USING SANCTIONED ATHLETICS PROGRAMS TO UNDERSTAND STAKEHOLDERS'
PERCEIVED INFLUENCE IN DECISIONS AT MAJOR RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

By

Scott Hirko

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education

2011

ABSTRACT

USING SANCTIONED ATHLETICS PROGRAMS TO UNDERSTAND STAKEHOLDERS'
PERCEIVED INFLUENCE IN DECISIONS AT MAJOR RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

By

Scott Hirko

This study set out to learn more about the perceived influence of stakeholders on academic decisions affecting intercollegiate athletics, with the intent that such knowledge would help provide useful implications for future leaders making decisions that impact unique student populations. As an area of research, the semi-autonomous unit of intercollegiate athletics provided insight into how individual stakeholders interacted, particularly around certain policies, programs, or procedures. Estler and Nelson (2005) noted that, "an understanding of the nature and role of forces influencing intercollegiate athletics allows new strategies for planning and prioritizing sports within the college or university" (p. xi). Notably, in 2010, the situation around American intercollegiate athletics was one in which many believed that the decision-makers at higher education institutions were placing a greater emphasis on athletic success at a cost to academic success. This tension between athletics and academics on campus provided a useful context to investigate perceived influence of stakeholders.

A framework for the study was created to learn about those individuals who have a stake in, and perceived they could influence, academic decisions in intercollegiate athletics. The framework focused on the theories of power and influence, as well as a consideration of the loosely-coupled system of athletics within higher education and also the shared governance structure of higher education. Research focused on academic performance, admissions policies, and course selection practices within intercollegiate athletics to understand who, how, and why certain stakeholders may be, or may perceive themselves to be, influential in decision-making.

Interviews of 18 stakeholders were conducted at three major research institutions recently sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) for having poor academic performance of several of their athletic teams. Using a constant comparative and cross-case analysis of the data, several themes emerged from the interviews. Analyzing the themes from the conceptual framework led to several implications for higher education stakeholders, including faculty and administrative leaders. Implications contributed to the knowledge in higher education about strategies stakeholders used to make decisions, particularly when situations are most urgent. Three major implications were derived from this study: (1) Using urgency as a management strategy can provide leaders with an opportunity to adapt and respond quickly to situations, create greater stakeholder understanding of the rationale behind decisions, and enhance institutional pride through shared values and symbolism; (2) The interactive nature of situational leadership is an important implication, as stakeholders can realize their leadership also depends on how their engagement with others is impacted by the situation and by the environment; and, (3) Building and using cross-campus relationships is a critical tool for stakeholders to influence academic decisions.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, the loves of my life: my partner, Mary Jo Sougstad, and my children, Sierra Christine Hirko and Sage Olivia Hirko. We are a team recognizing that our work together will lead to a brighter future. The love and devotion from my family inspires me to be a better person, a better husband, and a better father.

I dedicate this dissertation to Dan and Mary Sougstad, my in-laws, for their support. These two individuals provide me with a living example of what is meant by integrity and wisdom. And, I dedicate this dissertation to my twin brother, Rhett Hirko, an individual to whom I can always count on for support and understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What affects individual decision-making within higher education helps to provide an understanding of how to influence strategies on future decisions. In its simplest form, and assuming a bureaucratic, rational way of organizational functioning (Bess & Dee, 2008), learning who has the greatest impact in decision-making requires only a review of job titles of individuals or looking at the top rungs of organizational charts; this will show who has greater authority. However, research has demonstrated that higher education organizations do not often follow the tenets of rational bureaucracies and that the different and unique environments of each college and university have a significant effect on institutional decision-making (Bess & Dee, 2008).

Among other factors that affect postsecondary institutional decision-making, Alfred (2006) considered external drivers ("shaped by forces outside of the institution" [p. 105]) and internal drivers ("dynamics inside the institution" [p. 105]). External drivers affecting decision-making include stakeholders, competition, economy, and policies and programs from federal, state, or local governments (Alfred, 2006; Bess & Dee, 2008; Brown, 1982; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996; Scott, 2003). Internal drivers affecting decision-making include stakeholders, organizational structure, campus culture, individual personalities, and interpersonal interactions among members (Alfred 2006; Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 1978; Bess & Dee, 2008; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Brown, 1982; Chaffee, 1985; Duderstadt, 2001; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996). What is less clear is how these internal and external drivers are related to the perceived influence of stakeholders, on decisions made in semi-autonomous units in a given college or university.

Implicit leadership theory suggests that individuals within an organization often expect leadership from those at the higher levels of the organizational ladder (McShane & Glinow,

2008). However, in postsecondary institutions, the model of shared governance of administration and faculty (Bess & Dee, 2008; Bogue & Aper, 2000; Clark & Youn, 1976; Duderstadt, 2001), and the nature of how these institutions operate (often as a loosely coupled system) (Orton & Weick, 1991; Weick, 1976) provide a different rationale to consider who is involved in making decisions. Some fairly autonomous units retain levels of independence in making decisions; such units include physical plant, food service, public relations, global outreach, institutional technology services, and intercollegiate athletics (Bok, 2003; Duderstadt, 2001). These non-academic units are provided leeway (or, some level of autonomy) in how they make decisions regardless of how those decisions may impact the broader institution or campus climate (Duderstadt, 2001). The semi-autonomous nature of athletics is a particularly interesting unit in which to consider perceived stakeholder influence on postsecondary decision-making because the amount of media attention paid to athletics adds public scrutiny to decisions; and, the historic tensions between academics and athletics makes it less clear who is most influential in decisions related to the particular group of students who participate in athletics. That is the purpose of this research.

Many non-academic units within a university, including athletics, provide significant benefits to an institution's mission despite potentially distracting educational values. For example, there is a vocal contingent of faculty and administrators who appreciate the contributions of athletics to the mission of higher education. External forces, such as alumni, financial supporters, and media attention provide potential significant support of athletics (Toma, 2003; Zimbalist, 2001) while internally, athletics provide benefits such as institutional identity (Duderstadt, 2003; Toma, 2003; Tratchtenberg, 2008), community pride (Moore, 1989; Toma, 2003), and student-athletes acquiring skills and discipline learned from participating in the

athletic experience (Miracle & Rees, 1994; Pascarella & Smart, 1991; Ryan, 1989; Scott, 2002; Toma, 2003).

Yet, these benefits are juxtaposed against comparable criticisms of preferential treatment and undue privilege (Sperber, 2000; Zimbalist, 2001). The end result is debate about who should be in charge and most influential in decisions about athletics on a college campus. For instance, critics of the semi-autonomous nature of intercollegiate athletics claim that college sports devalue the mission of higher education because of its overemphasis on responding to external forces such as commercialization (Duderstadt, 2003; Flower, 2003; Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010, 2001; Sperber, 2000, 1990), public pressure for success in athletic competition without the same demand for academic success (Bok, 2003; Duderstadt, 2003; Stern, 2003; Thelin, 1994), and special privileges afforded to athletics (Sperber, 2000; Zimbalist, 2001). From within higher education, many faculty and administrators criticize athletics as devaluing the mission of higher education by spending a disproportionate amount of attention and energy on athletics instead of academics (Bok, 2003; Briggs, 1996; Duderstadt, 2003; French, 2004; Meggyesy, 2000; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Sperber, 2000, 1990; Thelin, 1994).

Several specific examples of internal and external forces help to elucidate how decision-making in athletics has created tension between athletics and academics. In 2009, the University of Oregon (UO) rescheduled spring graduation in order to host the NCAA Track and Field championships. The decision improved the visibility of UO across the nation, increased commercial benefits to the institution and the community, and provided a prominent stage of competition for the participating student-athletes. Yet, many at UO felt the decision also compromised the priority of academics at UO as subservient to the desires of athletics.

Subsequently, the decision drew sharp ire from UO faculty: "Oregon athletics and the university administration are again reaching for a quick payout at the expense of academic quality and institutional integrity" (Tublitz, 2009). Those who work in athletics also acknowledge the academic-athletic tension. Gerald Gurney, senior associate athletics director at the University of Oklahoma, expressed concern about the use of academically underprepared students to help athletic teams succeed: "Think about the terror a poorly prepared student-athlete must feel … in the classroom. Imagine how that affects their daily lives. It's a far more formidable opponent than anything they'll face on the court or on the field" (Weiberg, 2009, para. 5). In 2008, *USA Today* published an investigative series that found student-athletes' choice of major was significantly affected by a combination of policies and practices that require athletes to progress toward graduation at a certain rate without consideration of how significant time commitments for their sport impact their course selection (Brady, 2008). A 2009 report from the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics included comments from a president of a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) member institution, expressing concern about the impact to the mission of education from significant media attention on athletics: "There's too much identification of a university with non-academic aspects, distracting from values of higher education and from desirable values in society" (Knight Commission, 2009, p. 30).

As noted by former Harvard University president Derek Bok (2003) and former University of Michigan president James Duderstadt (2003), and as also found in a Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (2007) survey of more than 2,000 faculty nationwide, the problem was that some stakeholders may have had too great an influence on academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics despite the fact that academics was outside of their

purview. And, other stakeholders perceived they felt powerless to influence academic decisions in athletics despite their expertise in education, curriculum, or student development. The resulting tension between academics and athletics was due to the perception of decisions that provided coaches and student-athletes the tools to succeed on the playing field as the priority over resources for the same student-athletes, and their instructors, to succeed in the classroom.

The extent to which academic success plays a role in the development of athletic policies, programs, or practices may be affected by the influence of the stakeholders involved. In addition, there is an expectation that the perceived influence of stakeholders may vary based on the policy, program, or practice. For instance, athletic directors involved in the competitive nature of athletics may have more influence than faculty or provosts in shaping academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics; while other policies, programs, or practices may improve an institution's athletic success, they may also be detrimental to student-athletes' individual academic success. In addition, considering that curricular matters are within the faculty bailiwick, it is reasonable to expect that faculty perceive they have some influence on academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics but the research is inconclusive (Alfred, 2006; Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2007; NCAA, 2006).

The aforementioned examples demonstrate how decisions that relate to the fit and function of intercollegiate athletics within the educational mission of higher education are an area of concern involving both internal and external environments for many of the nation's largest and most high-profile higher education institutions (Bok, 2001; Duderstadt, 2001; Toma, 2003). The reference to environments in this study includes factors, drivers, culture, and climate. A high-profile field such as intercollegiate athletics is an appropriate area to research perceived stakeholder influence in decisions because the pressure to make decisions that help athletic teams

win is felt not only by the players, but by coaches, athletic administrators, college presidents, and others in leadership positions (Duderstadt, 2003; Estler & Nelson, 2005); and, these decisions are often covered and promoted in all forms of the media. Decisions made to succeed athletically are often perceived to be at odds with an institution's academic mission (Duderstadt, 2003; Sperber, 2000; Thelin, 1994). Furthermore, the greatest amount of attention in the highest level of intercollegiate athletic competition (NCAA Division I-FBS) is paid to the sports of football and men's basketball (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010; Toma, 2003) in which academic performance has historically lagged behind most other sports at the NCAA Division I level of competition (Duderstadt, 2003; Lapchick, 2006; NCAA, 2006a; NCAA, 2009).

A better understanding of the influence and perceived influence of different stakeholders in making decisions that affect the academic performance of student-athletes would help to clarify why and how certain policies, programs, or practices are implemented. Specifically, choosing to investigate stakeholders' perceived influence on academic decisions that impact football and men's basketball may help shed light on the influence of stakeholders in decisions that impact fairly autonomous units and, more broadly, in higher education institutions. It is expected the results will lead to implications which identify ways that individual stakeholders in fairly autonomous units, such as athletics, can be influential.

Research Questions

This study is intended to understand how stakeholders influence decision-making at major research universities, particularly who, how, and why individuals impact academic decisions related to athletics. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What factors contribute to the perceived influence of stakeholders on decisions about academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics?

2. What is the relative amount of perceived influence of stakeholders on decisions about academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics?

Definitions

The following are definitions, including several academic policies, programs, and practices that were used to understand the relative amount of influence of stakeholders.

College athletics refers to athletics competition involving individuals from two or more American higher education institutions. More specifically, for this study, college athletics referred to intercollegiate athletics at major research universities who were also members of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) most competitive level, Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS).

Stakeholders relate to "groups and individuals that affect or are affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices, or goals of an organization" (McDaniel & Miskel, 2002, p. 329). More generally, stakeholders are "those elements in the environment surrounding the organization that have some reason to care about what happens to it" (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 715). With respect to intercollegiate athletics, stakeholders are individuals with a stake in the outcomes of athletic policies, programs, or practices, and may also refer to individuals who play an important role in developing intercollegiate athletics policy (Estler & Nelson, 2005). Each of the stakeholders who relate to academic decisions affecting athletics is addressed in the next chapter, but those stakeholders on which this study focuses included: admissions directors, alumni, athletic directors, boosters, faculty, media, presidents, provosts, and Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS) directors.

Significance of Study

This study is relevant across campus, not just within athletics, but to decision-makers involved, and influencing, other areas of campus. Three academic policies, programs, or practices affecting college athletes are used as an example of how stakeholders can understand situations and use strategy to influence decisions in areas of their interest. These policies, programs, or practices are: Academic Progress Rate (APR), special admittance policies, and the process of athletes selecting a major. APR is the measure adopted by members of the NCAA intended to assess each Division I athletic team's progress toward graduating its players, with associated penalties for not meeting established benchmarks. The intent of APR is to provide a term-by-term progress report of all members of an athletic team toward graduation (NCAA 2006a); however, APR does not directly measure student-athletes' learning.

Many colleges have a special admittance policy that allows for gifted individuals to be admitted, even though their high school grade point average, ACT, or SAT test scores may not meet an institution's minimum admissions standards (Andre & James, 1991; Byers, 1995; Duderstadt, 2003; Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2001; Lapchick, 2006; Thelin, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001). This includes athletically-gifted individuals who applied to major research institutions.

Major selection refers to the practice of steering student-athletes to specific majors deemed less academically rigorous for various reasons, primarily to ensure that student-athletes meet both NCAA and institutional requirements as being on track toward graduation within a five-year period (Brady, 2008; Weiberg, 2009). Similarly, *clustering* refers to the practice of student-athletes' decisions to take a specific course with several other student-athletes either as a form of friendship with their peers, because time demands from their sport restricted their choice

of courses (NCAA, 2009), because the courses are perceived as less challenging (Diacon, 2008; Thamel, 2006), or because there is a professor deemed favorable to grading student-athletes because of the student's role as an athlete (Diacon, 2008; Thamel, 2006).

By using the three aforementioned academic policies, programs, or practices affecting college athletes, this study will help to better understand how stakeholders influence policies, programs, and practices in higher education through the context of a semi-autonomous unit, namely intercollegiate athletics. And, stakeholders may likely perceive their influence varies based upon the policy, program, or practice. As noted by Estler and Nelson (2005), "an understanding of the nature and role of forces influencing intercollegiate athletics allows new strategies for planning and prioritizing sports within the college or university" (p. xi). An investigation into academic decision-making related to athletics helps provide useful perspectives on the nature of influence in the development and implementation of policy, programs, and practices, particularly how certain positions or groups interact within and across unit structures when making decisions.

Internal and external environmental contexts that influence decision-making, including situational and organizational factors, are also considered in this study. The organizational structure of a higher education institution is a useful perspective through which to learn about perceived stakeholder influence on decision-making in semi-autonomous units by allowing for hierarchical, horizontal, or other political processes to be taken into account, including when examining decisions about athletics (Bess & Dee, 2008; Bok, 2003; Duderstadt, 2003).

More specifically, using the area of athletics at America's largest institutions – particularly major research universities – should help shed light on stakeholders who made decisions affecting a fairly autonomous area of campus. Stakeholders, including administrators,

faculty, and the public, could gain a more clear understanding of the rationale behind developing and implementing policies, programs, or practices – most significantly how positions or groups interact on decisions.

Questions about the influence of stakeholders provide the direction for this study. The questions are intended to learn how and why stakeholders should position themselves to be influential in decisions, whether in their area of discipline or otherwise. Further, the questions provide insight into the extent that stakeholders' perception about their influence varies based on different policies, programs, or practicies. Several additional questions may help to provide answers which may be useful to campus stakeholders. For instance: Why, and to what extent, did some stakeholders have, or perceive to have, influence over decisions either within or outside of their area of expertise? How was stakeholder influence, or perceived influence, reflected in alignment between policies, programs, or practices and institutional mission? How did stakeholders perceive they influenced on decisions impact the type of policy, program, or practice that was implemented? To what extent did academic policies, programs, or practices shaped by stakeholders affect the academic performance of students, including student-athletes?

Summary

This chapter provided the rationale for investigating stakeholder influence in decision-making in higher education, using as an area of study the fairly autonomous area of athletics, particularly considering the internal and external forces that resulted in tensions between academics and athletics. The relative amount of perceived influence of stakeholders involved in decisions likely significantly impacts how policies, programs, or practices are created, and how the decisions subsequently affect students. This investigation addresses a need to better understand who, why, and how certain stakeholders influence decision-making in higher

education, including decisions in intercollegiate athletics. The next chapter reviews the literature relating to the theories of power and influence, as well as a theoretical presentation on organizational structure and governance. Stakeholder theory was used to construct an understanding of those individuals who have a stake in, and can influence, academic decisions in semi-autonomous units, such as intercollegiate athletics. In addition, research on academic policies affecting intercollegiate athletics was provided as a context to understand who, how, and why certain stakeholders may be, or may perceive themselves to be, influential in decision-making.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The tension between athletics and academics in higher education plays out in public and private arenas across the nation, including daily newspapers, organizational think tanks like the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics or the Drake Group, and in boardrooms among university trustees. On campuses, making decisions that create (or merely imply) tradeoffs of academic needs against athletic needs often include a clash of values propagated by many different people involved in the issues: faculty, academic administrators, athletic administrators, media interests, alumni, and others. Examining this decision-making process through an investigation of influence and power among the stakeholders will help to better understand the academic-athletic tensions in higher education (Estler & Nelson, 2005). This chapter provides the context for the current study by reviewing the literature on influence in intercollegiate athletics and in higher education, an understanding of the role of stakeholders in higher education decision-making, and policies, programs, or practices affecting the academic performance of student-athletes.

The conceptual framework is drawn from an analysis of four areas of literature: power and influence in higher education, organizational theory, stakeholder theory, and a review of intercollegiate athletic policies relating to the academic performance of student-athletes. The first area of the literature review investigates how difference aspects of power influence decision-making processes on academic policies within higher education. The second area includes a discussion of how colleges and universities operate from a shared governance perspective and the structure of colleges and universities as loosely coupled systems within which decisions are made. The third area uses stakeholder theory to explain the influence of different stakeholders'

on decision-making. The final area investigates three academic policies, programs, and practices common among many institutions in NCAA Division I athletics. Organizing the chapter this way helps the reader understand how academic policies, programs, and practices can be used as lenses to see stakeholders influence in the academic side of intercollegiate athletics.

Power and Influence in Athletics

To frame this study, I consider how power and influence affect the creation, process, and outcome of decisions on academic policies and practices affecting intercollegiate athletics. When combined with legitimacy (formal rules, structure, and control), power can take the form of authority (formal control to make final decisions) and influence (ability to affect decisions) (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). This study focuses on how influence impacts decision-making, particularly the extent that stakeholders perceive they can affect decisions on academic policies and practices in athletics despite the hierarchical nature of their position (or, despite their authority). Below I present an understanding of power through which influence is realized.

The common thread with respect to the different aspects of power is that power is a form of control and those in power are dependent upon their relationship with others. Weber's (1947) classic definition is "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will, despite resistance, and regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (p. 152). I prefer the definition of power by Parsons which considers situational aspects, relationships, perceptions, and considers units as well as individuals: "power is the realistic capacity of a system-unit to actualize its interests within the context of system-

interaction and in this sense exert influence on process in the system" (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980, p.17).

This study considers a stakeholder's perceived influence on decision-making of academic policies and practices in athletics through the ability to create, place, or use power in a particular relationship, potentially by reward or punishment (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Many individuals who participate, administer, or follow college sports attempt to influence individuals who have the authority to affect campus athletics policies and practices; for example, this may include faculty who attempt to influence a policy to ensure student-athletes who lack proper academic preparedness are not admitted to campus. Those within intercollegiate athletics recognized control as a key aspect of power when the NCAA followed the 1991 recommendations of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics and changed its governing model to strengthen presidential control at institutions and at the NCAA (Knight Commission, 2001; Solow, 1998).

Constructing an understanding of influence in college athletics depends on a realization of how stakeholders' perceive their power in a higher education setting. Kilian (1969) noted that most identifiable human characteristics are sources of power depending on the circumstance. He shared a variety of individual traits that may help to create power: money, knowledge, intelligence, competence and skill, physical force, and coercion. Certain group characteristics may also affect power, including motivation, zeal, dedication, and clearly perceived values. Furthermore, other individual skills help to construct power such as courage, audacity, energy, speed, and agility. Considering the distribution of power from a business perspective, some companies allocate power differently in the business world: either through personal characteristics and networking (ability to negotiate and to convince), or by successful job

performance, formal rank, and loyalty (Schein, 2004). Of particular importance is to understand any of these characteristics are converted to power by authority and influence by the role group position, or converted to power by their perceived value of others. "To convert them to power, the power seeker must find human beings who value the things sufficiently to obey his orders in return" (Friedrich, 1937, p. 23). These characteristics are a useful checklist to help identify the sources of power stakeholders use to influence athletic decision-making on academic policies or practices.

Understanding the influence of stakeholder groups in college athletics should also take note of the nature of power in the loosely coupled organizational dynamics of higher education (Weick, 1976), since "groups and individuals seek to maximize their local advantage, even at the expense of others" (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 540). Often, when one assumes a position or some new responsibility, the individual may attempt to enhance their influence on decisions while in that position. An individual's abilities (as noted in the sources of power above) to expand their power is separate from their authority, or the organizational power ascribed to their job. Therefore, this study focuses on the sources of power by considering the relative amount of perceived influence between different stakeholder groups on academic policies, programs, and practices. An example of considering relative amounts of perceived influence comes from Solow's (1998) study of faculty athletic committees. The research included concerns that, while Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs) are positioned at the junction between faculty and athletics administration, their influence on decision-making may be diminished to the extent they are co-opted into "less critical views of athletics" (Solow, 1998, p. 19).

Two recent studies from the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics help to provide some stakeholder perceptions about the amount of power affecting intercollegiate

athletics decision-making. In a 2007 study of faculty perceptions on athletics-related decisions, the Athletic Director was "perceived [by faculty] to have more power than the institution's president, board of trustees, faculty, or alumni" (Knight Commission, 2007, p.8). And, a 2009 study of presidents from Division I-FBS member institutions revealed that "presidents believe they have limited power to effect change on their own campuses regarding athletics financing and the larger problems it has created" (Knight Commission, 2009, p. 16). The same study noted that "outside sources of income has had a significant impact on big-time intercollegiate athletics as a whole, and hence also on presidents' control over budgets and influence over reform" (Knight Commission, 2009, p. 17). It is notable that the studies are among the few to investigate the perceived amount of influence or power of stakeholders on intercollegiate athletics. However, the studies do not consider specific academic policies or practices affecting college athletes; rather, they reflect faculty and presidential views toward college athletics as a whole, the financial aspects of college athletics, and also the affect of athletics on the values of higher education. Furthermore, the relative amount of perceived influence by stakeholder (such as faculty influence in relation to presidents' influence and the influence of other stakeholders) is not investigated by either of the Knight Commission studies.

Understanding the role of influence within the organizational structure of higher education is an important consideration given the model of intercollegiate athletics on campus. The organizational dynamics of the higher education institution affects the role that stakeholders have on athletic decision-making. And, how athletics fits on campus and within the academic mission is affected by stakeholder relationships. The next part of this chapter is intended to provide an understanding of the organizational dynamics of higher education institutions, and how they affect the influence of stakeholders on athletic decision-making.

College Athletic Decision-Making

American higher education systems are complex by nature, and colleges have various

organizational structures and contexts in which power can influence decisions across an

institution (Clark & Youn, 1976; Duderstadt, 2001), including decisions affecting intercollegiate

athletics. Decision-making in higher education is both bureaucratic and collegial, depending on

the organizational structure, the circumstances, and the environment (Birnbaum, 1989). In other

words, while decisions need to be made (describing the need for bureaucracy), there is a wide

variety of experience and knowledge that allows for sharing information (describing the need for

collegiality) with regard to decisions. Within this complex structure, higher education

administrators and faculty members are separated by linked (Bess & Dee, 2008): separated by

their own discipline, different departmental structure, or possibly in a different building, but,

linked within a bureaucratic structure involving decision-making from other offices, including

offices with higher authority. Examples of this separate-but-linked structure include a president

approving a budget request by a college, or a faculty athletic council reviewing a student-athlete

admissions policy. The aforementioned structure describes a shared governance model

(Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 1978; Dill, 1984) which allows for faculty, each member of

whom is often primarily focused on their discipline, to have significant influence on the

operations and administration of the university including in areas beyond, or perceived to be

beyond, their bailiwick (Duderstadt, 2001). For instance, faculty members within colleges and

departments have their own internal power and influence over personnel and curriculum (Bess &

Dee, 2008; Clark & Youn, 1976); the same could be said for administrators operating from their

areas of expertise (Bess & Dee, 2008). Within the governance structure, faculty share a

collective value toward academic principles as the predominant force around which individual

and group roles are shaped. However, for this collective value to exist as a faculty cornerstone, faculty purposefully exclude administrators, students, student-athletes and athletics, and other non-faculty members as contributors to this value of academic principles (Brown, 1982). As a result, the model of shared governance leads to a tension often found when those lower on the hierarchical ladder with their own academic-centric value-set attempt to influence decision-makers with greater authority; or, attempt to include those in other areas of campus which have different, misunderstood, or potentially conflicting values (Duderstadt, 2001).

Because of the complexity of how higher education institutions are managed, organizational theories can be useful in understanding how certain elements of a higher education institution work with each other, such as academic departments, campus administration, or athletics departments. Weick's (1976) analysis of higher education institutions as "loosely coupled" systems is particularly useful in this study because it provides an understanding of the identity of different elements of a college, as well as the interrelation and responsiveness between the elements in certain events or decisions. Those elements that are responsive but separate with their own identities are "loosely coupled"; the more responsive, the "tighter" they are coupled. Loose coupling provides a context to look more directly at the "human workings which underlie organizational structure" (Orton & Weick, 1990, p. 218), particularly the processes that create a complex, higher education institution. Orton and Weick (1990) call for a dialectical interpretation of loosely coupled systems in which each of the elements are distinct and are also responsive. The process of decision-making in a loosely coupled system would allow for distinctiveness and responsiveness to influence a decision. This "judgment decision-making strategy" (Thompson, 1967, p. 138) refers to university structures

that include a combination of multiple perspectives on situations to help create a collective judgment.

Athletics has a unique fit in higher education's organizational structure; as a part of the institution, it must reflect the institution's academic values, yet it also is often provided a semi-autonomous nature that many believe allows for decisions external to academic values and more in line with a business culture than an academic culture (Andre & James, 1991; Bok, 2003; Duderstadt, 2003; Estler & Nelson, 2004; Sperber, 1990). Frey (1994) found that college athletics departments are loosely coupled within an institution and the complexity of athletics makes it difficult for stakeholders external to the athletics department to have any control over athletics. Borland, Howard, et al. (2009) state authority over athletic decision-making can be from certain stakeholders either internal to the institution (president, provost, faculty, fiscal officers, athletic coaches) or external to the institution (state government legislators, athletic associations, athletic leagues, and state institution governing boards). The authors note that stakeholders' engagement in athletics issues also gives them certain authority because they end up expressing what they expect out of, and from within, athletics. Some stakeholders' expectations from athletics may include winning teams, ethical coaches, positive academic performance, or quality athletic facilities.

Considering loosely coupled systems as a context for decision-making within higher education helps to understand how institutions allow individuals or groups on campus in similar or different areas to influence decisions. By identifying boundaries around specific events and elements to be "coupled," such as specific academic policies or practices affecting athletics, researchers can better understand how an organization operates. Through the use of loose coupling as a context, researchers can couple organizational structure, the authority of those

making decisions, and the specific policies or practices under consideration. As noted by Weick (1976), "the question of what is available for coupling and decoupling within an organization is an eminently practical question for anyone wishing to have some leverage on a system" (p. 39). Therefore, the next area presents how stakeholder theory can help understand how certain individuals use leverage to affect athletics decision-making. Literature about the role of different influential stakeholders in athletics decision-making is also provided.

Stakeholders

As part of the study of the effects of power influencing academic decision-making in college athletics, a look at the role of stakeholders perceived influence on policies and practices is in order. Stakeholders are an important construct in intercollegiate athletics policy by discussing the influence of presidential leadership, commentary from boards of governors, faculty recommendations, and foundations (Estler & Nelson, 2005). Faculty, alumni and boosters, media, politicians, presidents, and athletic directors were identified by Duderstadt (2003) as stakeholder groups influencing athletics at the University of Michigan. Stakeholder theory is a useful lens within educational policy because of the impact of educational decisions, actions, policies, practices and goals on parents, academics, business, students, and others in education (McDaniel & Miskel, 2002). And, stakeholder salience is directly related to administrators' perceptions of power, legitimacy, and urgency (a claim for immediate attention) (Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1999). In other words, when considering implementing or adapting policy designed by administrators, certain stakeholders undoubtedly have a strong role in the outcome. The theory posits that power, legitimacy, and urgency are attributes that can change for any individual or relationship and are perceived differently by different individuals (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Power, legitimacy, and urgency are also socially constructed by

stakeholders and are critical components to consider in stakeholder influence (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Thus, social relationships and interactions between and among stakeholders also impact organizational decision-making (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997; Rowley, 1997).

Different levels of organizational dynamics within a campus include different intersections of stakeholders engrained in myriad institutional policies and practices, with each stakeholder potentially having a different influence on policy making. Identifying stakeholders' perception of power, urgency, and legitimacy can help determine their influence on academic policies and practices in athletics. Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) propose three categories of stakeholders depending on their possession of power, urgency, and legitimacy (Figure 1). Latent stakeholders have low influence in an organization's decision-making, possessing only one of the three attributes. Expectant stakeholders have moderate influence in an organization's decision-making, possessing two of the three attributes. Definitive stakeholders have high influence in an organization's decision-making, possessing all three attributes.

Phillips (2003) stated it is the "job of the theorist to suggest reasons for inclusion of an entity as a stakeholder group" (p. 141). The literature was used to develop an understanding of potential stakeholders which may influence academic policies in athletics. This review discusses how stakeholders intersect with academic policies and practices in intercollegiate athletics, provides insight about the values of those with (or without) the influence on athletic decision-making, and provides an understanding of how stakeholders may perceive academic decision-making in athletics.

Athletic Directors.

At many higher educational institutions which provide intercollegiate athletics at the most competitive NCAA level (Division I), the Athletic Director is in charge of the operations of the
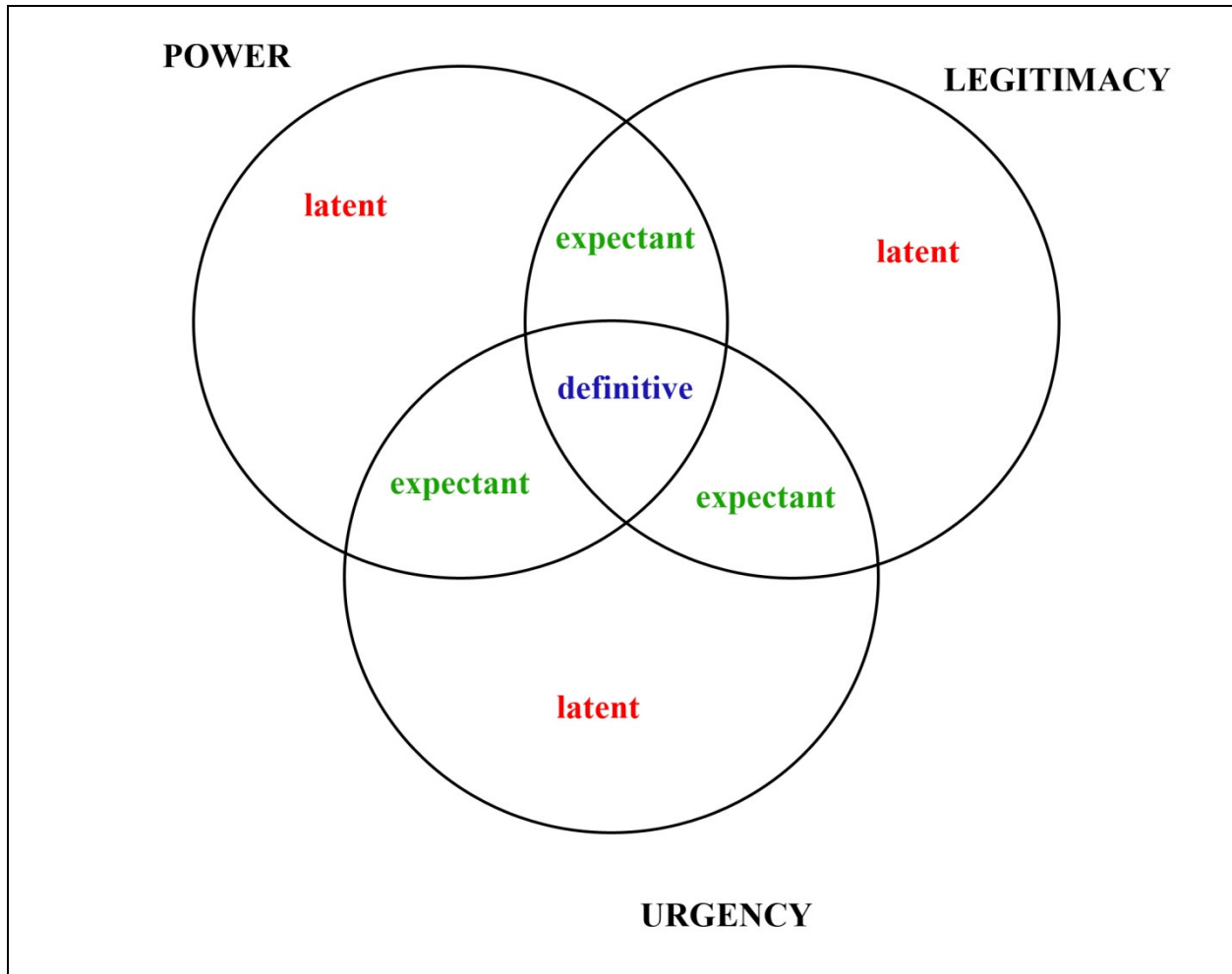
Figure 1. Qualitative Classes of Stakeholders. Adapted from "Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts," by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), *The Academy of Management Review, 22*(4), p. 872. For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation.

athletics department. The Athletic Director is perceived to be either an expectant or a definitive stakeholder with both power and legitimacy; depending on the decision to be made, he or she may also have urgency. The Athletic Director has a stake in the direction of the institution, the Athletics Department, and the student-athletes; and, the institution has a moral obligation to the Athletic Director both as an employee and as the primary individual who influences decisions in athletics. An athletic director has a wide array of complicated administrative duties involving

issues of financial, personnel, rules and laws, and steering the department through the institutional culture. He or she is responsible for the integrity and financial health of the athletics department (Duderstadt, 2003).

The influence of an athletic director as a stakeholder on academic decisions in athletics is similar to the role of a CEO of a major corporation (Sperber, 1990). When it comes to athletic decisions, faculty perceive the Athletic Director has more power than any one else at an institution, including the President and Board of Trustees (Knight Commission, 2007; Solow, 1998). Yet, in their analysis of the structural design of several college athletics departments, Cunningham and Rivera (2001) found that the extent of centralized power of an athletic director did not affect the educational success (graduation rates) of athletes.

Faculty.

Faculty have a stake in the direction of the institution, the academic success of the students and the institution, and the development of curriculum. Further, the institution has a moral obligation to the faculty because they are employees who also influence curricular decisions (Alfred, 2006; Clark, 1963; NCAA, 2006b, Schulman & Bowen, 2001). In academic decisions, faculty may be perceived as expectant stakeholders, with legitimate claims in controlling curricular matters, and with power through academic governance. In respect to athletics, "faculty attitudes may affect the academic performance of athletes" (Shulman & Bowen, 2001, p. 73) particularly through athletics scheduling conflicting with class time and a negative perception of academic preparedness of athletes. While faculty perceive to have a certain level of influence on academic decisions or policies affecting athletes, the actual power faculty have to affect decisions may not be as great as they perceive or desire. Faculty historically have a "lack of power in governance" (Thelin, 1994, p. 187) in reforming athletic

23

policy as a result of the locus of control for athletic policy decisions away from academics, the role of faculty in the structure of the American university, and failure of institutional leadership to listen to faculty in non-academic decisions. Many faculty feel helpless (or powerless) to influence athletics policies on campus. A 2007 survey of 2,000 faculty members at 23 NCAA Division I campuses found that "professors are generally dissatisfied with the extent to which faculty input is considered when athletics decisions are made, and are more dissatisfied (44 percent) than not (25 percent) with the range of faculty perspectives considered by administrators when athletics positions are formulated" (Knight Commission, 2007, p.5.).

Yet, the NCAA recognizes the legitimacy of faculty in athletics through a Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR), in which each NCAA member institution is required to appoint a faculty member to serve in an official role to ensure institutions maintain the appropriate balance between academics and intercollegiate athletics. In most cases, FARs are given their authority by appointment from administrators (presidents, athletic directors, the NCAA), so as a result, there is concern that FARs are less critical of athletics (Solow, 1998). Faculty athletic committees typically consist of faculty members who serve as watchdogs of the athletics department and institutional athletic issues, and serve at the nexus between academics and athletics. One insight into the potential of faculty influencing academic policy-making in athletics was provided by Carodine, Almond, and Grotto (2001), who proposed that faculty committees could "recommend policy changes related to academic issues affecting or affected by intercollegiate athletes, admissions procedures, and the academic progress of all student athletes at NCAA member institutions" (p. 31). However, Sperber (2000) was outspoken about faculty athletic committees as ineffective because they do not include faculty who believe athletics

corrupts academic values. Therefore, the extent that faculty have power and legitimacy over academic policies and practices in athletics seems questionable.

Directors of Admissions.

The selection of students to attend an institution and students' subsequent academic success impacts institutional prestige. To that extent, directors of admissions affect the future direction of institutions by creating and implementing policies and practices which lead to admittance decisions. Directors of admissions have a legitimate stake in which students will be admitted and thus influence decisions on the composition of the student body, including the admission of student-athletes. Admissions decisions may develop a sense of urgency when reviewing all applicants to be admitted, particularly at institutions with more competitive admissions process or with less academic support services for students. In their study of college athletics and educational values, James Schulman and William Bowen (2001) identified the admissions process as the "key junction in creating not only the student body of the present but also the alumni of the future" (p. 30). Certainly, the stake is high for admissions officers to make decisions when potential students (or athletes) may be academically underprepared. The authors clearly stated the pressure on admissions officers when institutional practices influence admissions, and when the largest NCAA Division I institutions are willing to accept substantially lower academic qualifications in favor of gifted athletic qualifications. While pressures exist, admissions offices use athletics to help promote the institution as its front porch, or its welcome mat, to undergraduates (Sperber, 2000) despite research which disputes the effectiveness of athletic success on admissions (Frank, 2004).

Provosts.

A provost, or vice president of academic affairs, has legitimacy as the chief academic officer at a college or university. A provost also has power as the campus leader with respect to the values of academic integrity and helping to formulate academic policy on a campus. The influence of provosts on academic decisions in athletics may be greater for those that believe in the value of faculty involvement as a key to successfully shared governance; and, even moreso if busy presidents provide provosts with heightened authority over the day-to-day operations of an institution (Miller & Pope, 2002). Decisions on policies affecting the education of college athletes as students -- within the academic mission of an institution -- seemingly fall within provosts' bailiwick. While the power and legitimacy of provosts categorize them as expectant stakeholders in academic decisions, this may not be as transferable to the influence they have on academic policies and practices specifically in athletics.

Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS) Directors.

In a 2008 article, *USA Today* demonstrated the pressure on student-athlete academic support services (SASS), which serves on the front lines of the academic side of college athletics: "Teams that fail to meet academic standards can lose scholarships. That puts [SASS directors] in the crosshairs as they juggle constituencies with competing interests: athletes who want to play, coaches who want them eligible and provosts who want them to graduate" (Brady, 2008, para. 8). As explained below, due to their direct contact with athletes, SASS directors have a legitimate stake in how an organization's academic policies affect student-athletes. Historically, advising student-athletes has focused on maintaining academic eligibility and graduation rates rather than on enhancing the academic, personal, and athletic development of the student-athlete (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). Since 1991, the NCAA has required member

institutions to provide academic support to athletes where necessary, which has legitimized the role of student-athlete support services across the country. Often, SASS directors are assigned to student-athletes in order to assist them with making decisions on course selection or major selection to help keep them on path to graduation. SASS directors differ from advisors in academic departments with respect to the particular knowledge of the scheduling and time commitments of athletic games, practice, and competition. Furthermore, SASS directors are knowledgeable of NCAA academic eligibility requirements and keeping student-athletes on track to graduation, and thus are often pressured by athletes, coaches, or the athletics department in decisions on specific student-athletes (Steeg, Upton, Bohr, & Berkowitz, 2008).

There is abundant literature which focuses on how policies or practices for SASS can improve the academic performance of athletes through better focus on student development, including social and psychological needs (Broughton & Neyer, 2001; Carodine, Almond, & Grotto, 2001; Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Hollis, 2002; Melendez, 2006). Within athletics departments, Cunningham & Rivera (2001) noted that graduation rates of athletes was not affected by the extent that employees were empowered to make decisions, including SASS directors at some institutions in which SASS was part of the athletics department. However, there is no research on the structural relationship between SASS and athletics departments within collegiate organizations; indeed, many SASS departments are not housed within athletics departments, and thus there may be differing types of accountability for SASS staff. Still, the NCAA requires institutions to account for the academic success of its student-athletes.

The literature also does not examine how SASS directors influence the creation of academic policies, programs, or practices. At minimum, SASS directors are latent stakeholders who influence academic policies and practices based on their legitimacy. But, the lack of

literature about the role of SASS directors as stakeholders speaks to the need to better understand the extent that they may influence academic policies and practices, particularly considering how SASS is at the front lines of the academic performance of student-athletes.

Presidents.

Although college presidents may be the CEO of their institution, many realize they are not completely "in charge" when dealing with athletic policies and practices. The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics acknowledged the stakeholder relationship of presidential influence in athletics in a 2001 report: "presidents and trustees must work in harness – not wage the battles so commonplace today over control of the athletic enterprise. Presidents cannot act on an issue as emotional and highly visible as athletics without the unwavering public support of their boards" (Knight Commission, 2001, p. 24). Comments from NCAA presidents in a 2009 study on the economic concerns in college athletics supported the feeling of powerlessness on individual campuses: "the presidents who have had their heads handed to them? A high percentage of them had that happen because it was something to do with athletics" (Knight Commission, 2009, p. 15); and, "the real power doesn't lie with the presidents; presidents have lost their jobs over athletics" (Knight Commission, 2009, p. 16). Certainly, presidents have legitimacy and have power at an institution, but the literature questions the extent that presidents as expectant stakeholders can influence athletics.

Alumni.

Alumni have an interest in the athletic success of their intercollegiate athletics program, but are not owed an obligation by the institution as it relates to academic decision-making in athletics. However, many alumni believe they have power to exert influence, despite resistance. Their power classifies them as latent stakeholders without legitimacy or urgency. For instance,

Duderstadt (2003) denigrates the motives of some alumni who become obsessed about athletics enough to "undermine their governance and hence integrity by putting excessive pressure on coaches, athletic directors, and even university presidents" (p. 250). Others note that alumni influence athletic directors and institutions enough to prioritize athletic success at the expense of academic needs (Kjeldsen, 1982; Sperber, 2000). The literature infers that the power exerted by alumni does influence athletic decision-making, if not academic decisions in athletics.

Boosters.

Like alumni, boosters may also wield significant financial influence on the athletic success of their intercollegiate athletics program. While boosters are owed an obligation for their financial contributions to athletics, they typically do not play any legitimate role in academic decision-making in athletics. Because of their financial contributions to college athletics (such as buying tickets to football games, contributing to athletic endowments, helping pay for new athletic facilities) boosters are seen as individuals who have influence yet, who may not appreciate the academic values of an institution (Sperber, 2000). Boosters "attract high-caliber athletes and coaches to a growing and successful athletic program. The college or university athletic program with a well organized booster club of political and economic elite will survive" (Frey, 1982, p. 227). The relationship is often a silent quid-pro-quo, as boosters also reap economic and political benefit from their common association with athletics. As noted in the 2009 Knight Commission presidential survey, major university presidents feel significant pressure from boosters to support or reject policies that may influence a team's wins or losses. Thus, boosters are latent stakeholders, who wield power but lack legitimacy and urgency.

Media.

In his mapping of stakeholders, Phillips (2003) includes media as a perfect example of stakeholders which can "help or hinder organizational objectives" (p. 126). Much of the opinion-making about college athletics and sport teams is driven by the disproportionate amount of media interest in sports as related to the academic enterprise. The high amount of attention the media pays to sports leads to a greater amount of urgency to issues in athletics, and thus greater awareness of sports by more people than awareness of a physics lab experiment, a debate in English class, or even a jazz band recital (Bailey & Littleton, 1991; Duderstadt, 2003). Organizational managers, such as athletic directors and presidents, should take account of the affects of the media on organizational decision-making (Phillips, 2003). The effect of the media on an institution's athletic program is influenced by the media's motives: a story can be investigative, or driven by entertainment or commercial demands (Duderstadt, 2003; Lapchick, 2006; Zimbalist, 2001). The motives and context of a media report may have as much influence on academic policies and practices in athletics as the content of the media report itself. The media seemingly have a latent stakeholder relationship, external to the institution with no legitimate role, but conceivably some urgency to influence decisions.

Summary.

The literature was used to develop a perception of how certain stakeholders may influence academic policies and practices in college athletics. More specifically, this chapter included discussions of perceptions of power, legitimacy, and urgency for each stakeholder. Another way to understand the literature review about each of the three of the aspects of influence (power, legitimacy, and urgency) for each stakeholder was by mapping each of the aspects onto the model of qualitative classes of stakeholders (Figure 2). For example, the
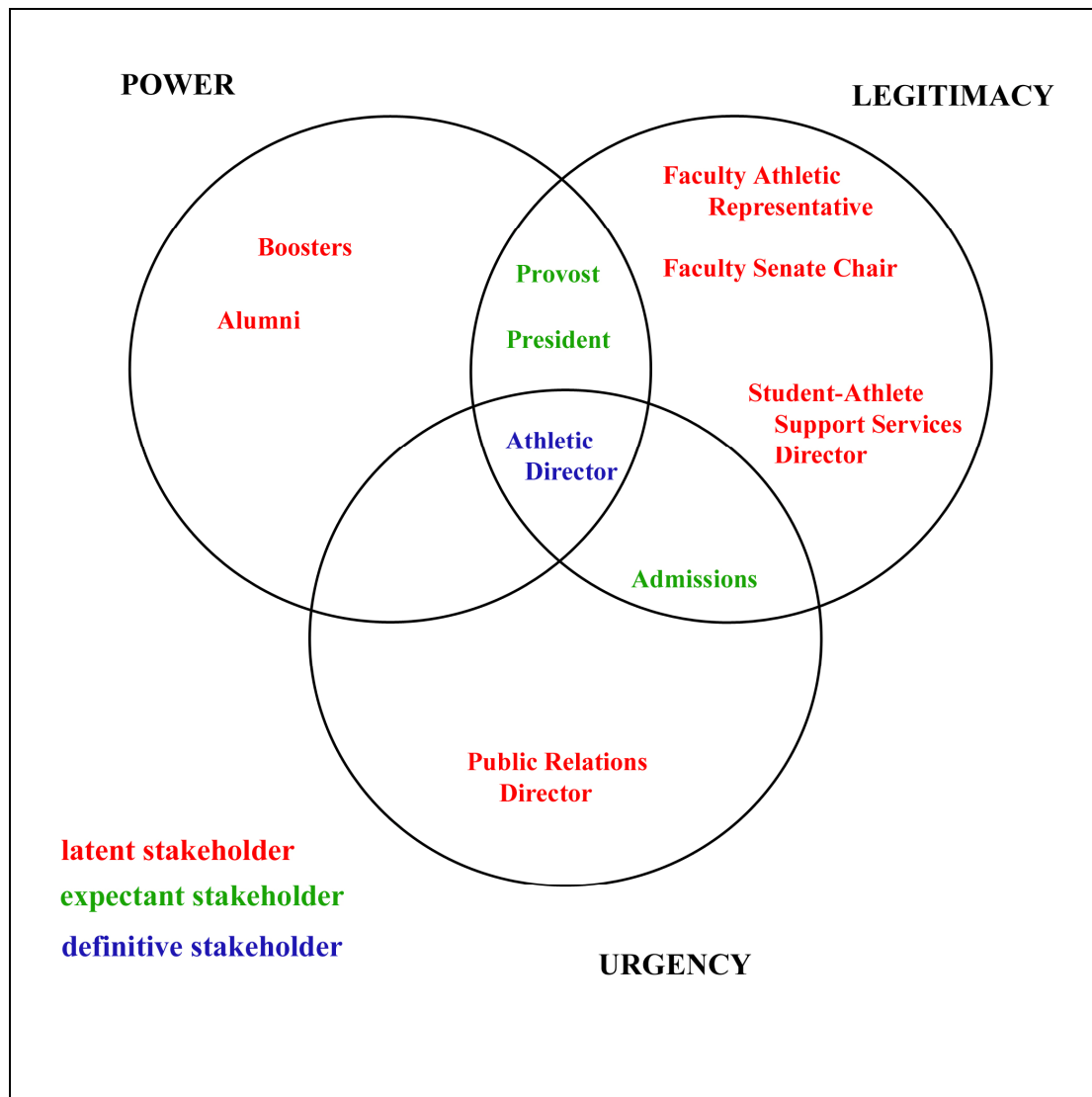
Figure 2. Perceptions from the literature of stakeholder influence on academic policies and practices in college athletics. Adapted from "Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts," by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), *The Academy of Management Review, 22*(4), p. 872.

aforementioned literature review of presidents stated that presidents had legitimacy and power, but the literature review did not include urgency: thus, presidents were included within the model as expectant stakeholders between power and legitimacy (included in the circle of power and the circle of legitimacy, without inclusion in the circle of urgency). This helped to create an initial understanding of the stakeholder relationships. However, the literature review demonstrated

limitations to this model in that it did not adequately define the relative amount of influence of each stakeholder. Further, the model did not adequately define the relative impact of social relationships on stakeholders' perceived influence, which may be particularly salient in decisions in loosely coupled organizations, such as higher education institutions.

Academic Policies and Practices in Athletics

To date, the literature about academic policies and practices in college athletics predominantly examines the outcomes from national policies instead of examining the stakeholders who influence institutional policies. Below is shared the more significant literature on academic policies and practices affecting college athletics, including NCAA Academic Progress Rates (APR), special admissions policies, and the practices of major and course selection. It is through an examination of these academic policies and practices that we can understand the role that stakeholders' perceive they may have to implement them at the institutional level.

One of the more significant policy changes affecting the influence over academic decision-making in athletics came from the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, which in 1989 recommended (and subsequently adopted by the NCAA) that decision-making power over NCAA policies be moved from athletic directors to presidents (Knight Commission, 1991; Thelin, 1994). This allowed for presidents of NCAA-member institutions to lead the adoption of policies such as Proposition 48 and Proposition 16 – fiercely debated by coaches, athletic directors, faculty, and presidents – which set minimum academic guidelines for student-athletes to qualify for intercollegiate competition (Petr & Paskus, 2009; Thomas, 2006). However, the federal graduation rate data used to help create those policies failed to consider the significant differences in mission and heterogeneity of Division I-FBS institutions (Ferris,

Finster, & McDonald, 2004). Similar concerns have been raised that the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR), implemented in 2005, fails to consider different institutional curricular policies which impact student-athlete's path to graduation (Diacon, 2008). Each college or university may have differing admissions and curricular practices and policies, thus reducing the validity of either the federal graduation rate or the APR as measures of assessing each institution's effectiveness of student-athletes' educational attainment.

So, while significant academic policies are created in aggregate, it is up to each institution to determine how best to implement policies and practices on their own campus. And, in loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976), higher education institutions rely on a variety of stakeholders to influence academic policies and practices. Below, I touch on the research of NCAA Academic Progress Rates, special admissions policies, and major and course selection in an attempt to gain insight on the potential role of stakeholder influence.

Academic Progress Rates (APR).

The research on the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR) has focused primarily on its ability to predict retention (Crom, Warren, Clark, Marolla, & Gerber, 2009; Marx, 2006), its use as a measurement of academic success (Diehl, 2009) and college choice (Lucas & Lovaglia, 2005), and comparing APR scores with institutional funding for academic support services (Bouchet & Scott, 2009). Next, there is a brief description of APR followed by a review of the scholarly discussion about its implementation at the institutional level.

The APR is intended to demonstrate the academic progress of an athletic team toward graduation, and takes into consideration the extent that student-athletes remain both academically eligible and remain in school over a six-year period. Teams that fail to reach a benchmark score (a 925 APR score which the NCAA predicted would equate to a 50% graduation rate) may be

banned from post-season participation, lose scholarships, and their institutions are required to create academic improvement plans. Because the APR measures student-athletes' academic eligibility and retention, it is reflective of student-athletes' classroom performance and the extent that student-athletes are able to proceed on a timely basis through majors and coursework toward graduation. Considering the needs of student-athletes to remain academically eligible, the APR is also reflective of how student-athletes may talk to faculty or academic advisors to discuss academic choices and classroom performance. Conversely, institutions do not want their athletic teams to be penalized, and thus will "create policies, programs, and services in order to assist at-risk athletes" (Schiferl, 2009).

In their discussion of the APR data collection process, Petr and Paskus (2009) noted that "policy discussions among presidents, faculty, athletics directors, coaches, and student athletes" (p. 91) have influenced the role of academics in college athletics. Educational mission and curriculum decisions differ greatly by institution (e.g., pass/fail grades, major or course selection, attendance, transfer credits), and can significantly distort how students or student-athletes qualify for APR points (Diacon, 2008). The NCAA's aggregate research of APR scores found that degree attainment for men's basketball players is hurt by retention failure and not academic failure; and football's academic problems are related to a slow degree process and in-season academic failures (Petr & Paskus, 2009). Stakeholders may influence policies to improve APR scores in football through in-season academic support services and in men's basketball by focusing on retention-improving measures. The literature demonstrates the differences in environment and mission at each institution which allow stakeholders to influence academic policy-making in athletics, such as APR academic improvement plans, from their own college environment.

Special admissions process.

Another academic policy in athletics relevant to this study is special admissions, or admitting student-athletes to an institution regardless of the institution's minimum academic requirements. There are recent concerns that APR may indirectly affect the special admissions process. In research about perceived APR effectiveness on academic success, 64 percent of the 75 Division I- FBS Faculty Athletics Representatives surveyed believed the APR would positively impact academic caliber of student-athletes because "coaches and athletics departments will take a closer look at the type of student-athlete being admitted" (Christy, Seifried, & Pastore, 2008, p. 6). This finding provides a glimpse into the perception that faculty as stakeholders have concerns over the academic preparedness of student-athletes entering college and the admissions policies which allow such student-athletes to circumvent standard academic admissions criteria. Indeed, special admissions policies for student-athletes have been of significant scholarly debate, but less of significant research. Shulman & Bowen (2001) provided the most in-depth critique of the relationship between admissions policies and academic performance of college athletes. Their research at academically high-profile public and private institutions found that not only did athletes enter college with weaker academic qualifications than non-athletes, but they were also more likely to concentrate in particular majors, and coaches were playing a greater role influencing the admissions process.

Stakeholders in positions more tightly coupled to athletics – such as coaches, athletic directors, or SASS directors, may have greater influence on admissions policies for athletes than other stakeholders. Coaches or athletic directors may spend more time cultivating positive relationships with admissions offices, enhancing athletes' holistic profile, or raising the public

profile of potential players to pressure admissions into admitting them (Stevens, 2007). For example, an investigation on ESPN's *Outside the Lines* found a practice at Florida State University in which student athlete academic coordinators labeled as many as 20 football players as learning disabled to skirt minimum NCAA standards and admit them as athletically-talented students (Farrey, 2009). Also of consideration for stakeholders involved in creating policies or practices on admitting athletes are studies finding that the head coach and academic support services are primary factors for an athlete's college choice decision (Gabert, Hale, & Montalvo, 1999; Letawksy, Schneider, Pedersen, & Palmer, 2003), regardless of a student-athlete's academic preparedness.

Major and course selection.

A student-athlete's selection of major may be influenced by stakeholders who are cognizant of a combination of policies and practices: special admissions in which many student-athletes may not be adequately prepared for the academic rigors of college, requirements for student-athletes to progress toward graduation, and the significant amount of time required for student-athletes to practice and travel to play in athletic contests (NCAA, 2009a). Donna Lopiano, who served as the Director of Women's Athletics at the University of Texas at Austin from 1975 to 1992, summed up some of the many concerns about the education of college athletes: "the imperative of staying eligible sometimes trumps the best interests of athletes who get nudged into majors they might not otherwise choose" (Brady, 2008, para. 10). This is confirmed by a 2009 NCAA study of Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS), which found that more than 80 percent of SASS directors believed it was most important to ensure student-athletes graduate; less than 10 percent believed it was most important for student-athletes to have a major choice; less than 10 percent believed it was most important for student-athletes to retain

athletic eligibility; and less than 5 percent believed it was most important for student-athletes to choose a major based on course availability (NCAA, 2009a).

Three recent studies questioned the role of APR in academic decisions that lead student-athletes to cluster into certain majors or courses to keep them academically eligible for athletic competition. Denhart, Villwock, and Vedder (2009) found the mere existence of clustering raises the real issue of true academic improvement as a result of APR. Indeed, the 2009 NCAA study found that 62 percent of SASS directors surveyed believed that clustering had not increased since introduction of the APR, while 27 percent believed it had increased. Fountain and Finley (2009) identified APR as potentially exacerbating issues of Atlantic Coast Conference football players being tracked into less rigorous majors or being clustered into courses as a result of pressures on coaches, academic advisors, and professors for athletic teams to avoid NCAA penalties for sub-925 APR scores. Neither Denhart, Villwock, and Vedder (2009), nor Fountain and Finley (2009), provided evidence of the role of APR in major selection, yet they shared a glimpse into how stakeholders perceived their relative amount of influence on major selection as a result of APR. And, while the NCAA study found a majority of SASS directors believed clustering was not caused by APR, a significant number believed that APR did impact student-athletes' major selection.

Summary.

The three policies and practices mentioned above are well engrained in the culture of intercollegiate athletics and have significant impact in the academic performance of football and men's basketball players on most NCAA Division I campuses. Each of the policies and practices provide a useful context to better understand the how stakeholders may influence, or may

37

perceive they have the opportunity to influence, academic policies, programs, or practices affecting college student-athletes' academic performance.

Institutions responding to NCAA sanctions for having poor APR scores are useful sites to investigate the perceived influence of stakeholders. Because policies, programs, or practices must be created to improve the academic performance of teams with poor APR scores – and because both special admissions policies and course selection impact APR scores – these institutions are useful places to learn about the relative amount of perceived influence of stakeholders involved in creating these potential solutions.

Chapter Summary

The literature review provided a foundation for studying how stakeholders may influence academic policies affecting football and men's basketball players at major research universities which are members of NCAA Division I. Laying out a conceptual framework of how power influences decision-making within the loosely coupled organizational structure of higher education helps clarify how stakeholders may influence decisions. The review provided an understanding of how athletics fits within the model of higher education to help identify potentially relevant stakeholders to understand their perceptions of power and influence over athletics decisions in relation to other stakeholders.

The three academic policies and practices affecting college athletes included in this review – APR academic improvement programs, special admissions policies, and major and course selection – were identified as higher profile issues which strike to the heart of the tensions between athletics and academics in higher education. They therefore are useful as lenses through which to view how stakeholders perceive they can influence the decision-making of athletics within the mission of higher education. Using stakeholder theory helped to understand how

certain individuals within higher education construct their perception of influence over policies and practices. Several different role groups were identified as stakeholders who are likely to have some relative amount of influence over academic decision-making in athletics – athletic directors, faculty, directors of admissions, provosts, presidents, SASS directors, alumni, boosters, and the media. The next section of this study will discuss the research design and methods used to collect data from these identified stakeholders.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the relative perceived influence of different stakeholders on academic decisions that affect policies, practices, or programs in intercollegiate athletics. This was a multiple case study involving three purposefully selected institutions using face-to-face interviews as a primary method of data collection. This chapter outlines the research design for the study, the rationale for a qualitative case study approach, the unit of analysis, the site selection process, the selection of stakeholders, the process to interview each stakeholder, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

Research Questions

1. What factors contribute to the perceived influence of stakeholders on decisions about academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics?

2. What is the relative amount of perceived influence of stakeholders on decisions about academic policies, programs or practices in athletics?

Constructivist Paradigm

This study was guided by a constructivist point of view, in which knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and the subjects and realities are numerous, constructed, and holistic (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The underlying assumptions of the constructivist paradigm are that each individual creates their own reality of a situation, that knowledge is a human construction, is always changing, and the results of a study are shaped or influenced by the researcher during the investigative process. Constructivist inquiry considers: the realities of the researcher, the subject, and the environment; the relationship between the researcher and subject; and, integrates the role and interpretations of the research in the study itself (Manning, 1997). The belief of a constructivist paradigm is an "understanding and reconstructing of the

constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming toward consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 113). The use of a constructivist paradigm for this study was important because it helped provide an understanding of interviewees' responses with respect to the environmental context of each individual and their institution.

Qualitative Methodology

The research questions for this study were directed at obtaining information from stakeholders about the relative amount of perceived influence on decisions; responses about influence are impacted by others and by their environment, and are thus socially constructed. Thus, it was important to use qualitative methodology to obtain data that can provide an understanding about influence as well as the factors on influence, including other stakeholders and the environment. Qualitative methodology is consistent with inquiry directed at meaning and interpretation of the human experience, an understanding of a world in which realities are constructed by the researcher. It has "as its purpose a description and understanding of human phenomena, human interaction, or human discourse" (Lichtman, 2006, p. 8). Qualitative research allows for the researcher to collect and interpret data from a subjective point of view in which the realities are influenced by others and are thus socially constructed. In other words, the use of qualitative research aims to produce understandings based on a data collection process that is flexible and sensitive to the social context in which the data are produced (Mason, 1996). As the data were gathered from interviews and research in the field, themes emerged to help better understand the phenomena and find a theory to explain the data (Merriam, 1998). A qualitative study was best for this research to describe, understand, and interpret the data instead of a quantitative inquiry which would have examined cause and effect (Lichtman, 2006).

Within an organization, much of the interaction and communication between individuals may be social, informal, or private, and not necessarily documented. The dynamics of interpersonal interaction are particularly poignant when it comes to studying the influence of particular individuals (or, stakeholders) on decision-making (Scott, 2003). Attempting to understand these relationships and interactions requires a process of collecting insightful, content-rich data that include the complexities of power and influence among stakeholders in a campus organizational setting. This process was applicable to this research, in which learning about how stakeholders perceived their influence in athletic decision-making necessitated an understanding and interpretation of social interactions as they related to academic policies, programs, and practices such as APR academic improvement programs, special admittance policies, and the practice of major selection of athletes.

Two methods of qualitative data collection were most appropriate for this study: document analysis and interviews. Document analysis – such as reviewing official documents presented to the NCAA, internal communications or policies, or school or community newspapers – provided historical, demographic, and personal information, and also helped to shape the direction of interviews (Glesne, 1999). Interviews were a useful form of data collection to gather information that could not be directly observed, particularly when investigating past events (Merriam, 1998). Semi-structured interviews are focused interviews with issues and questions developed from an interview guide to help make the process of multiple interviews more systemic and comprehensive (Patton, 1990; Yin, 1984). An interview guide (Appendix A) was created for this study based upon the conceptual framework and knowledge derived from the literature review, specifically relating to influence, interaction among stakeholders, and institutional policies, programs, and practices. A pilot test of the interview guide with a SASS

director from a Division I-FBS institution helped to ensure content validity and reduce potential bias. Revisions, as necessary, were made following the pilot test. Semi-structured interviews allowed for open-ended responses, which provided additional insight, and each interview had slight variations based on emergent questions or themes in the course of interviewing (Glesne, 1999, p. 68). Furthermore, because time was expected to be limited as a result of the leadership roles of the stakeholders to be interviewed, an interview guide provided an advantage to best use the limited time available (Patton, 1990).

Multiple Case Study Design

Interviews at three different campuses were used to investigate the research questions in depth and obtain content-rich data. Case studies include an "examination of factors that explain present status and that influence change over time" (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002, p. 441). Case studies in educational research are useful particularly when investigating the affect of influence on decision-making, and not just the outcomes of a policy, program, or practice (Merriam, 1998). The three institutions selected as case sites for this study, and the site selection process, are included later in this chapter.

Each case provided an opportunity to interview individuals in order to understand how and why events occurred in their natural context (Green & David, 1981). Data from the case studies included perceptions of individual and institutional behaviors, as well as reflecting the holistic environment within which the individual, institution, and the situation were being studied.

Yin (1984) referred to a multiple case, replication design as one that requires careful selection of each case in order to replicate results. Elements that related to the conceptual framework laid out in the literature review helped to form a context by which I created an

43

interview guide to "achieve sufficient variation on the factors most likely to explain the events and outcomes of interest" (Green & David, 1981, p. 7). Using multiple locations to interview multiple stakeholders, with a greater variation of institutions across the cases, helped to make the data more compelling (Merriam, 1998). Miles & Huberman (1994) explained the benefits of using multiple case sites: "By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does" (p. 29). Replicating the data collection process at different locations and analyzing the results through the study's theoretical framework helped to answer the research questions.

In addition, Yin (1984) differentiated between holistic and embedded case study designs. A holistic case study considers a case as a global unit of analysis, whereas embedded case studies contains multiple units of analysis. This research used an embedded, multiple case study design to gather content-rich data. Stakeholders at each location were interviewed about influencing decisions on academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics. This interview process allowed for a comparison of the interviews by stakeholder within each institution, and subsequently across multiple institutions in an effort to find patterns and replication.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis includes defining the case to be studied, individuals to be included within the study, providing geographic boundaries, and developing specific propositions to identity relevant information for the case; defining each of these helped to keep this study within feasible limits (Yin, 1984). The primary units of analysis in this study were stakeholders who were perceived to influence the decision-making of academic policies, programs, and practices in college athletics. In the data collection process, the stakeholders selected for interviews were

narrowed in scope to include only those internal to the institution: alumni directors, athletic directors, directors of admission, directors of Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS), faculty senate chairs, Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs), presidents, and provosts. The rationale for choosing internal stakeholders was because their positions were closer to the decision-making process and because they were accessible for interviews. Therefore, boosters and media were not included in the data collection process. An additional unit of analysis focused on the process of decision-making within institutions.

Including multiple units of analysis in this study allowed for an understanding of how stakeholders perceived their influence in relation to other stakeholders on similar academic decisions on policies, programs, and practices at different institutions. As part of these subunits of analysis, collecting data on stakeholders' perceptions also involved learning about the relationships and interactions between stakeholders on decision-making about academics in athletics.

In other words, the foreground of this study was an understanding of the relative amount of stakeholder influence within the organizational context of higher education. The background of the study was each institution, and how organizational structure, external and internal circumstances, and opportunities for interaction and negotiation among stakeholders affected stakeholders' perceptions to more directly influence decisions on academic policies, programs and practices. The process of selecting case sites and inviting stakeholders at each institution to participate is identified below.

Sample and Site Selection

Selecting interviewees involved finding individuals willing to provide information necessary for the purpose of the research (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This method of

purposeful sampling is common to qualitative research in order to provide content-rich data which will help answer the research question (Patton, 1990). Interviews were conducted with several aforementioned stakeholders at each case site location. Each interviewee was identified in the site selection process depending on time constraints and the availability of individuals within each stakeholder group. This section discusses the criteria and site selection process, followed by the procedures used to recruit interviewees.

Site selection.

The site locations selected for this study included a stratified purposeful sampling of institutions based on several criteria. Stratified purposeful sampling allowed for identification of a relatively small set of different cases to intensively study, with the purpose to "capture major variations rather than to identify a common core. Each of the strata would constitute a fairly homogeneous sample" (Patton, 1990, p. 174). Below, each of the criteria are identified and defined, as well as a discussion of the rationale for using each of the criteria.

The criteria used to consider institutions for case site selection included major research universities, academic performance as measured by the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR), level of competition, athletic conference affiliation, institutional size, geography, and size of total athletics budget. Estler and Nelson (2005) and Solow (1998) both noted that each of these criteria may play a role in difference in perceptions of power and influence in decision-making, and at each institution with its own organizational dynamics, academics may have a different influence in athletic decision-making as related to institutional mission. The first criteria used, APR, identified those institutions which implemented APR academic improvement plans for men's basketball and football teams since 2005, the first year the NCAA implemented the APR policy. Since that time, NCAA policy required its member institutions to submit

academic improvement plans for those teams failing to reach a benchmark score of 925. To provide an understanding of what a 925 APR means, in 2010, the NCAA stated a 925 APR score predicted a 50 percent graduation rate. The NCAA website was used to compile a list of institutions which implemented academic improvement plans in men's basketball and football since 2005.

Subsequently, level of competition was considered for site selection. Level of competition for this study was considered by the pressures and financial influences in major college football programs, which are what scholars and journalists refer to as the "haves" and the "have-nots" in the bifurcated model of major college sports (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2009). The "haves" are major research institutions that are members of a NCAA Division I athletics conference whose regular season football champion received an automatic bid to the football Bowl Championship Series (BCS). A bid to the BCS provides lucrative financial rewards of more than $20 million to the athletic conference and significant media attention to the institution as having one of the most successful major college football teams in the country. The level of competition considered as a site selection for this study was the "have-nots," or those major research institutions that are members of an NCAA Division I athletics conference whose regular season football champion did not receive an automatic bid to the BCS, and thus fewer financial rewards and less significant levels of pressures. In its online report, *College Sports 101*, the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics expressed the impact of not being a member of a BCS-qualifying conference:

> Most of the institutions in the "have" [BCS] conferences have historically been the most prominent in their states or regions, enjoy deep and wide fan bases, and can command television contracts, bowl-game agreements, and ticket prices to support vast enterprises.

The "have-not" [non-BCS] conferences tend to consist of newer, smaller, and more

regional institutions that lack these resources and opportunities. Nonetheless, their leaders

and constituents desire the visibility and the prestige associated with big-time college

sports, and must supplement the revenue they can generate from athletics with substantial

internal funds to "keep up with the Joneses" in the elite leagues. (Knight Commission on

Intercollegiate Athletics, 2009)

At the time of site selection for this study, this "have-not" level of competition criterion provided

a population of 52 out of a total of 120 institutions within Division I-FBS and from five different

athletic conferences.

Size of institution was also considered both in student undergraduate student numbers as

well as in athletic finances within the institution's overall academic budget. Keeping similar

boundaries for the size of student population and financial impact of athletics within the

institution was expected to help ensure this study would gain information from individuals with

similar responsibilities who also have the most at stake (stakeholders) with respect to academic

decisions affecting athletics (Solow, 2008). Student population was determined using total

number of undergraduate full-time equivalent students and number of student-athletes on

scholarship, available from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary

Education's Equity in Athletics Data Analysis online database. Each of the institutions in the

selected sample enrolled between 15,000 and 25,000 undergraduates and had more than 300

student-athletes (USDOE, 2009). The aspect of athletic budgets that was used as a criterion was

the ratio of institutional spending in education and research per student compared to institutional

spending on athletics per athlete. This information was obtained from the Delta Project on

Postsecondary Education Costs, Productivity, and Accountability and from the Knight

Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. The samples chosen had a similar ratio of the cost of athletics per athlete compared to the cost of academics per undergraduate student: between 1.97 and 2.24 times greater for athletics per athlete than for academics per undergraduate student in 2008 (Delta Project on Postsecondary Education Costs, 2010).

Thus, the following criteria helped to identify several institutions for this study with similar characteristics:

- major research university;

- institution implementing academic performance plans in men's basketball and football since 2005 based on poor academic performance as measured by the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR);

- undergraduate population;

- number of students on athletic scholarship;

- ratio of institutional spending in education and research per student compared to institutional spending on athletics per athlete;

- institutional membership in one of five "have-not" NCAA Division I athletic conferences;

Subsequently, institutions were selected from different athletic conferences and different regions of the country, with the expectation that significant themes relating to stakeholder influence in decision-making would be found despite geographic differences. The three institutions below were chosen from the final set based on the researcher's financial ability to travel to the region as well as the timing of the travel. While several additional institutions could have been selected for further study, the data provided were sufficient after interviews were conducted at the first three institutions.

Each institution was provided a pseudonym for anonymity: the pseudonyms are listed below with the institution identified for research.

Midwestern University.

Midwestern University (MU) is a public institution located in the midwestern United States and classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a university with high research activity. In 2010, MU had roughly 18,000 undergraduate and graduate students and participates in the NCAA's highest competitive division, Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision. Its athletics department comprised of 17 sports teams with over 300 students receiving athletic scholarships. Both its men's basketball team and football team failed to reach a score of 925 for the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR) at least once since the APR was instituted in 2005, thus requiring MU to submit academic improvement plans for those teams for each year they failed to reach the benchmark.

Southern State University.

Southern State University (SSU) is a public institution located in the southern United States and was designated with a Carnegie classification as a university with high research activity. In 2010, SSU enrolled roughly 15,000 undergraduate students and was also a member of the most competitive division in the NCAA, Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision. Its athletics program included 16 sports teams with over 350 students receiving athletic scholarships. The APR for the SSU men's basketball team was below 900 for three of the four years, and below 800 for the other year, of the data considered in the study; its football team APR was below 900 for two years in the study. SSU was required to submit academic improvement plans for those teams for each year they failed to reach the benchmark.

Pacific Western University.

Pacific Western University (PWU) is a public institution located in a high-population density, urban area in the western United States and was designated as a university with high research activity. In 2010, PWU enrolled more than 20,000 undergraduate students and was also a member of the most competitive division in the NCAA, Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision. Its athletics program consisted of 16 sport teams, with more than 350 students who received an athletic scholarship. PWU's men's basketball team and football team failed to reach a score of 900 for the APR for each of the four years in the study, thus requiring PWU to submit academic improvement plans for those teams for each year they failed to reach the benchmark.

Stakeholder interviews.

For each site, a criterion sampling process was used to identify interviewees. Informants were selected at each institution based on those stakeholders identified in the literature as most likely to be involved with or have influence on academic decisions affecting student-athletes. Based on the literature review and the reduction in the scope of stakeholders, a total of eight individuals were identified as stakeholders at each of three institutions for a maximum of 24 potential interviews. The stakeholders selected for interviews were only those internal to the institution: alumni directors, athletic directors, directors of admission, directors of Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS), faculty senate chairs, Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs), presidents, and provosts. Contact information was obtained from each institution's website. I contacted each stakeholder to schedule a face-to-face meeting at the location of their choosing. Of the 24 requests for face-to-face interviews, a total of 16 were scheduled, with one phone interview scheduled because a face-to-face meeting was not possible. The phone interview was effective in collecting sensitive data (Borg, 1983); this is especially the case for individuals

considered in a position of power (Stephens, 2007), as was the person interviewed by phone in this study. Follow-up e-mails and phone calls were made to those declining or not responding to my inquiries, with each communication requesting a phone interview at the time and date of their choosing. By the end of the inquiry process, the study was limited to 17 total interviews.

Data Collection

This section discusses the process of inviting stakeholders to participate in the study and the process to collect the data. Notably, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to requesting documents, inviting prospective participants, and conducting interviews. I first share the process used to collect and review documents. This follows with a discussion of some of the potential assumptions and beliefs that may have influenced the design of the interview process, the number of interviewees, how they were contacted, and the process of collecting the interview data.

Documents were reviewed prior to travel to each case site location in order to "stimulate thinking about important questions to pursue through more direct observations and interviewing" (Merriam, 1998, p. 114). Documents analyzed included formal documents filed with the NCAA (NCAA self-study reports, APR academic improvement programs), memorandums or other institutional analyses, as well as campus and community newspapers. Documents were accessed from the Internet and also requested from stakeholders and athletics departments. While documents were not the primary source of data for this study, information from documents helped to better understand which individuals were involved in athletic decision-making and how they perceived they influenced the eventual decisions relating to academic policies, programs, or practices.

I served as the instrument in qualitative research, but was cognizant of values, beliefs, and assumptions brought to the study. One assumption was that each of the stakeholders identified to interview for this study had attitudes or beliefs relating to college athletics and thus had informed perspectives about their potential influence. Beliefs are concrete judgmental concepts of a topic (college athletics) based on one's knowledge, interest, and experiences (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Attitudes are evaluations of decisions about one's beliefs reflective of a topic and can change over time (Krosnick et. al, 1993). Furthermore, attitudes and beliefs are components of persuasion which are important aspects of relationships that may affect influence (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Arpan-Ralstin, & St. Pierre, 2002). An additional assumption was that there was a relationship between perceived stakeholder influence and decisions of academic policy, program, and practices in athletics. In other words, while stakeholders may have had perceptions about the relative amount of influence on decisions about policy, practice, or programs, others factors may have been more influential (such as institutional climate, state or federal regulations, or NCAA policies).

I placed an initial phone call and e-mail to invite potential interviewees (as mentioned above) to participate and requested dates available to meet for a face-to-face interview. Each contact included formal written information (Appendix B) to arrive within a few days. The formal written invitation included a request of dates available to meet for an interview, an introduction to the study, the potential benefits of the study, and a request for written consent (Appendix C). The written consent form included the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits from the study, the process of each interview, protection of privacy, contact information of the researcher, and notation of IRB approval. Participants were informed of their rights and instructions on how to withdraw from the study at any time.

An additional form (Appendix D), requesting descriptive information, was also sent to each participant and obtained prior to each interview. The descriptive form included questions about their job title, the length of tenure at their job and at their institution of employment, and their specific interaction with the athletics department. After meeting times were established, interviews were conducted at the location of the participant's choosing at their institution. Semi-structured interviews (Appendix A) were used to solicit open-ended responses to gain greater understanding of perceptions, values, beliefs, and behaviors of each participant. Interviews were recorded using computer software after approval from each participant; this allowed the researcher to be more attentive and record visual observations. Each interview took approximately one hour.

The 18 interviews succeeded in providing sufficient information throughout the process. Themes became apparent and were identified through triangulation across the three case site locations; thus, additional interviews were unnecessary.

Data Analysis

This study used a constant comparative method and a cross-case analysis to analyze interview data within each site and to analyze interview data across all three sites. Each of the recorded interviews was transcribed. During the transcription process, pseudonyms were given to each institution and to each interviewee to protect identities. Subsequently, interviews were analyzed for patterns and themes, and organized by specific cases and institutions. An emergent design within qualitative data collection included analysis of the data as part and parcel of the process of collecting the data. In other words, data from interviews were analyzed continuously throughout the process to find emerging themes or patterns, and the emerging themes and patterns were checked by including them within the context of the interview guide in subsequent

interviews. Analyzing data from case studies can "range from organizing a narrative description of the phenomenon, to constructing categories or themes that cut across the data, to building theory" (Merriam, 1998, p. 196). .

Data triangulation was used to find a theme or pattern in the data through the use of multiple interviews (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002; Mertens, 1998; Patton, 1990). In this study, similar questions were asked of each interviewee relating to their perception of influence as it related to other stakeholders about decisions relating to academic policies, practices, or programs in athletics or on decision-making affecting student-athletes' academic performance. As the interview process evolved, patterns emerged that helped explain the perceived level of influence of each stakeholder – the patterns strengthened as more interviews were conducted, particularly in the second and third institutions in this study. Commonalities found between and among the interviews created a pattern that helped to describe the relative amount of perceived influence (Yin, 1994). A peer debriefing of the protocol, questions, findings, and patterns provided the opportunity to discuss the data in a holistic context (Merriam, 1998), to help make meaning of the data, and to confront my own values and attributes brought to the interviews (Mertens, 1998).

This study used an integrated case-oriented and variable-oriented strategy to help find themes from the interviews. A context chart (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was created after interviews at each institution to organize the impact and flow of decisions by stakeholders about specific academic policies, programs, or practices impacting college athletics. This helped to provide an understanding of the role of the structure of the institution in the perception of influence in decision-making in athletics. In addition, cross-case analysis was used to consider the most influential variables (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This helped to determine similarities and differences in streams of data across cases. In this study, specific significant factors emerged

which affected the perceived influence of stakeholders on the decisions of academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics and were isolated and matched to other cases with similar policies, programs, or practices. Those data from interviews which conflicted or overlapped were shared with a peer for feedback.

The data were partitioned into a matrix display based on institution and stakeholder role group to generate explanations and understandings about the relative amount of perceived influence among stakeholders (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Care was given to enter into the matrix a thick level of data including the meanings, context, and intentions of each interview. Key data and themes were identified and coded. Rules were created and recorded to make decisions on which chunks of data from the interviews were placed into the matrix. Data were filled into the matrix early in the analysis. The matrix and the record of rules were shared with two colleagues for feedback and adjustments were made, as necessary, to assist in developing clear understandings and conclusions.

Trustworthiness

Ensuring the quality, or trustworthiness, of research in case studies is essential to ensure that the researcher and others have confidence in the process of the investigation and its results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). The use of triangulation, explanation-building, and peer debriefing helped to enhance the validity and reliability of the results in this study (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998; Yin, 1984). To ensure accuracy, each interviewee was asked how they would like to receive a draft copy of the data, and the data was provided as requested to each interviewee for their response (Yin, 1984).

Confidentiality was ensured through the aforementioned use of anonymity, coding of responses, and storing data separately from demographic information. Before collecting any data, consent was obtained by Michigan State University's Institutional Review Board.

Summary

This chapter presented the constructivist approach and qualitative methods used in this study. Methods included an embedded multiple case-study design, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Also discussed were the participant and site selection process and interview procedures used to gather data. The process of ensuring trustworthiness and confidentiality were documented. Analyzing the data through an integrated, synthesized, and cross-case strategy was also discussed. The next chapter describes the results from the interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Three different four-year institutions of higher education in America were selected as sites to conduct interviews. Five interviews were conducted at one location, and six at two other locations. Below are the findings from the interviews which helped to answer the research questions. The findings are provided in order from the first site in which interviews were conducted (Midwestern University), followed by the second site (Southern State University), and concluding with the third site (Pacific Western University). The table below provides the names and titles of individuals who were interviewed at each institution.

Table 1. Names and titles of interviewees and their site affiliations

	Midwestern University	Southern State University	Pacific Western University
Admissions Director	Greg		
Alumni Director	Mandy	Denny	Pete
Athletic Director		Stan	
Faculty Athletics Representative	Len	Ann	Ben
Faculty Senate Chair		Richard	Mark
President	Cindy	Sean	Darryl
Provost			Gene
Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS) Director or Assistant	Mike	Dart	Emily

Midwestern University

In 2010, when interviews for this study were conducted, Midwestern University (MU) was a public institution located in the midwestern United States and classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a university with high research activity. MU had roughly 18,000 enrolled undergraduate and graduate students and participated in the NCAA's highest competitive division, Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision. Its athletics department comprised of 17 sports teams, with more than 300 students receiving athletic scholarships.

The President and the Athletic Director were notified by the NCAA in 2010 that their men's basketball team failed to reach a score of 925 for the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR). This was significant because failure to meet the 925 benchmark required MU to take action to improve its score to be in compliance or to potentially suffer penalties. As point of reference, in 2010, the NCAA stated a 925 APR score approximately predicted a 50 percent graduation rate. One of the actions required by failing to meet this 925 score was for institutions to submit academic improvement plans for those teams in noncompliance.

Several academic policies, programs, and practices at MU relevant to athletics were identified to learn how stakeholders perceived certain situations were handled on campus and who they believed influenced the decisions and directions of these situations. Situations identified at MU as relevant to this study included policies on how to handle missed assignments for traveling student-athletes, decisions on how to handle student-athletes who may be less academically prepared to enter MU, and the class choices of student-athletes. Each of these programs, policies, and decisions also had the potential to affect APR scores and graduation rates.

The President of MU, Cindy, had served in her capacity at Midwestern University for a little over three years at the time of the interviews for this study. The President was directly informed of academic issues, including those affecting athletics, by individuals who served on her cabinet. The cabinet included the Chief Human Resources Officer, the Chief Communications Officer, the Athletic Director (AD), and five vice presidents: Vice President for Student Affairs; Vice President for University Advancement; C.F.O. and Vice President for Finance & Administration; Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost, and the Vice President for Legal Affairs and Governmental Relations. Through this structure, the President provided each member of the cabinet with direct input in senior-level discussions relating to their own department as well as to other departments on campus. This organizational model placed academic issues in the same reporting structure as athletics and as other departments and other areas on campus.

The President's cabinet met on a weekly basis, with each member expected to contribute for the welfare of the institution, whether within or external to their assigned area of control. These cabinet-level meetings provided an opportunity to share information and ideas with the President, and were also places where cabinet members were "invited to engage in helping to craft a solution" impactful of other areas of campus beyond their immediate department. The President noted these forums helped her gather information and direct individuals to gather data to make informed decisions. Cindy stated, "I'm regarded as somebody who wants information and who is not going to conclusions without the data."

The Athletic Director reported directly to the President, and the two conversed on a weekly basis. Reporting directly to the President was a means for greater presidential oversight of athletics decisions at MU. Westmeyer (1990) noted that "at nationally reputed football,

basketball, or baseball teams… the President is more likely to retain closer control by having the Athletic Director report directly to him" (p. 67). Also as stated by Cindy, "We meet on a regular basis, the AD and I, to share information and discuss issues, and he joins us weekly at the president's cabinet where I expect him not just to be the Athletic Director, but to be an officer of the university and to be thinking about the strategic issues that we're talking about whether they're in his portfolio or not."

Midwestern University was organized through a committee structure, which provided an opportunity for administrators across campus to discuss issues and to potentially impact decisions. This was particularly true with academic decisions affecting athletics, in which several individuals – identified within this study as stakeholders – worked on committees to respond to particular issues. For example, the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee (IAC) met on a monthly basis to review and to make recommendations on athletics policy, including academic policies that may affect athletics. The IAC is a requirement of NCAA policy, which stipulates some faculty or academic oversight of the athletics department. The IAC membership at MU was similar to membership on most NCAA Division I campuses: eight faculty members appointed by the Faculty Senate, undergraduate and graduate student body representatives, and five administrators including the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, the Athletic Director, the Director of the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR), and the University Registrar.

The IAC had an Institutional Athletics Compliance Committee (Committee) that "serves in an advisory capacity" to the Student Athlete Support Services (SASS) Director. The Committee consisted of: the FAR, the SASS Director, the Chief Admissions Officer, and senior staff from the Office of Financial Aid and the Office of the Registrar. Much of the work of the

61

Committee was directed through the SASS Director or the FAR who were made aware of academic issues as they interacted with student-athletes, coaches, and various stakeholders on campus. The Committee reviewed and made suggestions on various athletics programs, policies, or issues, including: the orientation of freshmen or transfer student-athletes; the process of monitoring the academic progress of student-athletes; academic support and scholarship programs for student-athletes; learning assistance and assessment of at-risk student-athletes or student-athletes with special needs; and, academic advising for student-athletes, such as study skills, mentoring, tutoring, study hall facilities, and resources.

A Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) is required of each NCAA-member institution to serve as a liaison between the institution and the athletics department, and also as a representative of the institution in conference and NCAA affairs: "a member institution shall designate an individual to serve as faculty athletics representative. An individual… shall be a member of the institution's faculty or an administrator who holds faculty rank and shall not hold an administrative or coaching position in the athletics department" (NCAA, 2009b, p. 443). Len, the FAR at MU, had served as a faculty member for more than 30 years and as an FAR for more than 13 years. He had several responsibilities, which included reviewing every student-athlete's academic eligibility requirements, communicating directly with coaches and student-athletes, and approving initial admissions criteria. Len's role was both proactive and responsive: proactive in that Len's experiences and knowledge gave him the ability to initiate discussions on policies, practices, or programs before any issues or concerns arose; and, responsive as the individual to whom stakeholders first turned with respect to more immediate or identified issues of the athletics department. Len stated as much: "having been here a long time, I think they ask me for experiential information." Gary, the Chief Admissions Officer, stated "[the FAR] essentially is

tying the world of athletics to the world of academics… and he's been here a long time. I mean he's like a 35-year faculty member that everybody knows."

In his capacity as FAR, Len was provided a direct line of communication with Cindy, the President, through which they both regularly communicated. According to Len, "I meet regularly with the President… and I try to get some face-to-face time at least once a term." About Len, Cindy stated, "he has direct access to me if he calls and says he needs to see me, it's accommodated as quickly as possible." Len concurred: "[The President] said, 'If... if Len calls, put him on the schedule and get him in as soon as you can.'" Cindy understood the high visibility of athletics, and used her relationship with Len to be appraised regularly about the status of academic performance in athletics. Cindy noted her relationship with Len was important, "because athletes tend to get more visibility in the press."

The remainder of this section presents several decisions and events that were useful in understanding stakeholder influence on academic decisions affecting athletics at MU.

Academic improvement plans.

In spring 2010, the President and the Athletic Director of MU were notified by the NCAA that the men's basketball team would receive an APR score below the NCAA's 925 benchmark. Cindy, the President, said, "I do know the basketball coach was very concerned about [poor APR scores] and understood the need to address it. That was communicated to me." As part of the notification, NCAA policy required institutions to create an academic improvement plan for the team to improve its academic performance. MU administrators and other stakeholders involved with athletics decisions had previous experience creating academic improvement plans for its football team and its men's soccer team, so they understood the process.

Each of the stakeholders interviewed in the study stated their confidence in the Athletics Department leading the effort to design and implement academic improvement plans because of its previous success in raising the football team's APR score above 925 only one year after it missed the benchmark. Cindy said, "I have confidence in the Athletics Director that I didn't need, basically, to say prove it." With respect to improving the academic performance of the men's basketball team, Cindy and other stakeholders believed the structure, and the people with the knowledge, were in place to best respond with academic improvement plans. Cindy said, "I think there are good procedures in place and that people have very, very high regard for the Faculty Athletics Representative and for staff who are focused on the academic support for the student-athletes." Mike, the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance and Director of Student Athlete Support Services (SASS), stated: "Besides myself as the kind of the final stop or the authority, I guess our athletic director would be the last stop, but I'm a senior administrator, looked at to develop, to create, various policy with input from coaches or other staff... but I am looked at as the expert on that subject."

The Athletic Director leaned on Mike to draft an academic improvement plan based on information gathered by the Compliance Director within athletics. The Compliance Director in athletics led an effort in which Mike and the athletic coaches identified several reasons for the low APR score of the men's basketball team. Mike said, "I was at the table, though. I was there to talk about what I saw the problems were... whether it be the eligibility or the retention number. The coach was at the table. The sport administration staff... an assistant coach or two was there. It was a starting point to say, okay, well, we're losing points. What are the problems?" The following reasons for a low APR score of the men's basketball team were listed in the academic improvement plans: failure of student-athletes to use available academic support services;

unexcused missed classed time; and, student-athletes voluntarily leaving the team and not continuing their academic work, which resulted in a loss of APR points.

Based upon the information, Mike created the academic improvement plans for men's basketball and shared them for review and input by Len, the FAR. Len said, "before [the academic improvement plan] is submitted, I review it, make suggestions about language, 'is this realistic?'" After Len's input, the improvement plans were presented to a committee that reported to the IAC. Mike said: "we had a committee that was made up of some [folks external to the athletics department], person in the registrar's office, person in the admissions office, and a person in financial aid who once the document was done, and all the athletics entities had their say, it was 'Okay this is our plan, these were the problems is what we're gonna do.' They kind of just blessed it." The improvement plans were then presented to the Athletic Director to approve and to implement.

The role of University Program for Academic Success (UPAS).

At MU, an initiative that emerged as an important example of stakeholder influence on academic decisions was that of the enhanced use of the University Program for Academic Success (UPAS). The UPAS program provided individualized academic support to any student (athlete or non-athlete) on campus with below a 2.5 GPA, including "tutoring, extensive academic advising, carefully selected courses, and participation in a bridge experience. You are also assigned an advisor who meets with you regularly to track your academic progress" (MU website, 2011). Mike, as a stakeholder closely aligned with the academic performance of student-athletes, recommended a policy that would require an academic mentoring/tutoring program for freshman and at-risk student-athletes, and for all men's basketball players with below a 2.5 cumulative GPA, to enroll in the University Program for Academic Success (UPAS)

65

program. His recommendation was predicated on the belief that the UPAS program would improve student-athletes' academic performance to surpass the APR 925 benchmark. This step was listed by Mike in the men's basketball academic improvement plan submitted to the NCAA. The recommendation stated, "to use existing university academic support services, including but not limited to the University writing center, math and stats tutoring center, and study skills center."

Special admissions.

Additionally, to accommodate student-athlete recruits who may be perceived as academically underprepared (or less prepared) or do not meet MU's minimum academic requirements, a group of individuals from across the campus were involved in a special admission process. If a student-athlete did not meet the minimum requirements, a "waiver" of the requirements was required to be filed. Mike helped direct the process of whether or not to formally request a "waiver" of the admission requirements, which would have to be approved by Greg, the Chief Admissions Officer. At MU, this happened a few times per year within all of athletics. As part of the special admissions process, Mike would discuss the recruit's academic credentials with the coach of the team and listen to a rationale for admission. Mike stated, "We talk with the coach and say, 'Okay okay this person's close. What do you feel like we can do or do we still really want this person?'"

Mike also reviewed initial NCAA eligibility data with Len, the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR), for his input about a recruited student-athlete's academic performance. Len is involved because institutional (and NCAA) policy requires an FAR to sign all admissions approval forms. Len said, "that information is gonna be part of the [admissions] waiver, and then I determine whether or not I feel comfortable signing off on that." Mike noted that the

credentials may lead to a special admissions request, but there would be no pressure to approve the request if the student-athlete could not succeed. Mike said, "We're given information that this student is close, and we request consideration; it's never us that says, you know, this person needs to be admitted." Rarely was there a case when a coach would circumvent the relationship between Mike and Len to request a special admissions waiver. If there was a consensus between Mike and Len that the student-athlete could not academically succeed at MU, either Mike, Len, or the Athletic Director would inform the coach that the recruit would be denied admissions. Mike stated "if this person's not gonna be a qualifier then the coach is gonna be advised by myself, by our athletic director, or our sport administrator, that we should probably step away from this kid." Otherwise, if it was determined the recruited student-athlete could succeed academically, there would be a formal request to admit the recruited student-athlete; the request would be made to Greg, the Chief Admissions Officer.

When necessary, Greg met with Mike and Len to discuss special admissions requests. Because requests for special admissions were made to him as Chief Admissions Officer, Greg perceived he had important influence over decisions that affected student-athletes who lacked minimum admissions standards. In referring to his role in the special admissions piece of the overall improvement plan, Greg observed, "I guess had I sought to adjust or make changes to the plan, I think I would carry more than the average amount of weight." Len noted that Greg is "sort of athletics-friendly, but he's not going to let them stomp on him." Furthermore, Greg said, "you have your coaches that tend to find us and tend to go right to the top," which referred to his ability to influence decisions because some coaches decided to engage directly with him instead of those coaches respecting the formal special admissions process. Thus, Greg had significant authority on admissions decisions at MU. However, once the students were admitted to campus,

Greg perceived his influence was moot. After admission, freshmen student-athletes were enrolled in the UPAS program, and from that point forward other campus administrators on campus were more influential in academic decisions affecting these student-athletes.

2010 missed assignment policy.

Also in 2010, an institution-wide policy was created to rectify situations in which students representing MU and involved in extracurricular activities (including athletics) did not have the opportunity to complete assignments in as equitable of a manner as other students. Mike, the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance and SASS Director, received concerns directly from student-athletes about an inability to make up missed assignments in the same vein as non-athlete students. He was direct about the need to create a policy on missed assignments that took into account the issues of student-athletes. "I'm the one who through meetings with student-athletes, with discussions with my own academic staff, have found probably two to three years ago, well, maybe two years, that there's a definite need." Mike noted his work directly with faculty on missed assignment policies due to student-athletes' travel. As an example, he said, "we're gonna work with the Math department in terms of student-athletes who have to travel and they're gone. I mean, we've had student-athletes who are on national TV with the institution are kind of penalized in that, 'well you know, they missed the common exam.'"

Mike brought this issue to the attention of both Len and the Athletic Director. As the FAR, Len was able to provide input and he reviewed the issue. According to Len, "I'm there and I have my input, having worked with athletics, you know, for thirteen years now, as to whether this is a good idea, bad idea." Mike also used his professional experiences and contacts external to the institution to develop an understanding of how similar situations were handled at other institutions, which helped him to draft a potential strategy. Mike explained the process in this

way: "We try to work with campus officials to create something that's beneficial and protective, I guess, so the anecdotal stuff lines up. We say that we need something and we look for best practices, we come up with kind of a draft then of what we want and then it becomes with whatever people that need to be around the table come together, look at it, here's what we've got." Mike brought the issue and a potential solution before the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee (IAC), at which Len was also present. The Provost was also made aware of the issue by the Athletic Director. The Provost suggested to Len and the Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate of the need for "faculty having some codified requirement to provide other opportunities to make up work." The IAC presented the solution to MU's Faculty Senate, which adopted it as academic policy.

Cindy, the President, was informed of faculty not following Midwestern University's policy of permitting students equal opportunity to make up assignments. This issue was raised with her because it pertained to all extracurricular students, both student-athletes and non-athletes, who participated in student organizations. She learned of the issue in separate meetings, first from the Provost, then from the Vice President of Student Affairs. Subsequently, Len brought the issue to Cindy's attention. Len said, "I did mention this to the President this fall when I talked to her and she said, 'Yeah, I'm supportive of what the Provost is doing in an effort to get that language into the… the sort of code of conduct for faculty.'" Cindy noted the need to follow process and academic policy: "looking at anything academic and then it belongs in the Provost's office." She gave the Provost the authority to make the final decision, and the Provost decided to be consistent in applying the policy to all students, including student-athletes. Cindy then reached out to the Provost and the Vice President of Student Affairs to resolve the issue. She said, "that becomes an issue for the Provost, talking with the deans and the chairs about 'we

need to be following our policy,' so when I say I can't tell you it's been resolved, it's a persuasion thing rather than writing a new rule."

SASS and academic eligibility.

The purpose of Student Athlete Support Services (SASS) at MU was to assist student-athletes in their lives outside of the athletics arena. The services included academic monitoring, tutorial assistance, monitored study tables, and building skills to develop and pursue career and life goals. Mike, the Director of SASS, had knowledge and experience which were noted by several stakeholders as important at Midwestern University to maintain academic integrity of the athletics program. Cindy said, "People have very, very high regard for the FAR and for the staff who are focused on the academic support for the student athletes." Mike understood and shared this perception. He said, "[SASS] is kind of the go-to person in instances where student athletes are requesting, help, advice, just kind of monitoring in general."

Before adding to his role as director of SASS, Mike served solely as the Assistant Athletics Director for Compliance, which was responsible for the institution's compliance with NCAA rules, including student-athletes' meeting initial admissions requirements and tracking and reporting the academic progress, retention, and eligibility of student-athletes. Thus, he had direct access to academic performance data of all student-athletes and was able to anticipate the Academic Progress Rate (APR) for athletics teams. As either director of SASS or working in athletics compliance, Mike's positions were essentially more pragmatic in the sense that he, greater than most administrators on campus, was closer to the student-athletes. In other words, Mike had greater knowledge of the specific academic and non-academic needs of student-athletes than most other administrators on campus. Mike was constantly in discussions with

70

student-athletes, and their coaches, about eligibility based on progress toward graduation and their class choices.

One of the systems that Mike oversaw as both SASS and athletics compliance director was monitoring the eligibility of student-athletes; he took a particular focus on those student-athletes who were at-risk academically. Mike initiated a system to regularly track the academic progress of student-athletes throughout the academic year. He said, "[the student tracking system] was something that was loosely structured. I brought it, made it more defined, and it's not a written-in-stone policy." As part of tracking student-athletes' academic performance, Mike often engaged directly with student-athletes about their decisions to take a course. He would let them know if a course was more challenging than their current grade point average (GPA) indicated and if the potential grade from the course would be detrimental to their progress toward graduation, and thus jeopardize their athletic eligibility under NCAA rules. Mike said, "I would advise a student on a major if they have a 2.1 GPA and you need a 2.75 or 2.5 to matriculate. Is this… is this a realistic thing?" Or, if the time a course was scheduled conflicted with a student-athlete's practice time, Mike would help inform the student-athlete and the coach of the conflict. He said, "if a student comes in, they're a technology major, and there's only one tech section that's right in the middle of whatever practice, that the coaches here... the staff... they just realize that there's no other option." In other words, Mike would meet with both the student-athlete and the coach about the need to come to a mutual agreement and resolve the conflicting timing of specific courses and athletic practices.

Mike was not alone in tracking student-athletes' academic status. Len's duties as FAR included reviewing every student-athlete's academic eligibility and talking with professors on behalf of coaches and student-athletes if there was a perceived or a real academic concern. Len's

proactive nature in fulfilling his duties was demonstrated by his willingness to review academic eligibility requirements: "I know that there are FARs that don't examine every student-athlete's record, but I feel more comfortable doing that."

Summary.

As a case site, MU provided a useful opportunity to learn about specific academic issues and those stakeholders who were most influential. More specifically, the issues used to investigate stakeholder influence related to missed assignments for traveling student-athletes, decisions on how to handle student-athletes who may be less academically prepared to enter MU, and how student-athletes chose their classes. The SASS Director and the FAR were the most influential in decisions relating to missed assignments and the course selection processes. In addition, the Director of Admissions proved to be significantly influential in special admissions decisions. While the President's influence seemingly was less significant, this may have related to her role in MU's climate and culture. Investigating these situations provided an opportunity to also understand how stakeholders perceived they influenced decisions. Understanding their perceptions helped to form a sense of reality of the environment of decision-making at MU.

Southern State University

In 2010, Southern State University (SSU) was a public institution with roughly 15,000 enrolled undergraduate students and was designated with a Carnegie classification as a university with high research activity. SSU was also a member of the most competitive division in the NCAA, Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision. Its athletics program comprised of 16 teams with more than 300 students on athletic scholarship.

The organization of SSU was led by the President's cabinet, which included five vice presidents (University Advancement, Enrollment Management, Student Affairs, Administration

& Finance, Research) and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Each of the Vice

Presidents reported to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Not serving on the

cabinet, but reporting directly to the President, were the Athletic Director (AD), the Assistant

Director for Athletics Compliance, a representative of the University Athletics Council (UAC),

and the Internal Auditor. Other individuals with direct reporting to the President included the

Director of Governmental Relations, the Assistant for Campus Diversity and Community

Outreach, and several other presidential assistants.

Sean, SSU's President, stated that "the Assistant Director for Athletics Compliance has

direct authority and reports to the President on issues related to NCAA compliance." In effect,

this structure, with the Athletic Director and compliance director reporting directly to the

President, was intended to help put greater presidential control over athletics decisions, while

also providing seemingly better alignment of academic performance within athletics to the

institution's academic mission.

The UAC was "a group that reports directly to the President and acted in an advisory

capacity on all athletics issues." The individuals involved in the UAC were appointed directly by

the President. The UAC was actively involved in making recommendations to the President on

matters of budget, new athletics initiatives, compliance, eligibility, academics, and

communication. The UAC worked directly with the Athletic Director and Student-Athlete

Support Services (SASS). Ann, who had for the previous decade served as a member of the

UAC, was also appointed by the President to serve as SSU's Faculty Athletics Representative

(FAR). In her role as FAR, she also continued to serve on the UAC. At SSU, SASS helped to

meet the academic needs of student-athletes; this unit is common among universities who

participate in NCAA Division I. The Director of SASS reported directly to the Provost and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, and not to the Athletic Director.

Since 2006, SSU encountered several high profile administrative changes, including a new President (Sean), two new Athletic Directors (including the recent promotion of Stan; when interviewed for this study, Stan served as the Senior Associate Athletics Director), and several new head coaches for its athletic teams.

In 2007, the NCAA announced that SSU's men's basketball and football teams would be penalized with a loss of scholarships, reduced practice time, forfeiture of games and any championship tournament revenue, and other probationary measures for "a failure to monitor its football and men's basketball programs" during the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 academic years. As a result, the penalties impacted the APR scores of the SSU football and men's basketball teams in each year between 2006 and 2008. In each of those years, the men's basketball teams at SSU scored below 900, and in two of those years, the football teams at SSU scored below 900. The scores were significantly below the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR) benchmark of 925, for which the institution also incurred penalties. The sub-900 APR scores at SSU, the replacement of several administrators (including two stakeholders with long tenures at SSU), and the resulting decisions affecting the athletic program made SSU useful to investigate with respect to academic decision-making and policies within intercollegiate athletics.

Below are decisions at SSU about programs, policies, and practices which influenced subsequent decisions by stakeholders. The first issue discussed is how stakeholders perceived their influence on decisions to create academic improvement plans for the football and men's basketball teams.

74

NCAA probation and academic improvement plans.

Before his arrival in late 2007, Sean, the President, acknowledged that the institution understood the need to prioritize improvement of APR and NCAA rules compliance for its men's basketball and football teams. Sean said, "Much of it began prior to me getting here when there were poor APR results." With respect to men's basketball, the NCAA ruled a SSU student-athlete violated NCAA eligibility requirements by taking correspondence courses to maintain adequate progress to graduation. An NCAA press release stated: "the school's compliance coordinator at the time, as well as the Director of Academic Services and the Registrar, all 'failed to catch the obvious error.'" In football, coaching staff violated NCAA rules by having "occasionally observed workouts, provided skill training, and tracked student-athlete attendance in the summer conditioning program."

The NCAA ruled a loss of scholarships (two in both sports in violation), reduced practice time, and other probationary measures for violating the NCAA's policies relating to eligibility, academic integrity, and other athletics practice regulations. As stated in SSU's 2008 self-study to the NCAA: "In 2007, [SSU] was penalized by the [NCAA] Committee on Infractions for major and secondary violations in the football and men's basketball programs. The penalties, both self-imposed and NCAA-imposed, impacted the area of rules compliance." In the 2008 academic year, SSU submitted an athletics certification document to the NCAA (also known as a "self-study"), required of each NCAA member institution every 10 years. Although no program has been decertified in the NCAA's history, the document provided an opportunity to review the alignment of athletics within the mission of SSU, as well as procedures and policies required to comply with NCAA rules and regulations. The NCAA self-study included responses to concerns about policies, programs, and practices that may affect athletics. In its response to the penalties,

SSU created an academic advisory committee appointed by the University Athletic Committee (UAC) to help understand each teams' deficiencies leading to the poor APR scores, to provide recommendations for improvement, and to propose expectations that were written into the academic improvement plan. Ann, the FAR who served on the committee, said, "[The provost] asked for the involvement with writing the academic improvement plans, not just, you know checking up on them. Let's have that person [me, the FAR,] there with the coach at the time so that there's that face-to-face." Sean, the President, noted the contributions of the academic advisory committee in his conversations with athletic staff at the beginning of each academic year: "I also make sure we go through the expectations of the academic advisory committee." After the committee completed its recommendations for the plan, the Athletic Director either adopted and implemented it, or requested changes before implementation. Stan said: "so those three people would get together with the head coach and come up with the improvement plan that they would bring forward for us to look at, for us to finally approve."

As part of the academic improvement plan, members of the UAC were assigned to football or men's basketball teams and regularly communicated with that sport team's head coach. Ann discussed the periodic nature of implementing the improvement plan each term, saying, "you follow up on that plan twice a semester with the coach, you know, 'how are things going? Are you meeting these goals?'" All of the information on student-athletes obtained by Ann and the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance was considered an additional check to hold coaches accountable for the academic performance of their teams. Dart, the Director of Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS), also shared his perspective on the effectiveness of the communication between UAC and athletic team head coaches. He said, "every sport is assigned someone from the athletic committee to work with them, you know, to talk to the coach if there

are concerns... so that the faculty rep is the person that calls the coach and says, 'hey look, we just noticed that your kids are not doing what they need to do.'"

One of the improvements noted in SSU's self-study was to have "regularly scheduled monthly meetings, which were mandatory for all athletics staff and non-athletics personnel with athletics rules-compliance responsibilities." The idea of having more deliberate conversations and open communications about academic performance of student-athletes was to educate coaches and administrators on academic eligibility and compliance issues, including a better understanding of the NCAA's APR. Ann recounted, "first of all, we were all educated on what APR was, by the Compliance Officer. She gives us updates throughout the year based on her calculations." Sean also discussed the process of sharing information on NCAA rules in his position as president: "I meet with the athletics department staff… including all the coaches, at the beginning of the year, and [we require it as a] NCAA meeting to remind them of the rules."

By 2009, an article in the local newspaper quoted Stan talking about the success of the academic improvement plan. He said, "We don't face any penalties this year because we met the waiver requirements. In layman's terms, the NCAA has said that we submitted an academic improvement plan and met it."

Academic coaches program.

Another strategy used at SSU to respond to poor APR scores was the creation of an "academic coaches program," in which specific individuals ("academic coaches") were hired to work one-on-one with athletes identified as at-risk academically. Ann, the FAR noted this direct assistance was identified as more effective than "going to study hall for X amount of hours and tutoring… We started off right away, putting [academically at-risk student-athletes] in the academic coaches program." Academic coaches received a better understanding of potential

academic issues because they were engaged directly with the content assigned by instructors; this understanding helped SASS and athletics compliance staff identify student-athletes who might be at-risk with certain courses, thus giving an opportunity to provide assistance before academic concerns impacted athletic eligibility. Ann said, "because we know we need to watch out for them so the student-athlete academic office and the coaches together define who are at risk."

Sean, the President, said, "I responded by providing the resources for [academic coaches]." Dart concurred on the importance of increased resources: "We hired two academic coaches, split those kids up, and each had three, and the results at the end of the day were... were resounding."

Keeping athletes eligible.

Several stakeholders shared concerns about keeping athletes eligible to improve APR scores. A variety of efforts were used to improve academic performance, including database management, providing resources and tutors in academic support, and engaging and communicating with faculty to improve the understanding and appreciation of the unique needs of student-athletes. SSU's self-study report to the NCAA noted that its database management was deficient in the ability to track the academic performance of student-athletes with respect to the institution's scholarship office's database systems. The self-study stated: "the feasibility of merging the [multiple] systems should be examined and a recommendation made to the President." Ann, the FAR, became a point person to create a new database, particularly after she found it difficult to understand the information from the previous system. She said, "I wasn't happy with it. I thought the results were hard to read. I just didn't feel like they gave us what I wanted to know from these student-athletes." Stan, the Senior Associate Athletic Director, recognized that the Athletics Department needed to provide the funding to help implement the

database system. Ann noted, "The [AD] said, 'I can pay for this. You know, I can do this.' So that's being pretty involved in that part of it, you know, he was concerned just like we were concerned."

In addition to providing funding for a better student-athlete data system, Stan understood that athletics needed to provide greater funding to SASS in order for it to be more successful in improving APR scores. He said, "We rely on them [SASS] extremely heavily, to get us that information, so we can again, make some budgeting decisions, that is best for the student-athlete and best for the APR." The work and the collaboration between the Athletics Department and SASS were extensive and critical to ensuring athletes remained eligible. If a student-athlete was not eligible, Stan tried to understand what happened: "'I want to know why. Why did we think this person was not eligible? You know, what class did you think counted, that at the end didn't count?" It was clear that many stakeholders were actively engaged individually and with each other trying to support student-athletes and help them remain eligible to play.

Faculty-athletics interaction and conflict resolution.

Stan, the Senior Associate Athletic Director, believed the interaction between athletics and the faculty was critical to successful academic performance of student-athletes. Stan said, "I can tell you right now, I've also seen the success of the philosophy, 'get involved.' Get involved, understand what they do." Stan went further on this point, noting how increased involvement and communication could alleviate the tension between athletics and faculty at SSU: "The more we get to know them, the more they get to know us, and that helps bring down those fences. It helps alleviate those stereotypes on both sides."

The need to improve communication between faculty and athletics was also noted in SSU's self-study report to the NCAA. The NCAA recommended a policy be adopted to

minimize conflicts between scheduling of athletics competition and missed class time. The policy "instituted by the University specifies the allowable number of classes that a student-athlete may miss because of competition. Additionally, the Athletics Department does not permit competition during Study Day or final exams" (SSU Athletics Department, 2008). Coaches were warned not to create a practice schedule that conflicted with courses. Any exception was required to be approved by the Athletic Director and the UAC. Ann, the FAR, noted how Stan, the Senior Associate Athletic Director, would reprimand a coach for not prioritizing academics in his decision-making. She said: "but scheduling could have been done better, we thought, and [Stan] went back to this coach and said, 'Look, it was approved because you're within our guidelines… But don't do this again.'" Stan had conversations with faculty to inform them about the rationale behind some of the scheduling issues for student-athletes. He said, "Sometimes there are conference games and we don't have any input on them. So, that was an education back to [the Dean], but it was good checks and balances to be able to say, yeah, you know, we are doing those things. That was that conversation."

As the individual on the front lines providing tools for student-athletes to succeed in the classroom, SASS Director Dart was blunt about the input he received from coaches and faculty. The requests he received from coaches and faculty impacted the advice he provided to student-athletes to ensure they remained academically eligible and able to participate in their sport. He said, "You're ready to go into your spring semester and you've got several of your kids who are in class at two o'clock. Football coach is upset. Basketball coach is upset. Now all of our coaches would pretty much have a problem if they're… if the kids were in classes that late. So what our concern was is always... put them in classes, get them in classes that won't conflict."

At times, there were significant conflicts between the student-athletes' desire to reach their academic goals and passions, and their ability to play their sport and remain on scholarship. The student-athlete may have to choose between being a student first or an athlete first, with most frequently choosing athlete. Using a nursing major as an example, Dart said, "Most often, what will happen in a situation like that, is... is the student-athlete is faced with making a.... a big time decision as to whether or not they want to continue in nursing and have to move away from their sport, or whether they do something else. Most often times, they will change their major." More directly, Dart said: "It's difficult for us, as well, when we have a kid that's caught in between. Good kid, works hard, but he's at a crossroads, and he's going to either have to change his major or, if he stays in the [major], it's probably going to affect his play." Stan summed up the importance of the Athletics Department providing input into the scheduling of student-athletes: "I would hope they [other campus leaders] trust the Athletic Director to know what is best for the student-athletes."

Conflicts between faculty and student-athletes, and the resulting concern by coaches about the impact on their team, were most frequently resolved either by the FAR, Ann, or the SASS Director, Dart. Ann discussed a situation when a student-athlete was going to miss an exam "and was having trouble with the professor, so I was really pleased because that's the first time a coach called [me]." Ann worked hard to improve the communication with faculty about the scheduling needs of student-athletes, reflecting, "I just wanted to get the word out to all of the faculty that, you know, we want you to help us." Sometimes, Ann received a request from Dart to intervene on a student-athlete's behalf. Ann said, "I've gotten a lot of discussions, or lots of requests from the SASS office. 'We're having some difficulty with a professor. Would you mind calling?'" In another instance, Dart explained how he confronted a faculty member for not

treating student-athletes the same as non-athletes with respect to scheduling of classes. "She [faculty] wasn't really happy with me. So sometimes I've... I'll get myself tangled in situations like that where you're confronting a top level administrator, an academic dean, or in this case, his department head, but that's what you've got to do when you believe your kids are doing what they're supposed to do." Dart perceived he became better respected for his work through his willingness to build relationships with faculty and engage with others during his career. He said, "I think [my reputation] has changed from the eligibility guy to... to the area on campus that 'he's doing a pretty good job with athletes.' I think the respect factor has gone up."

Hiring coaches.

There is a concern among many faculty at SSU that the job of coaches is to help student-athletes just play sports, instead of coaches understanding that student-athletes are students first and foremost. This strain at SSU adds to the tension between athletics and faculty in the faculty's perception of high salaries for coaching staff without accountability for the academic performance of student-athletes. In part to address this faculty perspective but also to hold coaches more responsible for academic outcomes of their athletes, several stakeholders commented about a new strategy implemented when hiring coaches. President Sean recently began including performance clauses within the contracts of head coaches.

One example of a clause was an incentive for supplemental compensation, in this case within the contract for a baseball coach. The clause stated: "$2,000 should the baseball team earn an annual academic grade point average of 3.0 or above. If the cumulative Academic Performance Report (APR) averages 925 or below, no supplement will be paid." Sean took the lead on this initiative, saying: "I suggested it to the Athletic Director and he embraced it." Not only were incentive clauses included, but there were also consequences to coaches for not

meeting minimum APR scores included in their contracts. Sean said, "We put a coach on probation because of his APR scores two years ago... we brought him in and told him this is in the deal: it either improves or we're going to change." This belief was shared and enacted in the Athletics Department where head coaches were more recently held accountable for their teams' academic performance. Stan said, "Our philosophy is the head coach is responsible for the academic performance of their athletes."

When it came to the actual process of interviewing candidates for head coaching positions, both Ann and Dart had different perceptions of their ability to have input. Ann believed her persistence in improving her visibility and improving the potential impact of the UAC has enhanced her value on campus. Ann said, "I think I'm becoming really visible…I want the faculty to understand what the committee's role is…We're just trying to do the kinds of things to make faculty more aware of the fact that these are serious college students." Her efforts to increase her credibility more broadly on campus added to her role and value in coaching decisions. Ann said, "We got a new basketball coach in the fall and I was on the search committee for that, which I really appreciated, and he [AD] had a chance to talk with the football coach about, frankly, what our expectations of him were."

Conversely, Dart felt left out of the loop in hiring processes of head coaches. As the Director of Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS), Dart was the individual who helped advise student-athletes with class and major choices, and was also the person who sets up tutoring and other forms of academic assistance. Dart said, "You have their best interests at heart, but if you don't have a strong coach backing you up, it ain't going to happen... it won't happen, and I've seen that, I've seen that with my own eyes where if you just... if you have a coach who just don't care about the academics." Dart believed he should be involved in the decision to hire coaches

because of the need to raise awareness of how coaches who recruit student-athletes that are at-risk academically may set student-athletes up for failure or otherwise unwittingly cause SASS to expend more of its limited energy on the more at-risk student-athletes. Dart said, "I've not been in any decisions when we've made [football and men's basketball] coaching changes... I've not been involved in that process, and I think I should be, I mean, because I have some... I have some areas of interest."

Special admits.

Dart's dialogue on the hiring process reflected his concern with admitting student-athletes based on athletic ability who otherwise did not meet the minimum academic qualifications. The process for allowing "special admits" on campus included university policy and meeting criteria developed by the Admissions by Committee. SSU policy limited the total number of special admits of all students to campus, both student-athletes and non-athletes, to a maximum of seven percent of each entering class. According to SSU's self-study to the NCAA, of 727 special admissions between 2005 and 2007, 47 (or 6.5 percent) were student-athletes. The criteria for admissions included a letter stating interests, goals, life experiences, co-curricular and work experiences, and personal strengths and talents. The members of the committee who reviewed special admissions applications were appointed by the Provost. Richard, the Faculty Senate Chair, reviewed all of those students, including student-athletes, admitted by committee to understand the impact of the policy. He said, "It was getting a handle on which students are admitted by exception so we know how the policy was affecting us." Sean, the President, noted the importance in admissions of not providing athletics with any special treatment with relation to other departments at the institution. He said, "The athletics department presses the coaches not to bring too many of those [special admits] to the institution's attention."

While he provided a review of applicants, Dart perceived his input was limited because the coaches already spent the effort and time to recruit athletes based on their athletic talents. After coaches recruited these athletes as potential SSU students, the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance provided copies of the prospective student-athletes' transcripts and experiences and shared it with Dart for review. He said, "I don't have very much involvement with who our coaches are recruiting in the first place." Still, his concern was with coaches who did not mind the academic preparedness of the student-athlete as illustrated in this example he provided: "I'd say, 'Coach, you know, you can't become top heavy now.' I'd say, 'You gotta, you're bringing in a lot of kids who, I mean, we don't know if they're going to ever play for you.' I mean, we're going to do our best, but that was a very difficult challenge, when you've got, you're signing 22 kids and 13 of them are problems." Dart summed up his relationship with coaches who recruited academically at-risk student-athletes: "That's something I've always argued about and felt that, you know, you guys, you all got to think about us sometimes when you're recruiting kids."

Some teams at SSU may have had more special admits than others, which also reflected how an individual's application for admission was received. Stan said, "You can't just look at bottom line qualifications. I think you've got to look at the make up of the entire squad." He used examples to explain SSU athletics' rationale such as: "you know, if it's the only person on the golf team that is an at-risk student. There's literally one. We may let that person in. Okay. The exact same qualifications may not get in the basketball team because, they have, whatever, 50 percent of their team is at risk." If there were some recruits that were flagged as potentially not able to succeed academically by Dart or the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance, they may not be referred to the Committee for consideration. Stan said, "We look at the list before it

is taken to the full committee, because we may pull some people off of it." However, on one occasion, when the Admissions by Committee rejected a recruit's request for admission, the head coach appealed to the President. Sean stated, "He came to me appealing the decision of the committee, and I said the position of the Committee is filed." In other words, the President supported the position of Admissions by Committee, and did not support the coach's appeal.

Summary.

The last quote mentioned above is representative of the change in culture about decision-making at SSU in response to several urgent situations, and several changes in high-profile administrative positions. Situations in athletics in which stakeholders were involved in decisions included NCAA academic improvement plans, academic coaches programs, academic eligibility issues, improving interaction between faculty and athletics administrators, hiring coaches, and the special admissions process. At SSU, the President became more influential in decisions in several of these areas – such as providing resources for an academic coaches program and the hiring process of coaches – after academic issues became more problematic. Both the FAR and Athletic Director were influential in academic eligibility issues and improving interaction between academics and athletics. The Athletic Director and the SASS Director were also influential in the special admissions process. These academic issues helped to clarify the extent to which the stakeholders interviewed in this study influenced decisions at SSU.

Pacific Western University

At the time of this study, Pacific Western University (PWU) was a public institution in a densely populated urban area with more than 20,000 enrolled undergraduate students and designated with a Carnegie classification as a university with high research activity. Its intercollegiate athletic program consisted of 16 sports with more than 300 students who received

86

scholarships to represent the institution as participants in athletics competition. The institution competed at the highest level of intercollegiate athletic competition, in NCAA Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision.

Darryl, the President of PWU, relied on a cabinet of five vice presidents (Provost and Academic Affairs; Administration and Finance; Chief Information Officer; Student Affairs; and University Advancement), as well as a chief of staff, a special assistant, and the Athletics Director. As part of the cabinet, the Athletics Director (AD) reported directly to the President as did each of the five Vice-Presidents.

In 2005, the first year after the NCAA's new academic performance policies were in effect, Pacific Western University received significant public reprimand for the poor academic performance of its athletics teams. Indeed, several of its teams were significantly below the NCAA's benchmark score of 925 for its Academic Progress Rate (APR), which at the time the NCAA predicted would equate to approximately a 50 percent graduation rate; its football and scored below 900 in each of the four years of data considered in this study; its basketball team scored below 900 in three of the four years. This deficiency was concerning across the PWU community, in athletics, in administration, among the faculty, among the students, and among alumni. "We were on thin ice," noted Mark, PWU's current faculty senate chair. Several stakeholders at PWU provided insight into some of the events, policies, and practices at PWU that contributed to the environment which led to the NCAA reprimand. Stakeholders talked about decisions in response to teams – primarily the football team – failing to meet the minimum APR benchmark in 2005 and in subsequent years.

Within his first year in office, Darryl, the President, replaced the Athletic Director (AD) who had been in charge while the institution was sanctioned by the NCAA. In reflecting on his

choice of AD, Darryl indicated that he quickly became very confident in the new AD's focus on academic performance, saying, "The Athletic Director I have takes a really strong position on academic performance and so I support him every way I can on that and that's paid off." In addition to this personnel decision, Darryl believed that providing resources (money and personnel) to the system would help improve the academic performance of student-athletes: "I saw what [other institutions] were doing versus what we were doing and we adjusted, so that was a resource issue."

In each year between 2005 and 2009, the NCAA publicly reprimanded PWU for failing to meet minimum benchmarks of academic performance (determined by the NCAA's APR) for students participating in several sports. As a result, PWU created academic improvement plans for each sport and each of the plans, as implemented, eventually succeeded in improving the APR scores for all of the at-risk sports; as of 2011, every sport at PWU met the NCAA's minimum academic benchmarks. Thus, the environment at PWU provided a useful case study to learn about the impact of certain stakeholders on decisions and policies created to improve the academic performance of student-athletes.

In 2011, PWU submitted a certification document to the NCAA. This process, called a "self-study," is required once every 10 years for each member of the NCAA. As stated in the self-study, "The President is responsible for the annual performance review of the Athletics Director. The President also has oversight of the athletics program through responsibility for the university budget and finances including student fees. The President also has a role in the conference affiliation of the university. In addition, the President works closely with the Athletics Board. The President's chief of staff is a member of the Athletics Board and the Board

advises the President as directed by university policy and as the President requests" (PWU self-study, 2011).

First, this section shares comments about several events relating to the structure of the athletic program and the effect on academic performance of the athletics program prior to the NCAA's decisions. Events, policies, and practices over time were used as the context to understand how stakeholders influenced decisions. Interviews provided insight relating to events and changes within the PWU administration and its athletics department over the two years following the NCAA reprimand. The reprimand profoundly affected decisions to create and administer academic programs for its student-athletes including admissions, major choice, course selection, class attendance policies, tutoring services, and tracking the academic performance of athletes. The first event shared below is a Faculty Senate decision in 2004 affecting athletics.

Faculty Senate reduces financial support of athletics.

The Faculty Senate at PWU held a vote in the spring of 2004 in which the faculty supported, by a margin of three-to-one, a resolution recommending the President withdraw the institution from the NCAA's highest competitive level – Division I-A (now called Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision). The resolution also limited public financing of the athletics program to 1.8 percent of the school's overall budget. The PWU student newspaper at the time quoted one dissenting faculty member as stating, "As someone who was against the resolution, I am for the spirit of holding athletics accountable ... they don't have a blank check." Mark, the Faculty Senate Chair, painted a stark picture about the relationship between athletics and academics at the time: "How do I put this, the interaction between the Senate and athletics was not good on the order of ten years ago." Emily, current Assistant Athletic Director for Academics, concurred: "They [Faculty Senate], wow, historically had an extremely negative perception of

89

the Department of Athletics." Part of the reason for the negative perception of athletics was behavioral issues of football team members. Emily stated, "But there was a large group of [football players] that were not good citizens. They got themselves into trouble."

This Faculty Senate vote was perceived favorably over time as one in which athletics was held accountable. Mark stated: "there have been senate chairs that have been perceived as enemies of it, and my feeling is, we spoke several years ago on how much support [athletics] should get and if they're managing to pull off their program in light of that, then good for them." An outcome of the vote was an understanding of the need for a new stable source of revenue. During Darryl's first tenure as President of PWU from 2004-2006, he led an effort to engage alumni and students to publicly support the need for the student body to increase its fee for athletics to help pay costs of maintaining the program. Approval of the fee by the Faculty Senate was covered in the student newspaper with a quote by the then-Senate Chair: "We either don't pay now and we have an athletic program that suffers, or we pay the extra $65 and have an athletic program that grows. We can't let one of our university programs suffer." The impact of this strategy was shared by Pete, the Alumni Director of PWU: "The alumni association led a campaign to try to get that student fee increased and it was voted on by the students to do it, so they bought in that it was important for athletics from the general fund." Darryl believed that faculty antagonism towards athletics significantly lessened in the wake of these events: "the deal we had made with the faculty and that seemed to take the energy out of the Faculty Senate's action." Pete concurred, saying, "that all went away when associated students honored the leadership of this president."

Administrative changes.

In the fall of 2004, the President received word two days before a significant football contest that several football players were academically ineligible. Darryl was not happy: "I was told on Thursday afternoon before Labor Day… that we had nine players ineligible on Thursday afternoon for Saturday games." At the time, the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) was in charge of checking and confirming eligibility of all student-athletes. Emily, the Assistant Athletic Director for Academics and former assistant to the SASS Director, shared the process of confirming eligibility at the time: "I don't know how the heck they did it then, but the FAR at the time cleared those people to participate." Ben discussed the previous process of ensuring academic success in football more broadly: "Before I became the FAR and two coaching staffs ago in football, made a great deal of lip service to the student-athletes making sure they were students first." One outcome of the timing of learning about football players' ineligibility was for the President to lead an effort with new guidelines for hiring and changing the responsibilities of the FAR. President Darryl stated, "We actually replaced [the past FAR] because of his performance." By fall 2005, the Academic Senate approved changes to the hiring guidelines and selected Ben as the new FAR. Ben recalled, "part of my hiring was, look, we're going to professionalize. You're not gonna be responsible alone for eligibility. You're going to be an auditor. You're going to make sure that the right processes are done."

Beyond changing the FAR, another more immediate outcome in fall 2004 was to clean house in athletics and in the administration. Darryl said: "I had asked the AD to leave, the football coach to leave, the basketball coach left, and then I had two vice presidents that I let go. So we made a major change in administrative team." He was emphatic about his role in these changes: "Those were my decisions," and rationalized the decisions, saying, "we needed to get a

good base in there so the athletic program had a chance to succeed." More bluntly, Darryl said, "It was just a mess, so it just needed to change."

A new athletic director arrived in late 2004 and began creating new academic programs soon after his arrival. This required hiring new staff with experience, including a director of Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS) from another Division I-FBS institution, and hiring Emily as the assistant to the SASS Director. The SASS Director had experience with academically at-risk athletes, while Emily had experience creating academic support programs with respect to general education requirements. The two new staff complemented each other well in creating a new process to improve academic performance in athletics. Emily said, "[The SASS Director] really led the charge initially and then allowed us to, not allowed us, but found value in the collaborative efforts toward the beginning of the second year." She also noted, "We really kind of gravitated toward each other's strengths."

Academic performance announcement.

By spring 2005, the first Academic Progress Rate (APR) scores were announced, reflecting poor academic performance of football and several other sports. The NCAA's public announcement of PWU's poor academic performance, the penalty resulting in a loss of scholarships, and the requirement for PWU to create and implement academic improvement plans provided an impetus for change. The FAR said, "The pressure to do something about that came largely from the NCAA, which was on the verge of decertifying us." The Alumni Director stated, "We had to say clean it up. We're embarrassed by that. We don't want to be in the [newspaper] anymore. We don't want to be about academic performance." The President spoke of his work with the new Athletic Director creating a process to improve academic performance, indicating, "That spring we outlined the reasons we needed to do this."

Gene was appointed as the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs in fall of

2005 and he implemented a structural change, moving academic support for athletics from within

the Athletics Department to reporting to him. Gene stated, "I walked into this office and that

mandate came along and I said I want those things over here. I want them back over here. They

belong in academic affairs because it's academic support." It was from this line of authority that

Gene was able to understand, review, and provide resources as necessary (and available) to

support the new academic performance plans and to support the needs of SASS. Gene said, "We

want to control, and I use that word carefully, how all these services are provided." Furthermore,

he added: "I know the President was behind me in wanting to do this. I couldn't do it on my own.

I didn't have the authority, and the President wanted... to get more connected to the campus and

we all agreed on that and he gave me license to do it and I did it."

As new staff members, Emily and the new Director of SASS set out to identify the

problem areas in the academic performance of PWU student-athletes. Emily said, "Our first

charge was really to jump in and see what the heck's going on" and, "our first charge was to

decipher." Emily felt the academic improvement plans helped create a framework to understand

the issues leading to the poor academic performance at PWU. She said, "I think these

improvement plans really identified for us, or helped us identify what was missing with our

policies and the things we didn't have in place."

Special admits.

One of the areas identified as a reason for the poor APR scores at PWU was admitting

students who were successful playing sports, yet were either not academically qualified or

underprepared to meet the academic expectations at PWU. Reducing the number of academically

at-risk student-athletes admitted to campus, also known as "special admits," was identified in

PWU's plan as a key to improve the academic performance in football. In other words, admitting less special admits to football and increasing the number of athletes who were academically qualified would hopefully lead to higher academic performance (as measured by APR) and potentially higher graduation rates. Ben, the FAR, stated: "Our president has said, I don't want to see those, or at least, I don't want to see many because apparently the previous president had approved a large number of them and, as I said, that's how we got into the problems with the APR and so on."

Ben served on the special admissions committee along with several others including the Registrar and the Director of Academic Success at PWU. This special admission committee reviewed all admissions for exception of students with special talents, including athletes. However, since the time Ben assumed his role as FAR, "only once" had he been informed by athletics staff, by a coach, or by the President about a special admit who was an athlete prior to the admissions review process.. Instead, much of the work to provide documentation about academic preparedness and other talents for each at-risk athlete was completed prior to the admissions process. Thus, if a student-athlete had submitted paperwork for admission, it was only after the coaching staff and the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance had already reviewed and decided the student-athlete's credentials would be acceptable under special admissions criteria. Gene, the Provost, reiterated this philosophy, saying, "We don't want to admit them when we're almost positive they're going to fail here." Ben explained that a separate committee for student-athletes admissions was not created, but explained, "we just haven't had that kind of admissions committee in the last year simply because we have not been admitting people who have not met those kind of requirements."

Additional events and policies impacted special admissions of athletes at PWU. In its 2011 self-study to the NCAA, PWU reported on an Executive Order issued by the Governor several years earlier that required each public university president to ensure appropriate efforts and resources be directed to improve the graduation rate of student-athletes, particularly those admitted as general exceptions for their athletic ability. To insure accountability, the Order required institutions to report bi-annually on the resources for academic support for athletes, as well as academic performance (graduation rates, drop outs, transfers). Soon after the Order was issued, the new Athletic Director and the President began to implement a new structure for academic performance and create academic improvement plans for sports not in compliance with APR. Emily stated, "The second year was when we started developing plans for tutoring programs and identifying at-risk student athletes coming in the door."

In the 2008-2009 academic year, PWU's academic improvement plans included a new policy in which all freshmen and transfer athletes were automatically placed into a SASS academic program, regardless if the student-athlete was a regular or special admit. The academic program, outlined in more detail below, included peer tutoring, academic study hall, and weekly academic meetings. Emily stated that, "we all come to the table in a group effort with the FAR and the Director of SASS to do more checks and balances."

Thus, a confluence of events relating to special admits, administrative changes, and the public admonishment of poor academic performance led to decisions which impacted the implementation of SASS and the creation of specific academic and tutoring policies, programs, and services. The specific types of decisions and resulting academic programs provided additional insight into how PWU attempted to rectify the academic performance issues and also improve the public reputation of its athletics teams.

SASS and advising athletes.

Student Athlete Support Services (SASS) was a unit created at PWU specifically to help

meet the academic needs of student-athletes; this unit is common among universities who

participate in NCAA Division I. The Director of SASS reported directly to Gene, the Provost and

Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, and not to the Athletic Director. In discussing the

origin of SASS at PWU, Emily recalled, "[The VP for Enrollment] was a huge supporter and

identified [why SASS was needed]. He also came from another big institution at the Division I

level and identified early on when he was here that we did not have adequate services for our

student-athletes. So I know he had a large hand in that."

One of the most important aspects of SASS from the onset was to ensure that student-

athletes understood their responsibilities as students and how to succeed academically. Part of

that involved goal setting and providing the resources to have individual advisors dedicated to

each athletics team. This need for resources was understood on campus as a priority. President

Darryl provided the initial resources to the Athletic Director, and said, "That was a resource

issue and then I held the Athletic Director responsible for the talent around it, and he's done a

good job with that." Gene, the Provost said, "I don't have the funds to put an advisor in for a

team, but if they wanted to do it, we'll accommodate them. We'll get the advisor. It'll be

dedicated to that team."

PWU's academic improvement plans for football and several other sports included goals

and procedures that were implemented by SASS to improve players' academic performance. The

academic improvement plans included a focus on graduation, instituting registration training

programs to improve student-athletes' ability to register for classes they needed to graduate, and

creating weekly academic meetings with peer advisors for all new (freshmen and transfer)

student-athletes as well as all continuing at-risk athletes. PWU's self-study to the NCAA specified this focus on graduation as an important emphasis: "there has been a shift in Student-Athlete Success Services philosophy (begun two years ago) from advising to meet NCAA eligibility to advising to graduate. This has likely contributed to the higher persistence of special admits." This philosophy is reflected in the PWU self-study through the use of the "Priority Triangle" concept (Figure 3):

Student – *graduation*

Sport – *eligibility*   School – *APR*
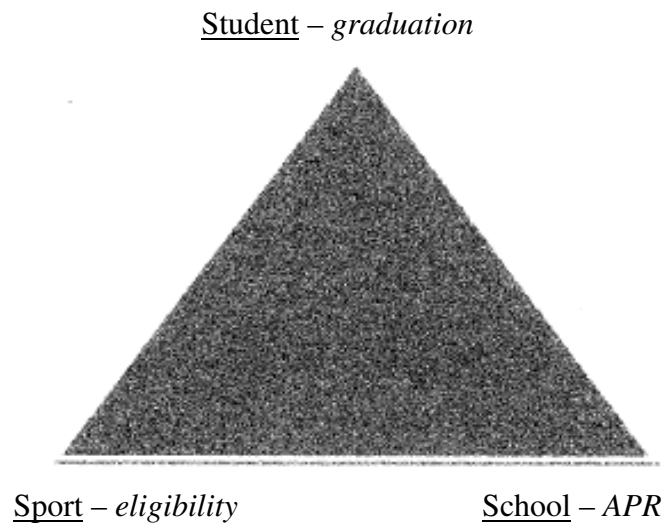
All advisement of student-athletes should take into account these 3 priorities!

Figure 3. Priority Triangle. Adapted from "Self Study Items for Operating Principle 2.1," *NCAA Division I athletics certification self-study instrument*, Pacific West University Athletic Department (2011), p. 47.

Emily discussed her role at the very beginning of SASS, working with men's basketball players on a daily basis, as an example of how SASS enacted its role in student academic achievement, saying, "[we] educate them on how to get into classes, how to get across campus and talk to your major advisor, how to decipher what major to choose, really educational planning for them on a weekly basis." One of Emily's primary duties was to ensure that athletes were registered for classes and were academically eligible with respect to NCAA and

97

institutional regulations in order to participate athletically. As one of the administrative changes to improve athletic eligibility, the Athletic Director placed these duties on her instead of on athletics compliance. Emily said, "I think he [AD] found it more fitting that the Assistant AD for Academics position would oversee athletic eligibility and move it through the pipeline because of the importance of APR." The process was intended to ensure student-athletes remained eligible. Emily stated: "I would get the student in here, they've got to sign up for winter session, they've got to get that GPA up to two-point whatever it was. The game plan." Ben noted how SASS and Emily eventually set up a process by which student-athletes could graduate early based on their course planning, stating: "She sets up the environment to where it's a very desirable thing." Another program that assisted student-athletes because of their time demands was a priority registration process, in which student-athletes were able to sign up for their classes prior to other students. Ben noted this may help improve the environment for student-athletes to succeed academically: "as a result, there is less pressure on that student because we do have preferential registration."

Part of ensuring eligibility was a direct communication with head coaches about the academic performance of student-athletes. Emily's duties included "communicating with head coaches on a weekly basis who wasn't doing study hall, who wasn't going to class" and "hashing out those grades, put them in a grid for every coach, send them off, call them, 'Hey, you've got a heads up, so and so... looks like they might be ineligible.'" And, if a student-athlete was struggling with their academic performance, a plan specific to the student-athlete's needs was created, involving the student-athlete, a learning specialist, the academic advisor, the Director of SASS, and the head coach. Mark, the Faculty Senate Chair, believed this process was significant in improving athletics' relationship with faculty: "[SASS] took it very, very seriously, sort of

beyond the level required by policy to track athletes." Communication between SASS, the

athletic staff, the coaches, and senior administrators seemed to be important at PWU, as well.

Emily said, "where we came from no communication six years ago, it's over-communication

now." Further, she said, "So, when I walked in the door six years ago, the conversation I would

have with somebody who was on the Academic Senate would look a lot differently than today. I

think they have gained trust in our... in us as a department."

Athletic administrators and SASS also worked to improve relationships with faculty and

administrators across campus to ensure that student-athletes succeeded academically. Emily

shared this point, stating, "I work with student-athletes and that first response was a very, an

extremely negative, like 'oooh.' There was no bridge between athletics and academics and it was

painful." The significance of the negative response from faculty did not deter Emily, but rather it

seemed to motivate her, "mainly because I found it extremely invaluable to communicate with

these people that had negative experiences." As FAR, Ben was frequently perceived as the

intermediary between athletics and academics; coaching staff who may have been concerned

about an academic issue with one of their players understood that Ben could help solve the issue

because of Ben's faculty relationships. Ben said, "I've had [and still have] a very, very good

relationship with the coaches. I would say that the head coaches for the most part know me and

know my name." Emily summed up her thoughts about the impact of communicating and

building relationships for those in SASS to be successful: "it took courage and extreme

communication that first year and a half." The Athletic Director embraced and rewarded

Emily's dedication and enthusiasm (promoting her from within SASS to assistant athletic

director for academics), and found her services valuable to lifting the Athletics Department's public profile by improving its academic performance.

Yet, communication did not preclude student-athletes from clustering in specific classes with other student-athletes; this could have been a result of peer friendships, less rigorous courses, or professors who were grade-friendly to student-athletes. The clustering impacted how SASS engaged with student-athletes' goal setting. Ben said, "So they counsel with them, but they never say you can't do it. Clearly, we have a lot of kids in sociology, we have a lot of kids in kinesiology." Mark, the Faculty Senate Chair, shared a similar sentiment: "I have had athletes take labs from me, which run from 1 to 3:40, I guess is the official time for them, and I've noticed that they're very keen to get done… maybe more keen to get done than to do a great job."

Occasionally, professors disagreed with scheduling specific student-athletes around assignments or non-equitable grading of student-athletes with respect to those students who are not athletes. In some of these instances, Ben was involved in his role as the FAR. For instance, Ben related a time when a student-athlete was not provided the same opportunity to earn assignment credits as non-athlete students because the student-athlete was traveling with the team. Ben said, "I would talk to the professor and the athlete and say, is there something we can do to work through this, so it's a negotiation." Speaking to the same challenge, Emily shared, "yep, give FAR a call. The student tried to go multiple times [to the professor], here's some emails from the student to the professor. I've tried to communicate with them. They're not being user-friendly." This demonstrated the work necessary for both Emily and Ben to get faculty to understand the specific needs of student-athletes, and learning how other individuals on campus can work with students to represent student's academic concerns.

The next area provides some perspectives on the Athletic Director's decision-making and how he led by building, and supporting, relationships across campus.

The role of the Athletic Director.

As noted earlier, the academic issues with the football team came to a boil late in the fall of 2004 leading to the President dismissing the football coach and hiring a new Athletic Director (AD). The process of hiring the AD included a selection committee created by Darryl, PWU's President, and headed by a successful coach in the professional National Football League. The new AD stated his concern about the poor relationship that existed between the athletics program and academics when he told the campus newspaper: "I certainly will be more visible on campus… I hope to become a very recognizable person."

The Athletic Director made quick decisions; for example, within a week of taking the job, he named a new football coach. Subsequently, the AD appointed additional staff to start a new program for Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS), including Emily and the new Director of SASS. From the beginning, the President, the Provost, and the AD understood that a commitment to provide SASS with appropriate resources was necessary to improve the academic performance of the student-athletes. Darryl stated: "That was a resource issue and then the athletic director I hold responsible for the talent around it, and he's done a good job with that."

In early 2005, the Athletic Director announced "Operation Graduation" in which SASS helped organize the academic structure of all football players' non-athletic activities including note-taking requirements, calendars, and assignments. That spring, the initial APR report of poor academic performance was released; while it reflected negatively on the institution, it also provided a benchmark from which to make improvements. Darryl noted how the APR report highlighted the need to reorganize academic support services: "the AD and chief of staff and

myself, there was probably five or six of us in the meeting, we talked through [the issue and how SASS could play a role] and changed it." Gene concurred with this recollection: "I was in the President's office when they had to turn around these APR ratings, I mean, we started this initiative." By 2006, Emily was providing the AD with APR reports by semester. Emily said: "He [AD] started meeting one-on-one with student-athletes that were not going to class and telling them, as the AD, 'I'm going to take your scholarship if you don't pull your head out of your you-know-what.'"

In 2007, the Athletic Director again leaned on Emily with respect to creating a policy to make coaches accountable for the APR of their student-athletes by placing it within their annual evaluation and merit pay increases. Emily stated: "We [Emily and AD] meet weekly on issues that were popping up, but I remember him telling me, 'This is ridiculous, I'm putting this in their contracts. I can do that, right?'" Ben noted his support of the measure: "The Athletic Director indicated to me that part of the contract with the coaches includes a clause that if a certain APR score is not maintained, that that could be grounds for removal and he has my full agreement on that."

In response to poor APR scores, the AD made decisions to improve APR scores. For instance, he included APR in coaches' contracts; he helped create and organize SASS; he created meetings and student-specific academic plans; and, he reduced the number of student-athletes to admit as students with special talents but lacking the academic credentials. Emily said that, "I really believe that everything at one point became APR driven."

Many individuals noted how the Athletic Director turned to them for the support and other resources necessary to make SASS successful in helping to improve the APR of the football team and of other athletic teams. For instance, the policies and practices included in the

academic improvement plans were well received by the President, which added authority and institutional authority to the AD's decisions. Gene stated, "The AD put it up to the president and that meant the staff were put into place with the mandate... that they needed to get it to work. The President would make it clear, in no uncertain terms." In one instance, Emily recalled how PWU's policy of not checking attendance was problematic for student-athletes who historically missed many classes. She presented a solution to the AD: "So I would bring to him [AD], we have no class attendance policy. This is a problem. 'Emily, institute it. Let's go. I'll sign off. What do you need me to do?'" In another instance, Emily referred to how instituting a new computer program to check grades throughout the term and to communicate that information to athletics staff and coaches would be useful: "The SASS brought it to the table, 'Hey, this could benefit us, we could save some money, we could be more efficient with our information'... and [AD] said 'Okay, let's do it. Let's get it done. What do you need from me?'"

There has been support from across the administration for how the Athletic Director implemented these procedures to improve academic performance in athletics. The President said, "The real credit is to the AD and the coaches, that if kids get behind in class and don't perform in class, the coaches usually take pretty hard, quick action on it, so we're pleased with that." And, the FAR said, "They [faculty] perceive the Athletic Director as being very successful in improving those numbers." Part of the AD's strategy of open communication included providing a report to the Faculty Senate each year. Mark said: "He's [AD] been here six or seven years, there's been an annual report to the Senate. So, I don't know the history of how that was initiated, but it's become a practice." Darryl, the President felt that success of the AD in improving academic performance keyed on relationship-building and keeping lines of communication open. He said: "[the AD] does it very well, in creating relationships, communication, conversations

with the places where the kids interact with the institution. So he has a good relationship with housing, with enrollment services, financial aid, and he insists on that, and I think in the past that hasn't been there."

Summary.

The case of PWU provided several policies, programs, and practices to understand how stakeholders perceived they influenced academic decisions in athletics. Areas of decision-making used to understand the relative perceived influence of stakeholders included: the decision by the Faculty Senate to reduce funding for athletics, administrative changes led by the President, the academic performance programs and the creation of SASS, and the special admissions process. The amount of influence as perceived by the President was significant in helping to shape decisions, particularly in replacing several high profile administrators and working to respond to concerns of the Faculty Senate. Both the President and the Athletic Director perceived they were influential in creating a new SASS. The SASS Director and Athletic Director perceived they were influential in the academic performance process by creating relationships across campus to improve APR scores. Investigating the decisions by these stakeholders helped to understand the urgent need at PWU to make significant improvements in academic performance of student-athletes and athletic teams.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS

Three primary themes emerged from the data presented in Chapter 4: urgency, presidential involvement, and faculty-athletics interaction. Each of these themes is presented below with respect to their proximity to the athletics department, in order from the most distant in where they originated (urgency) to the closest internally (faculty-athletics interaction). In each section, I define the theme and share information from each of the three case sites. It is presented in this way to help create an understanding of how stakeholders perceive they are influential in academic decisions in semi-autonomous units, such as athletics.

Urgency

One of the early themes readily apparent across the three sites was how a sense of urgency impacted the perceived influence of various stakeholders on academic decisions related to student-athletes. Urgency was found in the immediate need to respond to significant situations. In this study, the situations involved NCAA rules and regulations relating to academic performance, and in some cases, concerns about eligibility of student-athletes. The NCAA penalized each institution in the study with a loss of scholarships for teams failing to meet minimum Academic Progress Rate (APR) scores. Yet, each of the institutions handled the situations differently based upon their own organizational structure and their own environment – in particular, their own climate and culture. The extent that an institutional structure provided support or resources in response to the situation affected the sense of urgency of the situation. In addition, the environment also affected the sense of urgency at each institution e.g., a stated need to improve athletics success (wins and losses), strains between athletics staff and faculty, and budget decisions affecting athletics needs.

At Southern State University, a new President took the lead by "changing the culture" of the institution and having individuals outside the Athletics Department initiate new expectations about academic performance. Sean used a business-like, CEO approach after he became President, and directed academic stakeholders to respond to poor APR scores and NCAA rules violations. He immediately took charge by creating academic performance clauses in coaches' contracts and providing additional resources and tutors to the Student-Athlete Support Services (SASS) Department to improve academic success in men's basketball and football. The University Academic Committee created an academic advisory committee, with the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) leading the committee in writing the academic improvement plans. The FAR worked with the athletics compliance officer and head coaches to identify why academic deficiencies were occurring. The academic advisory committee placed academic expectations into the plan. Eventually, the plan was provided to the Athletics Department to implement. One of the areas identified for improvement was tracking student-athletes' eligibility. The FAR's request for resources to develop a new database to track student-athletes' eligibility demonstrated how the FAR was able to use her position to impact change.

At Pacific Western University, an environment of crisis existed after very poor APR scores of several teams and the public acknowledgment of football players ineligible to play two days prior to the first game of the year. The crisis led to decisions by the new President, Darryl, to sack several administrators and coaches and to make wholesale administrative changes. Indeed, the sense of urgency was significant and the response was reminiscent of a corporate takeover. Pete, the Alumni Director, said "we were embarrassed," and Mark, the Faculty Senate chair said, "we were going to lose our [NCAA] certification." Darryl, the President, was new and he used his bully pulpit to change the environment. "It needed to change," he said, "I kind of

set the tone." Darryl appointed a committee to hire a high-profile athletics director and a new football coach. In less than a year, a new SASS department was created, and it reported to the Provost, not to athletics. Darryl and the new Athletic Director provided the SASS department with the personnel and financial resources necessary to be successful. Academic performance plans were created and implemented by the SASS Director and her assistant, Emily, after they identified areas of deficiency with assistance of the FAR and the Athletics Compliance Director. Decisions made by the new SASS Director and Emily included new database tracking systems and creating relationships across campus to reduce tension and improve understanding between athletics and faculty. After APR scores significantly improved, the Provost believed the SASS department was a model to be emulated for non-athletic student academic needs across campus, although he noted that it would be a challenge to scale up the support system – more than 300 student-athletes versus more than 20,000 non-athlete students.

At Midwestern University, there was demonstrated confidence in the athletics department to respond quickly, efficiently, and adequately to the low APR scores for men's basketball. Cindy, the President, noted her confidence in the current process in place, including the Athletic Director, Mike (the Director of SASS), and Len (the FAR). The athletics department reacted to the need to improve APR for its men's basketball team by using the same process that was previously successful for improving APR for football. The only individual outside of athletics engaged with the plan at a preliminary stage was Len. When the plan was created by Mike, Len reviewed it and the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee "kind of blessed it." At MU, reliance on the knowledge and experience of the FAR was significant to address academic performance issues, including poor APR scores.

The sense of urgency of stakeholders across all three institutions was evident in how they responded to situations regarding poor academic performance of athletics teams. At MU, the response to improve APR scores was created within the athletics department. This may be due to the collegial environment at MU, with few academic issues within athletics in the past, open communication and close friendships across campus, and individuals in key stakeholder positions for long periods of time. There was a perceived greater urgency at SSU to make changes because of several years of APR scores below the NCAA minimum benchmark and other academic violations of NCAA rules. The response was led by an academic committee and the FAR, with resources provided by the President and the Athletic Director. At PWU, the urgency was also great across the entire campus with sub-925 APR scores on several teams, last-minute suspensions of football players due to academic ineligibility, and the Faculty Senate reducing the revenue stream. The President responded quickly by replacing key stakeholders and creating a new SASS department with the resources for improved academic performance. In each institution, a sense of urgency (such as APR scores that jeopardized the university's standing with the NCAA) created an immediate need to respond to significant situations. Urgency created a context for action but also affected the relative perception of influence of individuals on academic decisions related to student-athletes.

Presidential Involvement

It is well documented in the literature (Bok, 2003; Duderstadt, 2003; Estler & Nelson, 2005; Toma, 2003; Toma, 2005), by organizations such as The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (2009) and the Association of Governing Boards (2004), and in reports from the NCAA such as the 2006 Presidential Task Force on the Future of Division I Intercollegiate Athletics (NCAA, 2006a), that greater presidential involvement in the decision-

making of intercollegiate athletics is imperative for colleges to ensure integrity in the operations of athletics within the educational mission of colleges. There are similar findings in this study with respect to how stakeholders at each of the three institutions became more involved in more urgent situations, including presidents using their high authority to impact decisions. And, when situations were most urgent and perceived as most significant, presidents were the most involved of the stakeholders selected for this study.

How college athletics fit within the educational environment at each of the three institutions was on greatest display when presidents made decisions about athletics. At PWU where the sanctions were most severe, Darryl, the President, was very involved. As a former Division I student-athlete, he cared about and valued athletics, and understood the importance of athletics to PWU symbolically, culturally, and through institutional identity. He took the lead by removing two vice presidents, replacing the Athletic Director, basketball coach, and football coach, saying "those were my decisions." He reached out to the Alumni Director to build support for students to vote in favor of paying increased fees to financially support athletics; by doing so, he reduced the faculty antagonism toward athletics. He felt he "needed to make the changes" because the institution was in a crisis mode.

At SSU where circumstances were serious, Sean, the President, was also very involved. He said, "I'm probably more involved than might be typical." His rationale was a need to let people know that the environment needed to change to better align athletics within the institutional mission, saying, "Let's get back to this issue of culture. Everyone who's involved needs to believe in and understand the way things are supposed to be done." Sean appointed the new FAR and initiated the effort to include academic performance measures in coaching contracts. He provided resources to the SASS department to ensure the academic coaches

program had more tutors. He participated in annual meetings in discussions with athletics staff, faculty, and athletes. Sean believed in this: "It was important that the university reinforced our support for athletics, remind everyone that this is an academic institution." The FAR and Athletic Director stated their need to inform the President of the academic progress of athletics teams. Sean was direct: "I think I've set the tone. I think I've sent a clear message."

Conversely, at MU, Cindy, the President, took a hands-off approach to the athletics program. "I don't have a heavy hand on the tiller here. I have confidence and trust in the dispersed processes of governance." Her involvement was limited to one of communication, in that she was made aware of issues, including, as an example, missed class assignments for student-athletes. After understanding the problem, she noted the need for either the Provost or the Vice President for Student Affairs to get involved "because it was an academic issue." Cindy stated her confidence in the personnel already in place to make the proper decisions to address concerns about APR scores. In one case relating to academic eligibility of an athlete, she said, "I said, well it's either going to be up or down, but it's up to him, and no special deals, and I don't even know if he made it or not, so... that's how influential I am." Her approach was more of delegation rather than micro-management, and she left involvement in athletics primarily to the Athletics Department and to the FAR.

The high-profile nature of college athletics, and the public acknowledgement of poor academic performance at the three institutions in the study, provided the opportunity to understand how presidents could become involved to help rectify concerns. At PWU and SSU, the two institutions with more significant concerns, each president felt the need to assert their authority and make significant change. At MU, Cindy and other stakeholders did not believe she needed to be as assertive because the problem was not significant enough and she believed the

structure in place was sufficient to handle things. At each of these campuses, the concerns

perceived by most stakeholders as urgent across the entire campus were the concerns which

provided the rationale for more presidential involvement.

Faculty-Athletics Interaction

Another theme that influenced how stakeholders were involved in decision-making was

relationship-forming, creating conversations, and having a campus environment with open

communication. Much of this was reflected in the need to improve understanding between the

academic areas and the athletics department, particularly at SSU and PWU. This theme of

faculty-athletics interaction is embedded with two sub-themes: relationships and structure. Each

of these subthemes relies primarily on interaction or engagement between faculty and athletics

administrators, but from different perspectives and with different intentions. First, I share the

deliberate intention of stakeholders to create relationships and/or to use/improve existing

relationships across campus.

Faculty-Athletics interaction: Relationships.

At each institution, stakeholders often related how relationships were significant in

helping them make decisions. Many of these relationships were formed over long periods of time

at the institution, sometimes in other capacities or job duties than those held at the time of the

interviews. Other relationships were created to improve the faculty understanding of athletics

and to improve athletics staff understanding of academics. Creating relationships between

athletics and academics was used as a tool to find assistance and resources to improve the

academic performance of student-athletes.

For instance, at MU, Len, the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR), had a very long

tenure as a faculty member, and served more than 13 years as an FAR. Stakeholders discussed

the high level of respect that everyone on campus had for the FAR as a "distinguished" faculty member. Len noted the relationships he developed during his time at the institution contributed to his ability to find the information he needed as FAR. His relationships proved beneficial in several instances: with Mike, the SASS Director, or athletics department officials on eligibility issues; with Greg, the Admissions Officer, or coaches on special admissions decisions; or, identifying concerns with Mike and with faculty on missed class assignments incurred by student-athletes. The relationships Greg created during his long tenure at MU provided him the opportunity to review special admissions requests and to influence academic improvement plans.

The need to create relationships, in addition to using existing relationships, was seen as critical at SSU. Ann, the FAR, was relatively new, appointed by the new President. Both the new FAR and new president understood the need to improve their communications and work together to improve their ability to impact concerning situations; their realization was in part because the previous FAR served a very long time and was close to the previous president. So, relationships that previously existed and were thus important to problem solving changed with the change in leadership. Ann understood the need to develop relationships as a way to be more successful in her duties. She worked across the institution to enhance her role and her value. As a result, she was being called upon for input into coaching hires, and coaches called her for counsel on faculty-athlete issues. The new Athletic Director at SSU was hired from within; he had been in a variety of roles for a long time on campus and was seen as someone who could initiate change. Dart, the Director of SASS, said, "he [AD] was also one of the guys that could pick up the telephone and call the VP of Academic Affairs and there was immediate cooperation between the two, I mean, he was... already at the table.... that would have taken somebody else a few years to, I think, earn that level of respect."

At PWU, Ben was selected as the new FAR after his predecessor had not properly reviewed eligibility of football players. Before his selection as FAR, Ben had a long history as a very well respected faculty-member. The President chose Ben based on his network and respect across campus. During his time as a faculty member, Ben developed a positive relationship with the Faculty Senate; this relationship was important when the Senate voted in favor of cutting institutional funding for athletics. The President and the assistant to the SASS Director relied on Ben's experience and understanding of academic issues in decisions. Emily, then the assistant to the SASS Director, worked diligently to improve relationships with faculty to help implement the academic improvement plans; this was even more critical after the Faculty Senate voted to reduce funding. She said, "that took a good year and a half and that's why I'm in the position I am today, because I had to make those relationships with everybody on campus." Darryl, the President, believed the success of the Athletic Director was based on cross-campus relationships. Darryl said: "[The AD] does it very well, in creating relationships, communication, conversations with the places where the kids interact with the institution. So he has a good relationship with housing, with enrollment services, financial aid, and he insists on that, and I think in the past that hasn't been there."

Relationships among and between the stakeholders interviewed in this study were important to academic decisions affecting student-athletes. Stakeholders who had stronger or who had a wider span of relationships were often in a better position, or perceived they were in a better position, to influence outcomes and be effective in their jobs.

Faculty-Athletics interaction: Structure

Another aspect of interaction between faculty and athletics was how the location of athletics fit within the academic mission of institutions. This concern has been growing in

importance in the literature, most recently in the NCAA's 2006 Presidential Task Force Report (NCAA, 2006a) and in a 2009 national survey of faculty requested by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (Knight Commission, 2009). Faculty are not engaged enough with athletics, and as such, their lack of understanding has led to increasing concerns that athletics does not fit appropriately within the academic mission of higher education. The strain between athletics and academics is often structural, as realized in this study by stakeholders at two of the three institutions.

For instance, at MU, the SASS Department was housed within athletics and reported to the Athletic Director. Therefore, academic eligibility and advising were closely affected by athletics compliance issues. This impacted the positive perception stakeholders shared of athletics' ability to rectify the academic performance concerns of the men's basketball team. All stakeholders who participated in the study talked about "open communication" on the MU campus as an important aspect of using relationships to be effective in their jobs, noting their ability to "just pick up the phone" and communicate with others, including with the Athletic Director. There was also a history of few academic performance issues within athletics at MU. Len, the FAR, was the primary intermediary between faculty and athletics and it seemed most of the discussions of practice, policy, or decisions took place through Len.

The structure of how faculty-athletics interaction developed was vastly different at SSU. Enhancing faculty-athletic engagement was seen by most stakeholders as of paramount importance. Stan, the Associate Athletics Director, believed interaction was important, including direct discussions with academic deans. He said: "I can tell you right now. I've also seen the success of the philosophy, 'get involved.'" Ann, the FAR, worked diligently to improve her value to both faculty and athletics by making herself available and willing to engage in academic

issues. She understood that being at the nexus between athletics and faculty provided her with an opportunity to improve relationships, to be prepared for challenges, and to also improve her personal profile on campus. Dart, the SASS Director, reported to the Provost, and was in close communication with academic advisors and with academic deans. Dart frequently shared concerns directly with faculty and felt strongly this contributed to him no longer being perceived as the "eligibility guy" by faculty on campus. In addition, the policy for the University Athletic Committee to appoint members to follow up on teams' academic improvement plans was another example of how the structure allowed for improved interaction.

At PWU, a significant contributor to the crisis in 2005 was the lack of interaction between faculty and athletics. The President replaced the previous FAR and took steps to create a new environment to improve the engagement between faculty and athletics. A new SASS Department was created and reported to the Provost. By 2011, Mark, the Faculty Senate Chair, perceived there was a positive relationship between the faculty and athletics. Ben, the FAR, served in a capacity in which the relationships he built provided him the ability to resolve conflicts with faculty. Within the SASS Department, Emily believed she needed the opportunity to build relationships with faculty; this was a structural change by creating a process for relationships to occur. Emily said, "Academic advisors that are placed now have continued to do the liaison-ship with multiple entities and each of them have very good relationships with different departments. It's almost like we created a structure."

Interestingly, PWU's Provost and Faculty Senate Chair recognized that the new SASS Department was something they will attempt to emulate with the academic support center provided to students who are not athletes. Emily's work creating structural interaction between athletics and academics was rewarded with a promotion from the SASS department into the

Athletics Department. Emily said, "[the AD] kept hearing my name popping up because I was all over the place carrying a banner, you know, with a cape that said, 'athletics is going to be fine,' and I didn't work for him." Also, the Athletic Director began presenting a report to the Faculty Senate on an annual basis that included academic performance of student-athletes. Furthermore, the President's value of athletics within the academic mission was reinforced when he endorsed the Faculty Senate decision to reduce institutional funding of athletics, while also turning to the Alumni Director to build student support for the need to increase student fees to fund athletics. In other words, the President created a new structure that provided athletics stakeholders the chance to create or enhance their relationships across campus, thus reducing the tension between faculty and athletics.

In each of the three institutions investigated in this study, stakeholders made clear that interaction between two areas of campus – faculty and athletics – was important to reduce the strain and improve mutual understanding.

Summary

Three primary themes emerged from this study with respect to the perceived influence of stakeholders in academic decisions in college athletics: urgency, presidential involvement, and faculty-athletics interaction. Each of the themes provided an opportunity to understand who and what influenced decisions under different environmental and structural factors at each institution. Urgency was realized when the NCAA notified schools of poor academic performance, but became more salient when combined with poor academic performance affecting multiple teams, lack of appropriate tracking of eligibility, or other NCAA rules violations. Presidential involvement in decisions in athletics was more significant when the academic situations affecting athletics were more urgent, or perceived to be more pressing. And, faculty-athletics interaction

116

was a key contributor to the ability for stakeholders to affect academic decisions. Relationships between athletics and faculty, either creating relationships or using pre-existing relationships, were critical to improving the academic performance of student-athletes and athletic teams. Improving academic performance also relied on a structure in which athletics and faculty involvement can be more deliberate and allow for better, and more open, communication.

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a brief overview of the purpose of the research including the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the process of data collection and analysis. First presented is a brief outline of the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the process of data collection and analysis. Then several implications are shared of how higher education administrators and faculty can benefit from learning about the connections between different areas of campus, several strategies in decision-making, and how relationships between stakeholders in different areas of responsibility can foster productive and efficient outcomes for the institution, for students, and for the stakeholders themselves.

The primary purpose of this study was to understand how stakeholders within higher education perceive their influence on academic policies, programs, and practices affecting college athletes. Three institutions from different areas of the country were selected as case sites. Although each site had its own unique culture and environment, the three institutions had similar demographic characteristics, as well as similar academic concerns with their football or men's basketball teams. Interviews at each site revealed several consistent themes that helped to answer the research questions that directed this study:

1. What factors contribute to the perceived influence of stakeholders on decisions about academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics?

2. What is the relative amount of perceived influence of stakeholders on decisions about academic policies, programs, or practices in athletics?

To help answer the research questions, a conceptual framework was developed from several areas of the extant literature: a theoretical understanding of what constitutes influence, the roles and duties of different stakeholders, and the organizational structure of athletics within

major research universities. A qualitative study was used to collect data that would elucidate an understanding of the influence of particular individuals (stakeholders) in academic decision-making affecting athletics. The use of document analysis and interviews allowed for collecting and interpreting content-rich data from a subjective point of view in which the interviewees shared their view of reality and how their view was or was not influenced by others.

Studying several academic situations within athletics at three different institutions helped focus attention of the research and allowed for developing implications about how stakeholders can respond to significant and high-profile (or volatile) situations. The three institutions were selected with similar criteria to provide some conclusions that may be transferable to other institutions. Each of the institutions competed in the NCAA's most competitive division, Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). Further criteria of site selection included similar institution size, athletics budget, and academic performance of the men's basketball and football teams below the NCAA's benchmark score of a 925 Academic Progress Rate (APR); at the time of this study, the NCAA stated a 925 APR approximately predicted a 50 percent graduation rate. Relevant institutional documents and materials relating to the overall research questions were analyzed, including a review of NCAA self-study documents, local and community newspapers, institution websites, and academic improvement plans created by institutions as an NCAA requirement for teams with sub-925 APR scores.

At each location, six interviews were conducted for a total of 18 interviews. The stakeholders interviewed were identified from the literature and included admissions officers, alumni directors, athletics directors, Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs), faculty senate chairs, presidents, provosts, and directors of Student Athlete Support Services (SASS). A semi-structured interview guide was developed after researching several academic concerns in

intercollegiate athletics, including: student-athletes' tendency to cluster into similar classes or choosing similar majors; admitting student-athletes for their athletic talents despite not meeting institutional minimum academic requirements ("special admits"); and, academic improvement plans for athletic teams. Interviews were recorded by computer software and subsequently transcribed. During the transcription process, pseudonyms were given to each institution and to each interviewee to protect identities. After transcriptions were coded with pseudonyms, they were analyzed for themes within each institution, and subsequently analyzed for themes across institutions. Three significant themes affecting influence emerged from the data analysis: urgency, presidential involvement, and faculty-athletics interaction.

Findings

The first research question about factors that contribute to perceived stakeholder influence was found to be based both on structure and on relationships. Not only did urgency as a factor impact individual stakeholders close to the situation and their level of influence, but it also provided an opportunity to change the structure, potentially leading to different levels of influence in the future. In this study, increased presidential involvement in pressing situations often led to changes in structure to provide greater use of resources, or greater opportunity to form cross-campus relationships.

Further, the culture of the institution can be leaned upon in urgent times. Leaders demonstrated support for the cause by using institutional pride and symbols to forge greater appreciation and understanding. Presidents often used organizational culture to influence decisions, but they were not the only stakeholders for whom culture was a factor; athletic directors, FARs, and SASS directors made effective use of aspects of institutional culture, as well. Relationships were also found to be key factors affecting perceived stakeholder influence,

120

especially those that crossed faculty and athletic boundaries. Those for whom relationships were particularly important factors affecting perceived influence were those who, while in named positions, often had to work outside institutional formal authority to be effective. For example, FARs have NCAA authority and responsibility, but their ability to succeed within the institutional setting is largely based on the relationships and credibility they establish with faculty and athletic administrators.

The second research question about relative perceived influence of stakeholders was found to be dependent on the connection of the stakeholder to the decision being made and their proximity to it. The closer to a situation, the more stakeholders perceived they were influential in that situation. Stakeholders who were closer to the situation also felt greater urgency to solve it and exercise their influence. And, when the situation was more problematic or perceived to be more urgent, presidents became more involved and exercised greater influence. This relates to Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) situational leadership theory, which considers the effectiveness of leaders when they interact with others under different conditions. Even for presidents as stakeholders, how they influenced the context in which decisions were made related to the specific institutional climate, which allowed them to be influential and to gain influence.

Implicationss

The themes provided a basis for several implications about perceived stakeholder influence in making decisions that should prove useful for future administrators in higher education, as well as for faculty who interact with fairly autonomous units, such as intercollegiate athletics.

Urgency.

One implication from this study is that urgency can be used as a management strategy of higher education stakeholders. Influence became more salient when situations became more urgent. Thus, urgency is useful as a tool to manage decisions by creating an environment for certain stakeholders to be influential, or to either enhance or diminish stakeholder influence. Urgency should not be considered a negative pressure on decision-making, but rather it can be used to positively strategize if (or when) concerning situations occur. Urgency can be used to strategize through: 1) enhancing leadership by using authority to act or to build capacity for pulling people into action; 2) focusing attention by selecting targets and controlling resources; 3) or, emphasizing shared values by addressing an institution's symbols or culture. These strategies are similar to Orton and Weick's (1991) strategies of influence mentioned as the "voice of compensations" (p. 211) in their model of loosely coupled systems. In addition, an important strategy is for stakeholders to develop relationships across campus, either prior to, or in response to urgent situations. These relationships and the credibility associated with them help stakeholders (not limited to presidents) effectively negotiate strategies of urgency, build coalitions, and mobilize allies as necessary to influence decisions (Morgan, 1997; Orton & Weick, 1990).

Using strategy, even if incomplete, is important in a time of stress and change in the loosely coupled system of a higher education institution when it may be necessary to "launch the actions associated with a preliminary strategy long before it is carefully thought through and completely developed" (Duderstadt, 2001, p.45). Darryl at PWU and Sean at SSU fall in line with this concept of an emergent strategy in which leaders take actions and are public about the importance of their actions. The perceived crisis for both institutions because of the NCAA

sanctions provided a platform from which both presidents took bold actions, reinforcing a sense of urgency and their ability to lead in difficult times. Their use of urgency as a leadership strategy to make necessary and informed institutional changes is reminiscent of Bess and Dee's (2008) and Keller's (1983) calls for leaders to make data-based decisions in strategic ways so as to avoid becoming reactive prisoners of external forces (the NCAA in this study).

Urgency as a strategy can be as beneficial to other stakeholders as it is to those in positions of highest authority. In crisis situations, stakeholders that are closest to the situation may feel the greatest pressure to make improvements, and it behooves these stakeholders to make decisions as soon as possible, so long as they are in line with the academic mission of the institution. Considering the stakeholder theory of influence, it may be the high-profile and high pressure nature of intercollegiate athletics places urgency in a position of greater impact on influence than the impact of either legitimacy or power (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Future research of decisions affecting other semi-autonomous units would be useful to learn if urgency impacts influence on decision-making as it did in this study.

Urgency: Enhancing leadership.

The strategy of enhancing leadership is one in which stronger leadership is necessary to make decisions that will benefit the institution. To make decisions, stakeholders with authority should not necessarily wait for instructions, wait for policies, or wait for committees; rather, they should act. When situations in an institution become significant enough or compounded with other concerns, stakeholders in positions of higher authority and with the ability to make campus-wide decisions need to act and make decisions to rectify the situation. Those who are in positions with different levels of authority could use urgency as a leadership strategy to communicate with other decision-makers, to use or develop relationships that can help influence

123

the situation, and in so doing, build leadership capacity throughout the institution to be pulled into action when needed.

In this study, academic concerns at three institutions were presented, with differing levels of presidential involvement and, presidents were expected to influence decisions within the university setting. As academic performance issues became more problematic and as the publicity of the issues escalated, the urgency to respond subsequently increased, and presidents and other stakeholders became increasingly involved. This may be the case in other crisis situations at a university if certain situations also receive high-profile criticism; in this study, academic performance concerns were acute because the high-profile nature of NCAA sanctions at the institutions created pressure to make immediate improvements. But, in terms of enhancing leadership, presidents should plan ahead, and not necessarily wait for situations to compound into a crisis before they act (Duderstadt, 2001; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996). A strategy to plan for the worst, for the unexpected, or to create processes for responding to crisis situations is one that should involve stakeholders across campus who have relationships and resources to respond in the institution's best interest. For instance, President Cindy at MU created a climate which allowed for cross-campus relationships to flourish, and thus allow for a quick and efficient response in an urgent situation.

Multiple stakeholders can take a leadership role by sharing how they can be impactful in making decisions by working with those across campus, or using resources at their disposal. This form of enhancing leadership relates to McShane and Von Gilnow's (2008) idea that leadership among individuals within different levels of authority can be transformational, changing the organization's strategies and culture to better fit with the environment. Future research should focus on whether or not crisis situations in less competitive levels of the NCAA, particularly

124

Division II or Division III, lead to similar levels of the need for presidential involvement in decision-making and/or are addressed through enhanced leadership capacity throughout those institutions.

Urgency: Focusing attention.

Higher education stakeholders can also focus their attention on specific concerns in a time of urgency by providing the resources necessary or creating policies or programs that will lead to improvements. It is through these decisions over resources that presidents can use their authority and their ability to change or shift the organizational structure. Reorganizing reporting lines, for example, to locate Student Athletic Support Services under a provost rather than athletics, can send strong signals about the ties between academics and athletics. Another example of resource allocation and structural change would be establishing committee structures with clear accountability measures through which close working relationships between FARs and athletic directors can develop to more effectively address student learning and athletic goals.

Other stakeholders also have different opportunities to influence decisions for improvement. In this study, as academic concerns escalated, presidents and other stakeholders made decisions to provide new resources (more money, more personnel, new personnel, new database), restructure the areas of concern, and create compensation policies relating to academic performance. Although one could argue that increased presidential involvement is a sign of centralizing decision making in times of crisis and resource constraints (Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 1978; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996), this study also found other stakeholders exercising perceived influence on how resources and structures were allocated to address institutional needs. For instance, at PWU, the Alumni Director used his position and networking to lead students in support of an increased student fee to enhance the funding for PWU athletics to

remain competitive within Division I-FBS. And, at MU, the SASS director required academically at-risk student-athletes to work with existing academic support programs.

At both MU and PWU, these non-presidents were able to mobilize their resources by energizing a student power base to raise fees and by using broader institutional academic support resources, thereby not having to expend SASS resources and more closely connecting the academic needs of athletes with other at-risk non-athlete students. Having a more complete understanding of one's existing resources, knowing when and how to use them, and making relationships to find and use those resources are essential stakeholder strategies to influence decisions and improve problems in crisis situations that emerged in this study. They are likely just as important strategies in non-crisis situations. Situational leadership theory reflects this implication, in which leaders focus on developing structure in situations when followers have less ability or resources to complete tasks (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977); and, as the situation improves in resources and followers' abilities, leaders can then provide followers with greater participation in decision-making (Bess & Dee, 2008).

In this study, urgent decisions about resources were made in environments with open communication to foster understanding about the importance of the decisions. An implication is that by focusing attention on structural changes and resource allocation and being more transparent in the process, leaders can provide stakeholders with new opportunities to forge and improve relationships across campus, share resources, and be creative and strategic in their efforts to create programs for improvement. This resembles Leslie and Fretwell's (1996) point that a strategy to create close working relationships across campus improved how stakeholders' understood decisions. The ability to create, invest, or shift significant resources to respond to urgent situations is different in institutions of different size, structure, and culture, such as those

colleges in NCAA Division II or Division III. Future research about decisions to shift or move resources at institutions of different sizes, structures, or cultures would be useful to learn how stakeholders, and which stakeholders, can be influential in those decisions, or perceive themselves to be influential.

Urgency: Emphasizing symbolism and shared values.

In times of crisis in this research and in other studies, leaders also turn to institutional symbolism and shared values to restore meaning to the institution (Bess & Dee, 2008; Bull, 1984; Dill, 1982; Toma, 2010). Other stakeholders should take this into account when assisting in the development of new strategies which use, or enhance, the institution's symbols while also reflecting the shared values of the institution. One strategy may be to include a review and reassessment of the institution's mission, or similarly to create an environment where the shared values of the institution become predominant in the decision-making. Bess and Dee (2008) noted a similar strategy by faculty and staff in their strategic response to "identity threat" (p.157) as a result of statewide budget cuts to higher education. Interestingly enough, athletics – which is highly symbolic to institutions via its mascots, sport team nicknames, fight songs and cheers, cheerleading squads, marching bands, school colors and athletic logos – is among the fairly autonomous departments that are useful when one considers using symbolism in strategic decision-making. In urgent times, higher education stakeholders may choose not to make decisions that will upset the academic apple cart, but rather make decisions in-line with restoring institutional pride and respect, often through symbolic leadership (Toma, 2010). The idea of the symbolism of athletics as it relates to institutional identity has received attention, particularly from Sweitzer's (2009) research on the meaning of conference affiliation to institutional identity.

Moving beyond Sweitzer to research how stakeholders directly use athletics in their decisions to prop up other non-athletic units of an institution would prove useful.

Cross-campus relationships.

It is also important to consider authority outside of presidential authority at an institution and learn which individuals have established influential relationships within the organizational structure. This study found stakeholders who reach across campus to create relationships are doing so potentially because of personal interest, but moreover to benefit their own positional profile and to be perceived as impactful to the institution, thereby enhancing their authority. As a stakeholder who may not be a president or whose obvious authority related to academic influence may not be as clear, staying just within one's own reporting area will not improve influence in what is of particular interest. Relationships must be developed, preferably prior to a crisis, and nurtured for a stakeholder to be influential, and ultimately successful (Morgan, 1997). Bull (1994) found that in the process of managing change, leaders should create organic processes that rely upon relationships that encourage discretion and judgment, team building, openness, and delegation. This finding was reinforced in this research through many instances by those who were able to be most influential in academic decision-making affecting athletics.

As occurred at each institution in this study, cross-campus relationships can impact efficiency and academic success of fairly autonomous units and potentially move stakeholders into other administrative positions with similar duties. Stakeholders should realize their individual success lies in their ability to create and use relationships across campus, and that these relationships are beneficial to the institution. Similarly, situational leaders are those who, in certain situations, creating and enhance relationships in addition to directing work to be done (Bensimon, Newmann, & Birnbaum, 1989). Internally to the institution, the system depends on

128

these relationships that are often outside reporting lines and often socially constructed, with "structure as something that organizations do, rather than merely as something they have" (Orton & Weick, 1991, p. 218). And boundary-spanning relationships that stretch beyond the organization and its environments are "critical to organizational survival and success" (Bess and Dee, 2008, p. 714) as was found in the way stakeholders at each of the three institutions in this study were caused to create or mobilize networks, effectively create academic improvement plans, and deal with faculty or public scrutiny.

Indeed, making decisions requires interactions among people, takes time, and has an impact on the organization (Chaffee, 1983). Thus, being deliberate about a process to develop or enhance relationships assists with making decisions that impact the effectiveness of an institution. Bull's (1994) concept readily applies to stakeholders at all levels, who should create or use their cross-campus relationships to work with leaders to resolve problems from crisis situations. Future research can look more closely at how crisis situations in other fairly autonomous units provided the opportunity to create cross-campus relationships which were fruitful to individual stakeholders and to the institution.

Institutional climate matters.

One additional, important consideration is the impact of institutional climate on the ability for stakeholders to be influential. Institutional climate became the elephant in the room in this research. The study expected to provide findings to help map the extent that stakeholders in a semi-autonomous unit, such as athletics, were able to influence decisions. Instead, the study found that perceived stakeholder influence on decisions depends on the institution and its climate. Therefore, the theoretical model proposed by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) did not

129

necessarily work for this study. The findings of this study relating to perceived stakeholder influence were not consistent with what was expected given the literature review.

While the focus of this study was on individual stakeholder perceived influence on certain decisions affecting athletics, it also found that institutional context matters. Thus, the research not only questions the perceptions of influence, but how the perceptions impact or relate to influence as practiced. Furthermore, the research considers not only who may be influential, but also what impacts their influence, how they are influential, and why they are influential. Each institution has a different culture, as well as a different climate that affects how decisions are made (Bess & Dee, 2008). It is the culture and climate that help form the significance of how, what, and why certain individuals are influential. This study began with the purpose of learning about who was perceived to be influential, but ended up learning about what the roles of certain stakeholders mean within the institutional climate and culture, and how these stakeholders perceive their influence within that climate and culture. In the future, while certain quantitative measures are important in the site selection process to find commonalities of institutions, it is just as important to take into context how the institutional climate and culture may affect influence in decision-making.

Limitations

A delimiter of this study was its investigation of institutions that had already been impacted by NCAA policies and had already responded to improve the situation. Thus, while this study adhered to certain criteria in the site selection process, situations at institutions not in the site selection criteria may differently impact stakeholder decision-making. Furthermore, this study did not include interviews of other potential stakeholders, such as legislators, board of

trustees, boosters, or members of the media; therefore, the outcomes of the study may be different based upon data from interviews of these other stakeholders.

Summary

This study set out to learn more about the perceived influence of stakeholders on academic decisions affecting intercollegiate athletics, with the intent that such knowledge would help provide useful implications for future leaders making decisions that impact unique student populations. Interviews of administrators at three institutions helped to contribute to the knowledge in higher education about strategies used by stakeholders to make decisions, particularly when situations are most urgent. Using urgency as a management strategy can provide leaders with an opportunity to adapt and respond quickly to situations, create greater stakeholder understanding of the rationale behind decisions, and enhance institutional pride through shared values and symbolism. The interactive nature of situational leadership is an important implication, as stakeholders can realize their leadership also depends on how their engagement with others is impacted by the situation and by the environment. In addition, building and using cross-campus relationships is a critical tool for stakeholders to influence academic decisions.

APPENDICES

Interview Guide

Rationale: This document was developed to help build a conversation with a list of topic areas and questions relating to research questions. This interview guide may be modified over time to focus attention on areas of particular importance, or to exclude questions found to be unproductive (Hoepfl, 1997; Weiss, 1995). As noted by Weiss (1995, p.48), "the best guides list lines or topics so they can be grasped at a glance" without interrupting the flow of the interview or being too dense to focus on the guide instead of the content and context of the interview. Thus, these interviews serve to be used as a guide, and to allow the researcher to pursue data as they emerge (Patton, 1990).

Introduction: The researcher will greet the subject participant and introduce himself with personal information.

Purpose: The researcher will explain the purpose of this study is to learn about the relative amount of power of various stakeholders in the decision-making of academic policies affecting intercollegiate athletics.

Procedures: The researcher will explain that open-ended questions will be asked in individual interviews. Interviews will last approximately one hour, depending on the extent of information the participant wishes to share. Participants will be informed that their interview will be recorded and transcribed, and shared with them for their feedback.

Protection: Confidentiality will be assured by informing them that pseudonyms of institution and individual will be used in data analysis and in the final study. Participants will be encouraged to share only information with which they are comfortable sharing, and that they may discontinue the interview at any time.

Guide: The interview guide is listed below.

Conclusion: After each interview, additional comments will be accepted before the participants are thanked and dismissed.

Perceptions of interaction with athletics

- INTERACTION WITH ATHLETICS. Can you describe your interaction with the athletics department?

- INTERACTION WITH PLAYERS. Can you describe your interaction (directly or indirectly) with football or basketball players? What was your experience

- PERCEPTION OF YOUR INTERACTION? How do you believe you are perceived by others as interacting with athletics – other leaders on campus or in athletics?

Academic performance

- INFLUENCE ON POLICIES AND PRACTICES. What do you believe is your influence on academic policies and practices in athletics?

- RELATIVE INFLUENCE. How is your influence on academic policies and practices relatives to others on or off campus? Why do you feel that way?

- HOW DO YOU INFLUENCE ACADEMICS? How do you believe you direct or influence academic policies or decisions which may affect the football or basketball team?

- INFLUENCE OF OTHERS? Who do you believe is influential on campus? To what extent? Why are they influential? How are they influential?

Interactions on academic policies or practices

- INTERACTION WITH OTHERS? Have you interacted with others on academic policies or practices? How?

- SOCIAL NETWORKING: Are there particular individuals or groups with whom you have a social relationship that affects your impact on academic policies or practices in athletics? This could be a personal network, social group, or other type of relationship. With whom? How and to what extent?

- IMPACT OF INTERACTION OF ACADEMIC POLICIES OR PRACTICES? What impact did your interactions have on the decision making of academic policies or practices? With who specifically? Which interactions had the most significant impact? Which had the least impact? Why or why not?

Specific policies

- PARTICIPATION & OTHERS IN APR POLICY CREATION. Please discuss your participation (directly or indirectly, independently or with others) in decisions to create a policy for the institution's APR improvement program? To what extent to you believe you were influential, and influential comparison to others?

- PARTICIPATION & OTHERS IN MAJOR SELECTION. Please discuss your participation (directly or indirectly, independently or with others) in decisions relating to how the institution directs athletes to particular courses or majors? To what extent to you believe you were influential, and influential comparison to others?

- PARTICIPATION & OTHERS IN SPECIAL ADMISSIONS. Please discuss your participation (directly or indirectly, independently or with others) in decisions relating to how the institution gives special consideration to athletes in admission to

the institution?   To what extent to you believe you were influential, and influential
in comparison to others?

APPENDIX B

Invitation to Participate

My name is Scott Hirko, and I am a PhD candidate in Michigan State University's program in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education. I am requesting your participation in an interview that is part of a study examining the relative amount of interaction among various stakeholders on decision-making of academic policies that affect college athletics.

Your participation will contribute to our knowledge of the role of different individuals affecting the dynamics of athletics within the academic mission of higher education. I would like to interview you at a location of your choosing that provides comfort and ensures your ability to participate. The interview will last no more than one hour.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to answer some questions and not others. **Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.** Every effort will be made to protect confidentiality. Your responses will be coded with pseudonyms of both institution and individual to ensure that the any information is anonymous. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. A transcript of the interview will be created and will be shared for your review before analysis.

This study is being produced as a dissertation to complete the Ph.D. degree in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education at Michigan State University. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Scott Hirko (information below) or Dr. Marilyn Amey, amey@msu.edu, Professor and Chair, Department of Educational Administration, Erickson Hall, Michigan State University.

An institutional review board (IRB) will approve this study prior to any interviews. I will share with you the confirmation of IRB approval and contact information prior to any inquiry.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this invitation and this study.

Thank you so much for your participation!

Scott Hirko, Ph.D. Candidate
Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education
Michigan State University
hirkosco@msu.edu
(517) 488-2819

APPENDIX C

Written Consent

Dear Participant:

This is an invitation to participate in an interview that is part of a study examining the relative amount of interaction among various stakeholders on decision-making and academic policies that affect college athletics. This study, *Stakeholder Interaction in Academic Policies and Decisions in NCAA Division I-FBS Athletics,* is conducted by Scott Hirko, under the supervision of Dr. Marilyn Amey. Each interview will last approximately one hour, depending on how long your responses are. Your interview will also be audio taped for analysis.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to answer some questions and not others. **Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.** Every effort will be made to protect confidentiality. Your responses will be coded with pseudonyms of both institution and individual to ensure that the any information is anonymous. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. A transcript of the interview will be created and will be shared for your review before analysis.

This study is being produced as a dissertation to complete the Ph.D. degree in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education at Michigan State University. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Scott Hirko (information below) or Dr. Marily Amey, amey@msu.edu, Professor and Chair, Department of Educational Administration, Erickson Hall, Michigan State University.

An institutional review board (IRB) has approved this study and the approval form is attached.

If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact - anonymously, if you wish – Judy McMillan, Director, Human Research Protection Programs on Research Involving Human Subjects, by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, email address: irb@msu.edu, or postal mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you for participating!

I agree to participate in this study. In addition, by signing below I agree to allow my responses to be audio taped for research purposes of this study.

Signature _____   Date_____

Name (Printed)_____

APPENDIX D

Descriptive Questionnaire

Dear :

      The four questions below are posed to help provide brief contextual information about your interactions at _____. This information will be kept confidential and will be kept apart from data collected in an interview. Your name and the name of the institution will be provided a pseudonym to protect confidentiality.

      Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to answer some questions and not others. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

      This study is being produced as a dissertation to complete the Ph.D. degree in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education at Michigan State University. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Scott Hirko (information below) or Dr. Marilyn Amey, amey@msu.edu, Professor and Chair, Department of Educational Administration, Erickson Hall, Michigan State University.

1. Your occupation: _____

2. Length of time in your occupation: _____

3. Approximately how long have you been in this occupation at this location? _____

4. If different from above, what is your relationship to the athletics department, and for how long (years): _____

Return to:
Scott Hirko, Ph.D. Candidate
Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education
Michigan State University
1355 Turtlecreek Circle
East Lansing, MI 48823
hirkosco@msu.edu
(517) 488-2819

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Agle, B., Mitchell, R., & Sonnenfeld, J. (1999). Who matters to CEOs? An investigation of stakeholder attributes and salience, corporate performance, and CEO values. *Academy of Management, 42*(5), 507-523.

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2005). The influence of attitudes on behavior. In D. Albarracin, B. Johnson & M. Zanna (Eds.), *The handbook of attitudes*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Alfred, R. (2006). *Managing the big picture in colleges and universities: From tactics to strategy*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Andre, J., & James, D. (1991). *Rethinking college athletics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Razaveih, A. (2002). *Introduction to research in education* (Sixth ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. (2004). *Ten public policy issues for higher education in 2003 and 2004*. Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Bacharach, S. B., & Lawler, E. J. (1980). Power and politics in organizations: The social psychology of conflict, coalitions, and bargaining. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Bailey, W. S., & Littleton, T. D. (1991). *Athletics and academe: An anatomy of abuses and a prescription for reform*. New York: American Council on Education.

Baldridge, J. V., Curtis, D. V., Ecker, G., & Riley, G. L. (1978). *Policy making and effective leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bensimon, E. M., Neumann, A., & Birnbaum, R. (1989). *Making sense of administrative leadership: The "L" word in higher education*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University.

Bess, J. L., & Dee, J. R. (2008). *Understanding college and university organization: Theories for effective policy and practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Birnbaum, R. (1989). The latent organizational functions of the academic senate. In M. C. Brown II (Ed.), *Organization & governance in higher education* (fifth ed., pp. 232-243). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Bogue, E. G., & Aper, J. (2000). *Exploring the heritage of American higher education: The evolution of philosophy and policy*. American Council on Education/OryPress Series on Higher Education. District of Columbia: American Council on Education, Washington, DC.

Bok, D. (2003). *Universities in the marketplace: The commercialization of higher education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2003). *Reframing organizations : artistry, choice, and leadership* (Third ed.). San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Borg, W. (1983). *Educational research*. New York: Longman, Inc.

Borland, K., Howard, R. D., Sanders, C. T., & Gioglio, T. (2009). Accountability to athletics stakeholders. In D. B. Kissinger & M. T. Miller (Eds.), *College student-athletes: Challenges, opportunities, and policy implications* (pp. 219-234). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Bouchet, A., & Scott, M. (2009). Do BCS schools have an advantage over non-BCS schools in APR Rankings? An early examination. *The Sport Journal, 12*(4).

Bower, B. (1988). Study takes measure of college athletes. *Science News, 134*(23), 357.

Brady, E. (2008). Athletes' academic choices put advisers in tough balancing act.*USA Today*. Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/2008-11-20-athletes-advisers-cover_N.htm.

Broughton, E., & Neyer, M. (2001). Advising and counseling student athletes. *New Directions for Student Services, 93*, 47-53.

Broggs, C. L. (1996). *Differences in degree aspirations and attainment outcomes between football or basketball players and other intercollegiate athletes*. Paper presented November 1, 1996, at the annual conference Association for the Study of Higher Education, Memphis, TN.

Brown, W. R. (1982). *Academic politics*. University, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Bull, J. (1994). Managing change or changing managers? In S. Weil (Ed.), *Introducing change 'from the top' in universities and colleges: 10 personal accounts* (pp. 81-94). London: Kogan Page Limited.

Byers, W. (1995). *Unsportsmanlike conduct: Exploiting college athletes*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Carodine, K., Almond, K., & Gratto, K. (2001). College student athlete success both in and out of the classroom. *New Directions for Student Services, 93*, 19-33.

Carty, J., Heuser, J., & Fenno, N. (2008, March 16). University of Michigan athletes steered to professor. *Ann Arbor News*.

Chaffee, E. E. (1985). Three models of strategy. *The Academy of Management Review, 10*(1), 89-98.

Chaffee, E. E. (1983). Five models of organization decision making. In E. E. Chaffee (Ed.), *Rational decision making in higher education* (pp. 5-29). Boulder: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Christy, K., Seifried, C., & Pastore, D. (2008). Intercollegiate athletics: A preliminary study examining the opinions on the impact of the Academic Performance Rate (APR). *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 1*(1), 1-10.

Clark, B. R. (1963). Faculty organization and authority. In M. C. Brown II (Ed.), *Organization & governance in higher education* (fifth ed., pp. 119-127). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Clark, B. R., & Youn, T. I. K. (1976). *Academic power in the United States: Comparative historic and structural perspectives*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.

Crom, C., Warren, B., Clark, H., Marolla, J., & Gerber, P. (2009). Factors contributing to student-athlete retention. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 14-24.

Cunningham, G. B., & Rivera, C. A. (2001). Structural designs within American intercollegiate athletic departments. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 9*(4), 369-390.

Delta Project on Postsecondary Education Costs. (2010). *Cost of athletics per athlete vs. cost of academics per student*. Retrieved from NCAA_fbs_per_athlete_05_08_revised.xls.

Denhart, M., Villwock, R., & Vedder, R. (2009). *The academics athletics trade-off: Universities and intercollegiate athletics*. Washington, DC: Center for College Affordability and Productivity.

Diacon, T. (2008, September 2). The University of Ohiopennkaniowatenn. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2008/07/15/diacon

Diehl, M. (2009). *The academic performance of Division I men's college basketball: Views from academic advisors for athletics.* Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green.

Dill, D. D. (1984). The nature of administrative behavior in higher education. In M. C. Brown II (Ed.), *Organization & governance in higher education* (fifth ed., pp. 92-110). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Duderstadt, J. J. (2003). *Intercollegiate athletics and the American university: A university president's perspective*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Duderstadt, J. J. (2001). Fire, ready, aim! University decision-making during an era of rapid change. In W. Z. Hirsch & L. E. Weber (Eds.), *Governance in higher education: The university in a state of flu*(pp. 26-49). London: Economica Ltd.

Estler, S., & Nelson, L. (2005). Who calls the shots? Sports and university leadership, culture, and decision making (Vol. 30). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Farrey, T. (Writer) (2009). Outside the lines: Florida State academic scandal: ESPN.

Ferris, E., Finster, M., & McDonald, D. (2004). Academic fit of student-athletes: An analysis of NCAA Division I-A graduation rates. *Research in Higher Education, 45*(6), 556-578.

Flower, J. A. (2003). Downstairs, upstairs: The changed spirit and face of college life in America. Akron, Ohio: University of Akron Press.

Fountain, J., & Finley, P. (2009). Academic majors of upperclassmen football players in the Atlantic Coast Conference: An analysis of academic clustering comparing white and minority players. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 2*, 1-13.

Frank, R. (2004). *Challenging the myth: A review of the links among college athletic success, student quality and donations*. Miami, FL: Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

French, P. (2004). *Ethics and college sports: Ethics, sports, and the university*. Lanham, MD: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Frey, J. (1994). Deviance of organizational subunits: The case of college athletic departments. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 18*, 110-122.

Frey, J. (1982). Intercollegiate athletics in the future: Booster coalition, institutional control, and the pursuit of scarce resources. In J. Frey (Ed.), *Governance of intercollegiate athletics*. West Point, NY: Leisure Press.

Friedrich, C. J. (1937). *Constitutional government and politics*. New York: Harper.

Gabert, T., Hale, J.L., & Montalvo, G. (1999). Differences in college choice factors among freshman student athletes. *The Journal of College Admission,* No. 164, Summer/Fall, 20-29.

Gaston-Gayles, J. (2004). Examining academic and athletic motivation among student athletes at a Division I university. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(1), 75-83.

Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (Second ed.). New York: Longman.

Greene, D., & David, J. (1981). *A research design for generalizing from multiple case studies*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Bay Area Research Group.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative reserach. In N. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1977). *Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Hoepfl, M. (1997). Choosing qualitative research: A primer for technology education researchers. *Journal of Technology Education, 9*(1), 47-65.

Hollis, L. (2001/2002). Service ace? Which academic services and resources truly benefit student athletes. *Journal of College Student Retention, 3*(3), 265-284.

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2008). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (Third ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Keller, G. (1983). *Academic strategy: The management revolution in American higher education*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Kilian, T. R. (1969). *Power constructs in higher education*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Kjeldsen, E. (1982). Community interests and intercollegiate athletics. In J. Frey (Ed.), *The governance of intercollegiate athletics* (pp. 195-208). West Point, NY: Leisure Press.

Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. (2010). *Restoring the balance: Dollars, values and the future of college sports*. Miami, FL: John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. (2009). *Quantitative and qualitative research with Football Bowl Subdivision university presidents on the costs and financing of intercollegiate athletics: Report of findings and implications*. Baltimore: Art & Science Group, LLC.

Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. (2007). *Faculty perceptions of intercollegiate athletics survey*. Miami, FL: Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. (2001). *A call to action: Reconnecting college sports to higher education.* Miami, FL: Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

Knobler, M. (2008, December 28). College athletes: Academic performance: Behind the line on grades. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Retreived from www.newhaven.edu/news-events/27084.pdf

Krosnick, J., Boninger, D., Chuang, Y., Berent, M., & Carnot, C. (1993). Attitude strength: One construct or many related constructs? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*(6), 1132-1151.

Lapchick, R. (Ed.). (2006). *New game plan for college sport*. Westport, CT: American Council on Education and Prager Publishers.

Leslie, D., & Fretwell, E. K. (1996). *Wise moves in hard times: Creating and managing resilient colleges and universities*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Letawsky, N., Schneider, R., Pedersen, P., & Palmer, C. (2003). Factors influencing the college selection process of student-athletes: are their factors similar to non-athletes? *College Student Journal, 37*, 604-610.

Lichtman, M. (2006). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., pp. 163-188). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Doing what comes naturally. In *Naturalistic inquiry* (pp. 187-220). Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Lucas, J., & Lovaglia, M. (2005). Can academic progress help collegiate football teams win? *The Sport Journal, 8*(3).

Manning, K. (1997). Authenticity in constructivist inquiry: Methodological considerations without prescription. *Qualitative inquiry, 3*(1), 93-115.

Marx, A. (2006). *College athletes and student persistence: An examination of Tinto's model* University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative researching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

McDaniel, J., & Miskel, C. (2002). Stakeholder salience: Business and educational policy. *Teachers College Record, 104*(2), 325-356.

McShane, S., & Von Gilnow, M. (2008). *Organizational behavior: Emerging realities for the workplace revolution* (4th Edition). Boston: McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Meggyesy, D. (2000). Athletes in big-time college sport. *Society, 37*(3), 24-28.

Melendez, M. (2006). The influence of athletic participation on the college adjustment of freshmen and sophomore student athletes. *College Student Retention, 8*(1), 39-55.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mertens, D. (1998). *Research methods in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (Second ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Miller, M., & Pope, M. (2002). *The provost's view of the value of faculty led decision-making*. College of Education, San Jose State University.

Miracle, A. W., & Rees, C. R. (1994). *Lessons of the locker room: The myth of school sports*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books.

Mitchell, R., Agle, B., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *The Academy of Management Review, 22*(4), 853-886.

Moore, P. (1989). Students as athletes: Making it work. *Educational Record, 70*(3-4), 44-47

Morgan, G. (1997). *Images of organization* (Second ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (NCAA). (2010). *NCAA Division I Academic Performance Program and NCAA Division I Committee on Academic Performance Policies and Procedures*. Indianapolis: National Collegiate Athletic Association.

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (NCAA). (2009a). *Student-athlete academic support services at Division I institutions*. Indianapolis: National Collegiate Athletic Association.

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2009b). *NCAA 2009-2010 Division I Manual*. Indianapolis: National Collegiate Athletic Association.

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (NCAA). (2006a, March 1). Academic reform taking hold, latest APR data show. *NCAA Press Release*.

National Collegiate Athletic Association Presidential Task Force on the Future of Division I Intercollegiate Athletics. (NCAA). (2006b). *The second century imperatives: Presidential leadership -- institutional accountability*. Indianapolis: National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Orton, J., & Weick, K. E. (1990). Loosely coupled systems: A reconceptualization. *Academy of Management Review, 15*(2), 203-223.

Pacific West University Athletic Department. (PWU Athletics Department). (2011). *NCAA Division I athletics certification self-study instrument.*

Pascarella, E. T., & Smart, J. C. (1991). Impact of intercollegiate athletic participation for African American and Caucasian men: Some further evidence. *Journal of College Student Development, 32*(2), 123-130.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Petr, T., & Paskus, T. (2009). The collection and use of academic outcomes data by the NCAA. *New Directions for Institutional Research*(144), 77-92.

Phillips, R. (2003). *Stakeholder theory and organizational ethics*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Roskos-Ewoldsen, D. R., Arpan-Ralstin, L. A., & St. Pierre, J. (2002). Attitude accessibility and persuasion: The quick and the strong. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 39-61). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rowley, T. (1997). Moving beyond dyadic ties: A network theory of stakeholder influences. *The Academy of Management Review, 22*(4), 887-910.

Ryan, F. J. (1989). Participation in intercollegiate athletics: Affective outcomes. *Journal of College Student Development, 30*(2), 122-128.

Sack, A. L., & Staurowsky, E. J. (1998). *College athletes for hire: The evolution and legacy of the NCAA's amateur myth*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.

Satterfield, J. (2006, November 3, 2006). *Factors affecting intercollegiate student athletes and athletics.* Paper presented at the Association for the Studies of Higher Education, Anaheim, California.

Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schiferl, K. (2009). Staff blog: Schiferl on student-athlete rigors. Retrieved January 21, 2010, from http://www.olemisssports.com/ViewArticle.dbml?DB_OEM_ID=2600&ATCLID=1482676

Scott, H. S. (2002). *What game are they playing? A critique of the game of life*. Speech presented at the Sesquicentennial celebrating 150 years of Harvard intercollegiate athletics. Harvard University, Boston.

Scott, W. R. (2003). *Organizations: rational, natural, and open systems* (Fifth ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Shulman, J. L., & Bowen, W. G. (2001). *The game of life: College sports and educational Values*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Solow, R. S. (1998). *Faculty athletic committees as a source of intercollegiate athletic authority*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Georgia.

Southern State University Athletic Department. (SSU Athletics Department). (2008). *NCAA Division I athletics certification self-study instrument.*

Sperber, M. (1990). *College sports, inc.: The athletic department vs. the university*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Sperber, M. (2000). *Beer and circus: How big-time college sports is crippling undergraduate education*. New York: Henry Holt & Company.

Steeg, J. L., Upton, J., Bohn, P., & Berkowitz, S. (2008, November 19). College athletes studies guided toward 'major in eligibility' *USA Today*. Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/2008-11-18-majors-cover_N.htm

Stephens, N. (2007). Collecting data from elites and ultra elites: Telephone and face-to-face interviews with macroeconomists. *Qualitative research, 7*(2), 203-218.

Stern, C. S. (2003). The faculty report in the reform of intercollegiate athletics. *Academe, 89*(1), 64-70.

Stevens, M. (2007). *Creating a class: College admissions and the education of the elites*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sweitzer, K. (2009). Institutional ambitions and athletic conference affiliation. *New Directions for Higher Education*(148), 55-63.

Thamel, P. (2006, July 13). For some athletes, courses with no classes. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/13/sports/13cnd-auburn.html?ei=5090&en=8f01a6a3d956a923&ex=1310443200&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss&pagewanted=print

Thelin, J. R. (1994). *Games colleges play: Scandal and reform in intercollegiate athletics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Thomas, C. (2006). *A program evaluation of athletic academic support programs at two land-grant universities* Tennessee State University, Nashville.

Thompson, J. D. (1967). *Organizations in action: Social science bases of administrative theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Toma, J. D. (2010). *Building organizational capacity: Strategic management in higher education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Toma, J. D. (2005). Amateur ideals, commercial realities, and strategic uses: Exploring the false divide between spectator sports and the overall university. *Phi Kappa Phi Forum, 85*(3), 32-36.

Toma, J. D. (2003). *Football U: Spectator sports in the life of the American university*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Tratchtenberg, S. J. (2008). *Big man on campus*. New York: Touchstone.

Tublitz, N. (2009, January 4). It's time to give academics top priority. *Eugene Register-Guard*. Retrieved from http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/opinion/5038969-47/story.csp

Tysiak, K. (2011, August 2). Advocate says UNC let Michael McAdoo down. *Raleigh News & Observer*. Retrieved from http://www.newsobserver.com/2011/08/02/1384557/mcadoo-is-not-isolated-case.html

U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education. (USDOE). (2009). The equity in athletics data analysis cutting tool. Retrieved from http://ope.ed.gov/athletics/SelectDownloadOptions.aspx

Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization*. New York: Macmillan Publishing, Co., Inc.

Weick, K. E. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. In M. C. Brown II (Ed.), *Organization & governance in higher education* (fifth ed., pp. 36-49). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Weiss, R. (1995). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Westmeyer, P. (1990). *Principles of governance and administration in higher education*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Wieberg, S. (2009, July 9). Athlete advisers fear new NCAA eligibility rules spur cheating. *USA Today*.

Yin, R. K. (1984). Designing single and multiple case studies. In *Case study research: Design and methods* (pp. 27-54). Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Zimbalist, A. (2001). Unpaid professionals: Commercialism and conflict in big-time college sports. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.