Fall semester, according to a Westminster College Athletics news release.

RMAC All-Academic Honor Roll is recognition of student-athletes' dedication to their academics while also competing in collegiate sports, according to the RMAC Manual.

"As a team, we take our academics really seriously," said Brynnae Braun, a senior public health major, in an interview over Zoom. "[People] always say 'it's student-athlete, not athlete-student.'"

To be eligible for recognition, a student-athlete must carry a 3.30 cumulative GPA, must use a season of eligibility for the nomination and must have been an active student at the institution for at least two consecutive semesters or three consecutive quarters, according to the RMAC

Manual.

Last Fall was the 13th semester straight where Griffin student-athletes finished with a combined GPA higher than 3.3, according to the Athletics news release.

### Balance Between School, Soccer and Mental Health

"Most student-athletes can

say that they work really hard," Braun said.

Braun was the captain for the soccer team the past two seasons.

"If you have two hours a day to do your homework, you better get your homework done in that amount of time because you're not going to have other time because of soccer practice or whatever sport you play," Braun said.

Working on coursework

whenever possible is just one way to prioritize academics when busy with soccer, according to Elaina Pierce, a sophomore geology major and player on the women's soccer team. Pierce said creating efficient communication with her professors has been crucial, especially at the beginning of the semester.

"This past semester, I really took advantage of office hours, especially when I missed classes [for soccer] and had to make stuff up," Pierce said.

Pierce said keeping her professors updated on her schedule through emails and office hours helped her create a strong connection with them. This connection allowed her to work out how to stay on track, even when she missed class, according to Pierce.

Braun said even as student-athletes, academics come first "because ultimately, we're getting a degree."

Collegiate sports also require a high demand of time and is a "big adjustment" for students coming in from high school,

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BRYNNAE BRAUN

senior public health major, women's soccer team member

according to Braun. The key is routinely balancing your schedule, Braun said.

Pierce said the balancing is overwhelming and it generates an emotional toll.

“Sometimes I don’t know how to control my emotions appropriately,” Pierce said. “It leads to crying for no reason.”

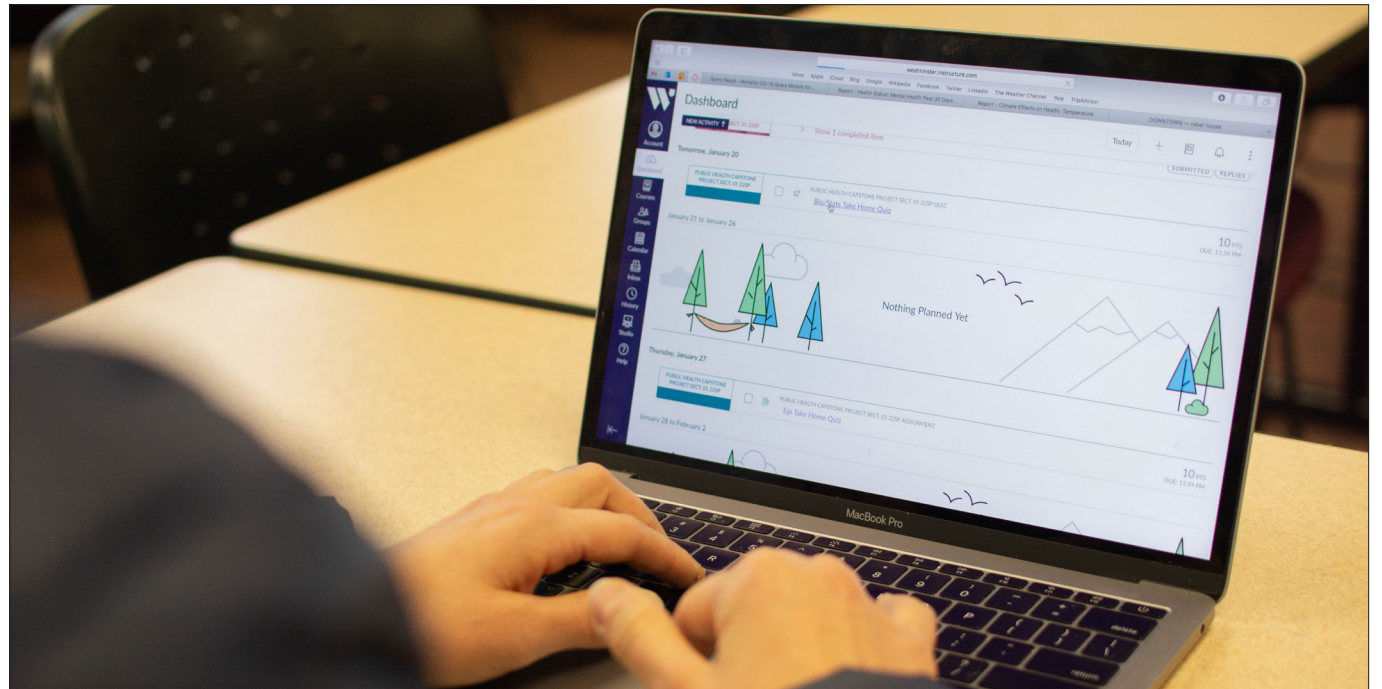
Pierce said she berates herself for this outburst of emotion and is only able to get going again after a phone call with her mother. She leans on her teammates to deal with the balancing act of being a student-athlete, according to Pierce.

“Just having a teammate there to sit and listen [is] so helpful,” Pierce said. “It’s relieved a lot of stress for me in a lot of cases.”

### A Look Into Student-Athletes Daily, In-Season Routine

Braun and Pierce said they use the same technique to balance their busy schedules — a weekly planner.

Pierce said writing everything



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Brynae Braun, a senior public health major and former captain of the women’s soccer team, checks her Canvas dashboard on her laptop in Dick 103 Jan. 19. “[The women’s soccer team] do typically have a lot of girls on the [Rocky Mountain Athletics Conference] All-Academic Honor Roll,” Braun said. “It’s difficult to achieve, but we just have that [high academic] standard.”

down makes it “easier for me to be like ‘okay, I know when I have practice. These are the things that I have to do. Where can I fit these things in?’”

Braun said competition travel is a smart place to fit in some homework: bus rides, waiting in airports and down time in hotels.

“When we’re traveling, we’ll all meet in the lobby and do our homework,” Braun said.

The teammates study together if they’re in the same classes and the players in upper level years help sophomores and first-year students, according to Braun.

The women’s soccer team is

more than just a team — it’s a supportive community, according to Braun.

“We’re all friends,” Braun said. “Everyone just wants everyone to succeed, whether that’s on the field or in the classroom.”



Q W  
Brynae Braun, a senior public health major and former captain of the women’s soccer team, opens up her homework on her laptop in Dick 103 Jan. 19. “[Women] who come to play at Westminster know it’s going to be hard academically,” Braun said. “I think you kind of brace yourself for how challenging it is, and you’re willing to accept that challenge.”