



COLLEGE ATHLETES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMPHASIS THEIR COACHES PLACE ON ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND GRADUATION

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HISTORY OF COLLEGE ATHLETICS

Today, thousands of college students compete in intercollegiate athletics on varsity and junior varsity sports teams sponsored by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) or other national governing bodies. Intercollegiate athletics have been a part of higher education and university life since the early 18th century when athletics were made part of the curriculum at the Rugby School of England (Falla, 1981; Ridpath, 2002; Zimbalist, 1999). Intercollegiate athletic competition in the United States, albeit primarily unsanctioned, is traced back as early as the 1820s to crew competitions, football, and rugby games between Ivy League schools. (Falla, 1981; Howard-Hamilton & Watt, 2001). Competitive advantage has ruled from the outset. In 1898, faculty members from what would become the Ivy League met to create rules to prohibit practices that were undermining the role of sport in education (Sack, 2003). The Ivy League faculty concluded that the institutions were not there to make athletes, but only good citizens whose mental powers have been sustained and enhanced by athletic participation ("Report on Intercollegiate Athletics," 1898; Sack, 2003). Almost from the day that Rutgers and Princeton played the first official intercollegiate football game in 1869, educators and others have decried the overemphasis of sport as contrary to the mission of higher education (Deford, 2001; Ryan, 1989; Sack, 2003; Stone & Strange, 1989; Telander, 1996).

DESIRED EFFECTS OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

At the university level, intercollegiate athletics can have a positive effect on university life and increase the quality of the overall educational experience for the college athlete, university, and local community, as well as for graduates and alumni of the institution. Athletics is an important part of life for undergraduates. It interests and fascinates an enormous number of citizens who claim no alma mater, but who love the color, the pageantry, and the sheer competition of sporting events ("The Crisis," 1990). Athletic participation during the college years can improve the individual's ability to get through the academic rigors of college and better prepare a college athlete for life outside of athletics in that it promotes growth in interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, and increases self-esteem (Richards & Aries, 1999; Ryan, 1989; Taylor, 1995). Coaches of athletic teams believe that sports develop certain desirable social values. The commonly listed traits are kindness, cooperation, truthfulness, courage, loyalty, friendliness, and character (Edwards, 1973; Frost & Sims, 1973; Gerdy, 2002; Kneller, 1965; Svare, 2004). There is the argument that, intercollegiate athletics have given a large number of college athletes the opportunity to attend colleges and universities who otherwise might not have attended. A proportion of these athletes from impoverished backgrounds have graduated from college and benefited society (Blackburn & Nyikos, 1974). Like other specialized educational pursuits, sports are environmentally cultivated and provide opportunities to satisfy the strong human drives for recognition and achievement which

in turn may motivate those to academically succeed (Gerdy, 2002; Gilbert, 1974; Ogilvie & Tutko, 1971; Svare, 2004).

Family members, peers, teammates, teachers, and coaches applaud a young athlete's accomplishments. Individual athletes with outstanding sports records are recognized and often honored for their achievements (Clarke, 1975; Gerdy, 2002; Svare, 2004; Underwood, 1984).

PROBLEMS OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

However, playing an intercollegiate sport can add an unexpectedly complex layer to student life. College athletes face all the challenges that non-athletes face in relation to the daily student routine, but college athletes also have their sport-related activities. College athletes constantly cope with balancing the roles of student and athlete (Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996; Martens & Lee, 1998; Street, 1999; Watt & Moore, 2001). Understanding the historical development of the popularity of college athletics can help one understand the breadth and depth of the conflict between the academic and athletic worlds of the college athlete (Watt & Moore, 2001).

Values in intercollegiate athletics have changed dramatically over the years. In the late 1800s, after intercollegiate athletics took a stronger foothold on campuses across the country, college sports were played for fun and leisure. The faculties and administrators in early higher education never planned for anything as frivolous as athletics (Sack, 2003). The concentration was solely on academics. Still, students gravitated toward recreational activities that college authorities saw as a method for the students to release pent up energies (Chu, Seagrave, & Becker, 1985). In the 1920s, many institutions requiring physical education courses emphasized the importance of physical activity in higher education. This combined with an increased emphasis on intercollegiate athletics, made physical education a big business on campuses of higher learning. The 1920s became known as the golden age of college sports. The students had new freedoms, new drives, and new searching's for emotional and physical outlets. College sports seemed to provide the one common denominator and rallying point for students, faculty, administrators, and communities (Sack, 2003; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Wilson, 1967).

From the mid-20th Century through today, intercollegiate athletics has become more commercialized, bringing in ever increasing revenue and stature to schools with winning teams (Sperber, 1990; Svare, 2004). Athletics have served a variety of needs for the institution and its various constituencies. College administrators have often felt the success and perception of intercollegiate athletics in the form of winning records and in attracted monies from the state and alumni (Chu, 1979; Underwood, 1984).

AN ACADEMIC CRISIS

The words "student" and "athlete" combined have sometimes been viewed as an oxymoron (Broadhead, 1992; Cullen, Latessa, & Byrne, 1990; Naughton, 1996). Colleges and universities have recruited, trained, and exploited a seemingly endless procession of students for their athletic ability, casting them off when their eligibility ends.

Administrators and coaches often look the other way when a college athlete begins to fail academically (Wyatt, 1999). Intercollegiate athletics can be good or bad for the participants, dependent primarily on the goals and motivation of the coaches and the institution (Alley, 1974). The literature suggests the reasons for this are that sports are organized around the needs of frustrated adults, the commercialization of the games, and the emphasis on revenue and winning, rather than around the values and education of high school and college participants (Alley 1974; Tunis, 1958).

Over emphasis on athletics has led to an inevitable clash of academic integrity versus athletic success at institutions that sponsor intercollegiate athletics. In simple terms, a college athlete must remain academically eligible in order to compete. If one is not academically eligible and not making satisfactory progress towards a degree, competition for that individual is prohibited (*National Collegiate Athletic Association*, 2001). Thus many people such as students, boosters, academicians, alumni, and coaches, have tried, and in many cases, have succeeded in beating the system. The effort and business of superseding academic requirements to gain athletic success has been around since the beginning of intercollegiate athletics itself (Sack, 2003; Savage, 1929).

Over emphasis on athletics has led to an inevitable clash of academic integrity versus athletic success at institutions that sponsor intercollegiate athletics.

The abuse of academic requirements began to spread to the primary levels of education where outstanding athletic prospects existed. College and university personnel began to influence the education, or lack thereof, of prospective college athletes in high school by bending the rules primarily by falsifying transcripts and standardized admission test scores, to gain the prospect admission to the institution (Sack, 2003; Savage, 1929). Academic abuse for athletic success at the high school level never gave some individuals the chance to be successful in college, or many who were admitted to a university have not been prepared or skilled enough to go to college (Briggs, 1996; Underwood, 1984). If a prospective college athlete was not ready or prepared academically for the rigors of college level work, graduation became an almost unattainable goal. A high proportion of incoming freshman college athletes up until the mid 1980s fit this category (Chu, Seagrave, & Becker, 1985). College athletes are believed to be less academically able and usually enter college with lower high school grades and test scores. Prospective athletes who are poorly prepared for college level work have been found to disengage themselves from academic roles (Adler & Adler 1985; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Hanford, 1974; Hood, Craig, & Ferguson, 1992; Lorimer, 1972; Purdy, 1981; Stuart, 1985).

When athletic reform efforts regarding academic eligibility for intercollegiate athletics were created, colleges and universities were trying to protect the integrity of their academic mission and the intellectual environment while trying to allow the college athlete the benefits that both provide (Sack, 2003; Watt & Moore, 2001; Zimbalist, 1999). Later in the 20th, now 21st century, intercollegiate athletics has become more commercialized, bringing in ever increasing revenue and stature to schools with winning teams. It has served a variety of needs for the institution and various constituencies. College administrators have often felt the exploits of their athletic teams attracted

monies from the state, alumni, and through other factors like ticket sales and fund raising opportunities (Chu, 1975; Gerdy, 2002; Svare, 2004; Underwood, 1984). Thus the drive for winning and revenue generation has remained constant. Studies done over the years conclude that athletes are unprepared for and uninterested in academics and come to college primarily to advance their athletic careers rather than their future vocational careers; therefore, they have lower grade point averages, higher attrition rates, and lower chances of graduating than other students (Adler & Adler, 1985; Cross, 1973; Edwards, 1984; Harrison, 1976; Nyquist, 1979; Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982; Sack & Thiel, 1979; Spivey & Jones, 1975; Webb, 1968). For many years, colleges and universities turned away from academic requirements to allow under-prepared students who are blessed with athletic ability on campus just to participate in athletics while academics became a forgotten entity (Dodd, 1999).

COLLEGE ATHLETES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENCE OF COACHING STAFF ON ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND GRADUATION

The coaching staff, particularly the head coach, usually provides the greatest impact on the academic success of any college athlete (Ridpath, 2002). A coach and/or coaches involved in the academic well-being, and the athlete relying on that guidance, of their college athletes and emphasizing the importance of academics can greatly increase the chance of a college athlete succeeding academically and graduating (Adler & Adler, 1985). This philosophy applies to both revenue and non-revenue sports. Revenue sports are defined as a team sport that can generate revenue to help support itself. Non-revenue or Olympic sports are those that typically generate little or no revenue and need subsidies to meet their operating budget (*National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2004-05*). The two most common revenue sports in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics are men's basketball and football. These two sports in particular carry immense pressure for coaches to win and keep their high paying jobs. It is then reasonable to assume that the less pressure to win on a coach and coaching staff, the more focus they can put on the academic well being of a college athlete. Non-revenue sports coaches typically focus more on academics and are much more involved in the student's life outside of academics (Adler & Adler, 1985). In revenue sports, coaches are primarily hired and fired based on won-loss records, not for achieving high graduation rates (Ridpath, 2002). The pressure to succeed can detach a revenue coach from being involved in the academic success of their college athletes (Sperber, 1990). A revenue sport coach is likely to be excessive in his demands on the time of their athletes for athletic purposes and not for academic purposes (Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982).

The level of the coach's involvement and whether that coach wants his or her students to graduate, or just stay eligible to compete, is an indicator as to whether a college athlete will graduate from college. According to Adler and Adler (1985), incoming college athletes in revenue sports normally feel idealistic about academics when entering college, as coaches tout academics during recruiting. However, this often changes when the pressures of athletics begin to be felt. Many college athletes are shuttled by their coaches into "professor friendly" classes and easy majors so academics will not interfere with their athletic responsibilities (Ridpath, 2002; Sperber, 1990; Svare 2004). If coaches are threatened with their employment, athletic success of the team will almost always take priority over the academic success of the college athletes (Ifill, 2005; Sperber,

1990). College athletes' academic performance is significantly affected by coaches' intervention in their academic lives (Adler & Adler, 1985).

College athletes are selected and recruited by coaches. These same coaches work with them and get to know them well while they are enrolled in college. If a college athlete runs into personal or academic trouble, coaches are usually nearby, ready, and motivated to help. In helping to advance their own careers, the coaches must recruit good athletic material and then guide these students through successful academic and athletic careers (Ridpath, 2002). A coach can be the strongest support person in the life of a college athlete (Petrie & Russell, 1995). Adler and Adler (1985; 1991) found that the varied sets of educational and life goals with which players entered college rapidly shrank to the single goal of winning games by a process they call "role engulfment" (Sack, 2003). They noted many factors contributed to this narrowing of aspirations, but found that the coach was the main influence in intentionally orchestrating the process of role engulfment away from academics in order to obtain the extreme loyalty from players he believed he needed in order to meet high performance athletic goals. Coaches can be an intended or unintended source of intense reinforcement for the role of a winning athlete but a lack of reinforcement for the academic role (Briggs, 1997).

Researchers have attempted to determine what non-academic variables might help to explain the college academic performance of college athletes (Adler & Adler, 1985; Ridpath 2002). The non-cognitive variables of a strong support person, involvement in the community, and positive self-concept positively predicted college academic performance. If influential role models do not care how the college athlete performs academically, the college athlete's academics will suffer (Broadhead, 1992; Petrie & Russell, 1995; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992; Sellers & Chavous, 1997; Young & Sowa, 1992). Many coaches themselves favor making the coach and athletic department responsible for the graduation rate of college athletes and stressing more the importance of education and graduation to the college athlete (Cullen, Latessa, & Byrne, 1990). The NCAA membership recently adopted an incentive/disincentive system tying academics to competitive equity. In short if a team and or athletic department does not meet a predetermined cut off score for graduation (50% or more per team), that team or department will penalized in various ways. Penalties could include loss of scholarships or ability to participate in post season or NCAA championship events ("NCAA Division I Framework," 2005; Suggs, 2005). Critics have decried this system as an open invitation for more cheating and fraud since the culture of revenue generation and winning has not changed (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Suggs, 2005). Legendary Penn State football coach, Joe Paterno, sums up the new standards by saying, "If Whatsamatta U is told to graduate 50% of it players, then Whatsamatta U. will find a way to graduate 50%" (Fitzpatrick, 2005, p. A01).

It is that culture that forces many college athletes after being counseled by coaches to major in eligibility and not academic progress to pay less attention to their academic pursuits (Purdy, 1981). In the early nineties, several former college athletes at different California state universities and colleges claimed that coaches advised them to enroll in courses like physical education courses to protect their athletic eligibility (Gerdy, 2002; Maloney & McCormick, 2002; Svare, 2004). In some cases, students were instructed to

reenroll in courses they have already passed and coaches became upset when players took courses that were required for graduation instead of courses that helped maintain eligibility (Broadhead, 1992). In late 2004, The Washington Post exposed a scheme by several major college institutions that were granting excessive academic credit for athletics participation (Schlabach, 2004). To an even greater extent, colleges and universities have allowed rampant academic fraud to persist. One of the most egregious cases of academic fraud was that of the University of Minnesota in 1999 (Dohrmann & Borger, 1999; Southall, Nagel, Batista & Reese, 2003). To maintain its elite status in the sport of men's basketball, the University of Minnesota, led by then head coach Clem Haskins, took steps to insure the basketball athletes remained eligible for competition. The university authorized a separate academic counseling program for the team under the direct supervision of the coach (Dohrmann & Borger, 1999; Southall et. al., 2003). This arranged conflict of interest and intense desire of the university to have a winning basketball program erupted into academic scandal in which athletic academic tutor Jan Ganglehoff admitted she wrote over 400 papers for 20 different academic at risk basketball players, just so their competitive eligibility could be maintained. Haskins direct involvement underscores the importance and vital role that coaches have with regard to academic progress and graduation of college athletes.

The Minnesota case is extreme, but academic fraud cases are not uncommon in NCAA athletics. The Minnesota case does illustrate the amount of influence a coach can have on the academic progress of a college athlete. Revenue sport college athletes, such as University of Minnesota men's basketball players, typically take a downgraded curriculum often at the insistence of their coaches and designed specifically for them, which could significantly reduce the educational value of their time in college (Adelman, 1990; Adler & Adler, 1991, Briggs, 1997; Purdy, 1981). College athletes will often decide in favor of athletics when a conflict exists with academics (Adler & Adler, 1991) to please their coach who possesses the power to decide who starts in games and who is put on scholarship (Simons, Van Rheenen & Covington, 1999). In non-revenue sports, coaches typically do not put much pressure on non-revenue athletes to perform. Since winning in revenue sports appears to have a larger monetary effect, it is believable that those athletes are forced by coaches to accept a more severe tradeoff between academic performances relative to athletic achievements (Maloney & McCormick, 1992).

According to Adler and Adler (1998) and Briggs (1997), the goal toward which a coach rallies the athletes, and around which he forges their role identity until it becomes their central life interest, is extremely short term. As one ball player explains, "Coach's main goal is to keep producing quality basketball teams...His job is not to produce accountants or NBA athletes, it's to have a winning program" (Briggs, 1997, p. 412).

RESEARCH QUESTION

Does the profile of the Mid-American Conference athlete created from the information gleaned from the survey confirm the characteristics presented in the literature with regard to college athletes' perceptions of emphasis placed on academic progress and graduation?

METHODS

DATA

To ascertain the effect of a college athlete's perception of his or her coach's emphasis on the academic progress and potential of graduation for a college athlete, the researcher self-developed a survey instrument to test the research question. To qualify as an NCAA Division I institution, an NCAA member must sponsor at least seven sports teams for males and seven for females, or six teams for males and eight for females. There are other criteria that must be met including home football attendance, number of scholarships given, and departmental budget amounts (Howard-Hamilton & Watt, 2001; NCAA, 2001). A mid-major athletic conference is a Division I conference that is not involved as a member of the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) in NCAA Division I Football (Suggs, 2001). The specific intercollegiate athletic conference analyzed for this study is the Mid-American Conference. The Mid-American Conference, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, was established in 1946 as a five-team league. It is the sixth oldest and fourth largest intercollegiate athletic conference in the NCAA. At the time the survey instrument was administered, the MAC consisted of 13 member institutions split into an eastern and western division with a total combined student enrollment of more than 275,000, including more than 5200 athletes competing in 23 sports (Hazel, 2000). Data were obtained from selected student athletes at the 13 schools in the Mid-American Conference. The data incorporated items from a survey instrument distributed to senior athletes at the 13 schools during the 2001-02 academic year. The population for this study included undergraduate student athletes in the Mid-American Conference that are currently in their senior year of NCAA eligibility, or in their fifth year of enrollment after expiration of their eligibility (N=1238).

These particular institutions, like others in mid-major conferences, are more likely than BCS conferences to admit academic at risk student athletes (Messer & Cherry, 2000). The Mid-American Conference is one of the few Division I-A conferences that allow admission of student athletes not academically eligible for competition during the initial year of enrollment (non-qualifiers), and admission exceptions for those student athletes who do not meet established institutional academic standards and are considered at risk academically (C. Peacock, personal communication, July 31, 2005; Messer & Cherry, 2000). Typically, the mid-major conferences will take the chance of admitting academic at risk student athletes on the basis of athletic accomplishments and potential so that they may be better equipped to compete, especially in the revenue sports (C. Peacock, personal communication, July 31, 2005; Messer & Cherry, 2000). Due to this phenomenon, student athletes in a mid-major conference, like the Mid-American Conference, present a diverse population along the academic spectrum to adequately assess the characteristics for graduation of Division I student athletes.

For purposes of this population, a senior athlete may not be a senior academically, but will be competing in their last year of competitive NCAA eligibility. Student athletes at NCAA Division I institutions are allowed four years of competitive eligibility within five years of enrollment (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2004-05). A fifth year college athlete is still enrolled at the institution and has not yet graduated, but has exhausted the four allowable years of NCAA competitive eligibility. All members of the population had yet to graduate from college at the time of distribution of the survey

instrument, but the predictors are assessed on the expectancy and predictability of graduation within a maximum of one academic year from the administration date of the survey instrument, based on analysis of responses completed on the survey and the percentage of degree completed by each individual. Percentage of degree completed is used as an NCAA standard to determine academic, not athletic standing of a particular student athlete (NCAA, 2001). For example, to be classified as a senior athlete by NCAA eligibility standards a student athlete must have completed 75% of their major degree requirements and only have one year of remaining competitive eligibility (NCAA, 2001).

ANALYSIS

Distribution of a questionnaire was the survey method for obtaining the information to answer the research question. The instrument was distributed by the researcher to a contact in each of the athletic departments in the Mid-American Conference. The contacts handed out the questionnaires to a random sample of the selected members of the population at each school. Due to issues relating to The Family Education Right to Privacy Act ("The FERPA Answer Book," 2000), a cover letter was included with the instrument containing a guarantee of complete anonymity and that completion of the survey is voluntary. Questionnaires are regarded as an effective tool for measuring many different characteristics such as thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, and perceptions for research studies (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

SAMPLE

The study used a proportional stratified sample of the population to complete the survey instrument. In proportional stratified sampling, the proportions in the sample on the stratification variable will be perfectly or almost perfectly representative of the proportions on that same stratification variable in the population (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The study examined 25% of the selected population (n=358). For example, Eastern Michigan University represented 157 students in the total population, or 11%. For the purposes of this study, using proportional stratified sampling, Eastern Michigan University received 39 surveys to distribute to selected athletes. The selected athlete's received the survey through a contact in each institution's athletic department. Upon completion of the survey, each individual returned the instrument to the researcher via United States Post Office mail in a postage paid envelope. The most popular method of distributing questionnaires is by mail (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Due to limited contact between the researcher and respondent, the response rate can often be very low and the public is often not willing to participate in surveys (Steeh, 1981). A response rate of 50% plus one (at least n=179) for this study is considered an acceptable statistical sample of the population (Kerlinger, 1986). Fifty-four percent of the surveys were returned for a total of 191 respondents included in the analysis.

To minimize issues of content validity, the self-reported survey instrument was developed through an extensive review of past and present literature, surveys, and questionnaires, approved by a jury of eight experts in the higher education and intercollegiate athletic fields, and trial tested through a pilot test of a like population. Of particular value to the development of the instrument were the American Institutes for Research Study of Intercollegiate Athletics (1981), The Reports of the Knight Commission on the Conduct of Intercollegiate Athletics (1991, 1993; "A Call to Action,"

2001), and NCAA Research Reports 91-04 (1991), 92-02 (1993), 96-02 (1997), 97-02 (1997), 97-04 (1999).

The survey instrument was presented to the jury of experts for professional review and assessment. The jury of experts conducted a readability analysis and approved the questionnaire for use in the data collection. These individuals were in the best position to critique and assess the potential of the instrument due to their knowledge of the subject, knowledge of research methods, and experience in higher education and athletic administration.

The survey was also trial tested through a pilot study with a like population to determine if any modifications need to be made. The survey was given to several Marshall University student athletes were not be in the population selected for the study. The researcher selected junior, by NCAA competitive eligibility standards, student athletes (N=20) to complete the instrument. This group was chosen because of its similarities to the sample frame and it presents an acceptable cross section of ethnicity, gender, sport played, and academic profile. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the data gathered presented an accurate assessment of the answers (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

DATA ANALYSIS

The method of statistical analysis incorporates descriptive statistics to confirm if the characteristics of the literature can be generalized to student athletes in the Mid-American Conference. All data gathered from the questionnaire, along with the research question, was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The demographic information also serves to allow post-hoc analysis as deemed appropriate along with analysis of any potential ancillary findings. Demographic information examined in this study includes gender, ethnicity, academic standing, expectation of graduation, college major, sport played in college, scholarship or non-scholarship, and score attained on SAT or ACT.

DISCUSSION

The literature note that coaches, in particular the head coach of a specific athletic team, can have a major impact on the academic success of the individual college athlete (Adler & Adler, 1985; Briggs, 1997; Petrie & Russell, 1995). An analysis of each question relating to college coaches' emphasis on academics was done using a descriptive statistics frequency cross tabulation by sport, gender, ethnicity, and answer given on the survey instrument. On the questions that covered recruiting of the college athlete prior to college enrollment, almost 50% of the athletes, representing all sports, who answered the question, said they believed their college coach made academics the number one priority during the recruiting process (Table 1). This corresponds with the literature in that most coaches do sell the academic importance of college and graduation to prospective college athletes, however according to previous studies and research, that goal appears to change to one of eligibility maintenance solely for competitive eligibility when the college athlete is enrolled in college (Adler & Adler, 1985; Sperber, 1990).

Studies indicate that the influence of coaches' emphasizing academic success and graduation among their college athletes is significant to the academic progress of a college athlete (Adler & Adler, 1985; Briggs, 1997; Petrie & Russell, 1995). The literature

indicates that coaches will strongly push academics and academic programs on prospective college athletes during the recruiting process (Adelman, 1990; Adler & Adler, 1991; Briggs, 1997; Purdy, 1981). The same studies also state that academic emphasis by coaches significantly decreases upon the prospect enrolling in college, specifically amongst revenue sports (Maloney & McCormick, 1992). The data presented from the college athletes in the Mid-American Conference is consistent with the literature on the subject of academics being emphasized during the recruiting process and that the emphasis decreases after enrollment of the college athlete, when the analysis includes sports in addition to football and men's basketball. Almost 90% of the respondents from all of the sports surveyed agreed or were neutral on the questions that asked about the level of emphasis on academics by coaches during the recruiting process. Less than 10 % disagreed with the questions.

The changes that coaches have with regard to emphasizing academics after college enrollment of their college athletes in the literature is also found in the data provided on the survey instrument by college athletes in the Mid-American Conference. While overall the student athletics in the Mid-American Conference said their coaches maintained the priority emphasis on academics and not athletics (almost 50%), only 31 percent believed that their coach was more interested in their graduating from college than their competitive eligibility (Table 4).

Overall, the Mid-American Conference coaches of the 27 sports, represented on the survey, stress academics and graduation more than athletic success. These research-based conclusions confirm that the results gleaned from the literature can be generalized to the Mid-American Conference when discussing overall impact of this characteristic on all college athletes and all sports represented on the survey. Using the recently released NCAA Academic Progress Rate Report Card the Mid-American Conference fared much better than athletic conferences that compete at a higher level of competition and monetary gain (i.e. BCS conference schools). Of the 13 schools in the MAC, only three schools fell below the overall institutional academic cutoff score of 925 ("Academic Progress Rate," 2005).

When college athletes' perceptions of college coaches' emphasis on academics is further broken down into the subgroups of revenue and non-revenue sports there are some different results. Over 50 percent of football players believed their coaches were more interested in keeping them eligible for competition rather than progressing academically. The men's basketball respondents differed from the literature and answers provided were very positive towards the coaching staff before and during college enrollment. Overall, there is no significance through statistical analysis of college athlete's perception of college coaches' emphasis on academics when comparing all teams through a one-way analysis of variance (Table 6), but there are differences noted in the sport of football as opposed to men's basketball. Table 3 shows that while 85.3 of the respondents answered agree or neutral to question 14, "After college enrollment my coach placed academic success above athletic success," there is a decline in agreement in the sports of men's basketball and football in comparison to the responses of non-revenue sport college athletes. Of 48 football respondents to the question, 21 agreed that academics were placed above athletic success, but 27 were either neutral or disagreed with the question. In men's basketball, the decline is similar versus the

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perception prior to college enrollment. Seven out of the 11 men's basketball respondents were either neutral or disagreed with the question.

The findings related to the survey question, "My coach is more concerned with my graduation than my eligibility to play," are significant in that only 30.9% of the college athletes surveyed in all sports agree that their coach is more concerned with graduation than competitive eligibility (Table 4). Still a very high percentage (64%) stated (Table 5) their coach would be concerned with in their academic success once eligibility expired. This is in conflict with the literature in the case of revenue sports where research indicates coaches detach themselves from their college athletes once their eligibility expires and they know they can no longer assist them athletically (Adler & Adler, 1985).

The literature indicates that due to the high pressure put on coaches in revenue sports to win games, often the focus on academics becomes less (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1991; Briggs, 1997; Broadhead, 1992; Purdy, 1981). The data in this study are consistent with the literature on most of the questions in that the influence of the coach on academics and graduation can be influential to a college athlete. Responses to certain questions demonstrate that certain revenue sport coaches are more concerned with winning and keeping players eligible than with graduation. Over half of the football respondents to these questions believed that their coaches were more interested in keeping them eligible, than seeing them graduate. The majority of the football players also noted that they believed that their coach (es) would lose interest in their academic progress once their eligibility expired. It is important to note however that the majority of the men's basketball responses on the instrument were positive towards the coaching staff, which does not correspond with the literature. The data overall finds that almost all coaches in the Mid-American Conference emphasize academics during recruiting (Table 2). The academic emphasis appears to decline for students in the Mid-American Conference after college enrollment, especially in football, as it is presented in the literature for other college athletes in NCAA Division I.

SUMMARY

The data in this study support results presented in the literature that the perception of the college athlete with regard to coaches' emphasis on academic progress is important as well as significant. While overall there is not a significant difference between groups with regard to the perception of coaches' emphasis when statistically analyzed, the descriptive statistics showing specific answers by revenue and non-revenue sports demonstrate the differences between revenue and non-revenue sports with regard to the importance on academics v. athletics. As the literature shows, the athletes in the primary revenue sports of football and men's basketball, have a dramatically different view of the priority their coaching staffs put on academic progress and graduation when compared to their non-revenue counterparts, specifically all female teams. This study supports the literature in that it shows the priorities of winning and revenue generation, not academic persistence, are first and foremost in the minds of revenue sports coaches, even in a non-BCS conference.

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TABLE 1
COLLEGE COACHES' EMPHASES ON ACADEMICS, REVENUE AND NON-REVENUE SPORTS

My coach emphasized academics more than athletics while recruiting me.

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	85	44.5
Neutral	82	42.9
Disagree	19	9.9
Total	186	97.4
No Answer	5	2.6
Total	191	100.0

TABLE 2
COLLEGE COACHES' EMPHASES ON ACADEMICS, REVENUE AND NON-REVENUE SPORTS

The coach made it clear to me about academics being more important than athletics during the recruiting process.

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	115	60.2
Neutral	59	30.9
Disagree	11	5.8
Total	185	96.9
System	6	3.1
Total	191	100.0

TABLE 3
COLLEGE COACHES' EMPHASES ON ACADEMICS. REVENUE AND NON-REVENUE SPORTS

After college enrollment my coaches placed academic success above athletic success

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Agree	88	46.1
Neutral	75	39.3
Disagree	28	14.7
Total	191	100.0

TABLE 4
COLLEGE COACHES' EMPHASES ON ACADEMICS. REVENUE AND NON-REVENUE SPORTS

My coach is more concerned with graduation than my eligibility

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Agree	59	30.9
Neutral	93	48.7
Disagree	39	20.4
Total	191	100.0

TABLE 5
COLLEGE COACHES' EMPHASES ON ACADEMICS, REVENUE AND NON-REVENUE SPORTS

I believe my coach will be interested in my academic success when my eligibility expires

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Agree	122	63.9
Neutral	41	21.5
Disagree	28	14.7
Total	191	100.0

TABLE 6
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE. REVENUE AND NON-REVENUE SPORTS

College Coaches Emphasis on Academics

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	198.717	16	12.420	.860	.616*
Within Groups	2382.932	165	14.442		
Total	2581.648	181			

*p < .05

APPENDIX 1

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC GRADUATION
SURVEY MID-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

Please check and/or answer as accurately as you can.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- 1. What is your gender? Male _____ Female _____
- 2. What is your ethnicity? _____
 _____ African American (Black)
 _____ Asian/Pacific Islander
 _____ Caucasian (white)
 _____ Hispanic
 _____ Other
- 3. What is your academic standing? Junior _____ Senior _____
- 4. Do you expect to graduate? Yes _____ No _____
- 5. What is your expected graduation date (Month/Year)? _____
- 6. What is your college major? _____
- 7. What sport or sports have you participated in? Main _____ Other _____
- 8. Did you receive an athletic scholarship for at least one academic year? Yes _____ No _____
- 9. What was your entrance exam score (One or both)? ACT _____ SAT _____
- 10. What was your high school Core Course GPA determined by the NCAA Clearinghouse? _____
- 11. What is your current grade point average in college? _____

Please circle best choice below.

GENERAL ISSUES

AGREE NEUTRAL DISAGREE

- 12. My coach emphasized academics more than athletics during the recruiting process. 1 2 3
- 13. The coach made it clear to me about academics being more important than athletics during the recruiting process. 1 2 3
- 14. During college, my coaches placed academic success above athletic success. 1 2 3

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	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
15. My coach punishes me for not attending class.	1	2	3
16. My coach cares that I succeed academically and graduate.	1	2	3
17. It is important to me for my coach to encourage and require good performance in class.	1	2	3
18. If I fail academically, my coaches try to find a legitimate way to keep me eligible.	1	2	3
19. My coach stresses the importance of getting a college degree.	1	2	3
20. When I entered college, getting a degree was more important than being a pro athlete.	1	2	3
21. My coach is assisting me in meeting my professional sports goals.	1	2	3
22. My coach is more concerned with my graduation than for my eligibility to play.	1	2	3
23. I believe my coach is interested in my academic success when my eligibility expires.	1	2	3
24. It is of great importance to me to get a college degree.	1	2	3
25. I feel I have control over my academic and athletic life.	1	2	3
26. I chose this school because of the coach.	1	2	3
27. My coach is the person who has the most academic influence on me.	1	2	3
28. It is important to my coach for me to graduate.	1	2	3
29. My sport does not interfere with my academic success.	1	2	3
30. I routinely practice no more than 20 hours per week.	1	2	3
31. I spend at least 10 hours studying per week.	1	2	3
32. I was redshirted in college.	1	2	3
33. The importance of academics was stressed in high school.	1	2	3

	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
34. I knew I had to meet minimum academic standards to compete in intercollegiate athletics.	1	2	3
35. I feel that I get special treatment because I am a student athlete.	1	2	3
36. I do not feel discriminated against because I am a student athlete.	1	2	3
37. I am regarded as a serious student by my professors/instructors.	1	2	3
38. Academics are my top priority in college.	1	2	3
39. I am satisfied with my athletic performance.	1	2	3
39. I chose this school because of its athletic reputation in my sport.	1	2	3
41. I have worked a job while enrolled in college and participated in athletics.	1	2	3
42. I have (check all that apply):			
_____ ATTENDED SUMMER SCHOOL TO REMAIN ELIGIBLE			
_____ ATTENDED SUMMER SCHOOL TO GRADUATE FASTER			
_____ REPEATED COURSES			
_____ BEEN ON ACADEMIC PROBATION			
_____ FOUND COURSES TOO DIFFICULT			
_____ RECEIVED AN INCOMPLETE AT LEAST ONCE			

SPECIALIZED ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENT ATHLETES

	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
43. I use special academic support services for student athletes on a regular basis.	1	2	3
44. Please check the services you use:			
_____ ADVISEMENT/REGISTRATION			
_____ TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE			
_____ MENTORING			
_____ COMPUTER LAB			
_____ STUDY HALL			
_____ STUDY SKILLS			
_____ LEARNING DISABLED SERVICES			

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	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
45. I could not graduate without having used these services.	1	2	3
46. I do not need these services to graduate.	1	2	3
47. My coaches require me to use these services.	1	2	3
48. I use these services voluntarily.	1	2	3
49. The academic support staff stresses academic success above athletic success.	1	2	3
50. I feel academics are important and a degree is needed for me to be a success.	1	2	3
51. I am taking the major that I chose when I entered college.	1	2	3
52. I have changed my major to remain eligible.	1	2	3
53. I can choose the courses that I want to take.	1	2	3
54. I plan to pursue a Master's/PhD. degree in the future.	1	2	3
55. I chose this school to meet my academic goals.	1	2	3
56. The athletic academic advisors have the most academic influence over me.	1	2	3

Please add any comments you desire in the space below.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY!!!!

PLEASE USE THE POSTAGE PAID ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND DROP IN THE NEAREST MAILBOX.