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Thomas R. Nisonger
Bowling Green State University

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NCAA COMPLIANCE OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS ON COST OF ATTENDANCE LEGISLATION

Thomas R. Nisonger

Master's Project

Submitted to the School of Human Movement, Sport, and Leisure Studies
Bowling Green State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In
Sport Administration

April 6, 2016

Project Advisor

Amanda Paule-Koba, Ph.D.

Second Reader

Sungho Cho, JD, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, the NCAA has been at the forefront of providing additional benefits to student-athletes and recently the NCAA passed the cost of attendance legislation. But with this legislation comes unintended consequences in the form of a recruiting advantage for many institutions and amendments would need to be made to combat the advantage (Katz, 2015). In order to examine the possibility of a recruiting advantage from the cost of attendance legislation, the senior members of each compliance office within the American Athletic Conference were surveyed (n=11). The survey was used to gain their opinions on various topics related to cost of attendance such as a possibly recruiting advantage, financial impact on the institution, and the financial impact on the student-athletes. Overall, the respondents did not conclusively show that they have a strong indication towards a recruiting benefit being gained from the cost of attendance legislation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

When investigating any new piece of NCAA legislation, in this study it is the recent cost of attendance legislation, there are going to be positives, negatives, and unintended consequences that result from its implementation and could result in needed amendments to level the playing field. A few of those positives include rewarding additional funds to student-athletes in terms of additional scholarship dollars and possibly enhancing graduation rates. Syracuse associate athletic director Jamie Mullin stated, “It is about providing them with additional athletically related scholarship dollars” (Maisel, 2011, para. 7). Clearly one of the main motivations in passing this legislation that awards the cost to attend an institution to a scholarship offer, was to aid the student-athletes and give them a benefit beyond their basic athletic scholarship (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015a). One of the other positives of the legislation could be impacting graduation rates. Matt Mitten, director of the National Sports Law Institute at Marquette University Law School said, “I doubt certainly the student-athlete’s cost of attendance will diminish the strong, fanatical support and interest in college sports. In fact, it might increase it, because a number of these kids might hopefully stay in school longer and more likely might earn their degree” (Maisel, 2011, para. 26).

But on the other side of the legislation are the negatives and possible unintended consequences that could result from its implementation. One of the negatives of this legislation would certainly be the financial implications and the possibility of a recruiting advantage. University of Louisiana-Lafayette athletic director Scott Farmer stated, “Either we’re gonna raise an extra \$1.2 million or we’re gonna deduct expenses by \$1.2 million” (Buckley, 2015, para. 12).

With many institutions awarding cost of attendance, they all face the same problem of balancing their budget which could have consequences for many student-athletes. The lone member institution that opposed the cost of attendance legislation was Boston College and their representative stated, “The consequence of such legislation could ultimately hurt student-athletes if/when programs are cut. This legislation further segregates student-athletes from the general student population by increasing aid without need-based consideration” (New, 2015, para. 8). One of the unintended consequences of the cost of attendance legislation might be the reappropriation of funds that could result in negatively affecting student-athletes in various sports if they are involved in the unfortunate event of having their program cut. One of the other negatives is the possibility for a recruiting benefit which is noted by Scott Farmer. Mr. Farmer noted, “You have to be able [to] say we’re doing it in order to remain competitive, because that’s exactly what it’s getting to” (Buckley, 2015, para. 26). The recruiting advantage might not have been thought of as an initial consequence but has developed into a negative effect of the legislation.

Purpose of the Study & Research Questions

With this legislation, the groundwork has been laid for possibly providing further benefits to student-athletes, something that has been demanded for years and this legislation illustrates that the NCAA is progressing with the times. This study will assist various intercollegiate athletic administrators in gaining an understanding on what compliance officers perceive about the legislation and if this legislation offers benefits, such as a recruiting advantage, to institutions that have a higher cost of attendance, among other possible impacts. Those compliance officers monitor, educate, and enforce all applicable NCAA, conference, and University rules and regulations for coaches, student-athletes, staff, boosters, and many other to ensure all their

actions are in line with those governing rules and regulations. The other intercollegiate athletic administrators need to know about this legislation and their colleagues opinions since coaches, prospective student-athletes, and a prospective student-athlete's family members might approach them with questions that they might not be able to answer unless they have a basic knowledge of this legislation.

Once a general understanding can be gained from compliance officers and their opinions formed, amendments to the legislation can be made if necessary in order to make the legislation easier to comprehend and implement. With the financial imbalance on cost of attendance figures, it could create an uneven playing field resulting in competitive imbalance but it is vital to know if those that handle this legislation will interpret that from the bylaw. If it is found that compliance officers believe there is a recruiting advantage with the cost of attendance figures, there could be further amendments to the legislation to, for example, set a maximum on the amount of the stipend that can be awarded.

Another key area to include is that this legislation offers no restrictions on what the student-athletes can spend their stipend on. These funds are awarded along with their scholarship to cover the cost of attending an institution but since those funds are given to the student-athletes with little to no conditions, they can spend the funds on anything they see fit. This area of the legislation would be difficult to monitor but if the student-athletes begin to purchase unnecessary items, something will need to be done to the legislation.

Further, the purpose of the study is to gain an insight into the compliance officers' opinions and perceptions on the cost of attendance legislation and to perceive how the legislation might impact their individual institutions. Subsequently, their opinions and perceptions could

show various holes in the legislation that will need to be fixed, such as a possible recruiting advantage, in order to bring about a level playing field.

Research Questions

1. Will institutions with a higher cost of attendance figure benefit with attracting highly recruited prospective student-athletes?
2. Will the cost of attendance legislation create an uneven playing field?
3. Do amendments need to be made to the current legislation?
4. Does the legislation need to have conditions on what student-athletes can spend their funds on?

Research Design

This study incorporated a quantitative method, focusing on a survey that was administered to senior compliance administrators within the American Athletic Conference. The framework of the study integrates questions that will gain a perspective from compliance officers that will show if there is any benefit to institutions and if the legislation needs to be amended. A final analysis of the responses will assist in gaining a frame of reference on what compliance officers perceive on the recently passed cost of attendance legislation within one athletic conference.

Significance of the Study

This study will not only benefit compliance officers but can also be a benefit to an entire institution's intercollegiate athletic department. The current legislation already places significance on student-athlete welfare, a major factor in intercollegiate athletics and one item that has been at the forefront of many discussions on new legislation. The cost of attendance legislation shows that the NCAA is being more progressive in terms of student-athlete welfare

and is not just concerned with their bottom line. With compliance officers' perceptions on the current cost of attendance legislation, the NCAA might be more apt to implement legislation that will further provide positive impacts to student-athlete welfare beyond financial considerations.

With every institution having different cost of attendance figures, each institution has varying impacts on their budget. Focusing on institutions that currently award cost of attendance, they are facing tight constraints on balancing their budget while assisting the student-athletes at the same time. If institutions with tight budgets continue to award cost of attendance they might not be able to sustain that expense long-term resulting in many institutions resorting to cutting programs so they can shift funds to the student-athletes in terms of cost of attendance. This becomes an issue when smaller institutions will shift those funds from athletic programs to cost of attendance and could result in decreased budgets for those programs which could possibly have an impact on the on-field performance of those programs (Lush, 2015). Lastly, for many institutions, they subsidize the athletic department by channeling a large percentage of students' general fees in order to support athletics and an increase in those fees might result in a decline in enrollment if institutions continue to award cost of attendance.

One of the largest areas of concern regarding cost of attendance legislation is that a recruiting advantage will develop and a competitive imbalance will result among the Power Five conferences (Atlantic Coast, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC) and the Group of Five conferences (American, Conference USA, Mid-American, Mountain West and Sun Belt), and possibly further enhance the gap between the haves and the have nots. One example of a recruiting advantage would be a prospective student-athlete deciding between Atlantic Coast Conference foes Louisville and Boston College. Louisville boasts a cost of attendance figure of \$5,202, third highest among Power 5 conference institutions, while Boston College has a figure

of \$1,400, lowest among all Power 5 conference institutions (Powers, 2015). Even though the competitive imbalance may take several years to develop, amendments to the cost of attendance legislation can take place now to avoid a wide gap being constructed in competitive balance.

With all of these impacts possibly resulting from one piece of legislation, amendments will need to be made so that all institutions are on an even playing field. First, student-athlete welfare is an element that all institutions can get behind since they all want to look out for those student-athletes. Although there are other ways to take care of student-athletes such as better medical care, implementing the cost of attendance legislation is a good start to a problem that has been around for many years. Second, implementing this legislation furthers the gap between the big budget institutions and those that are needing university subsidies, possibly an indirect impact of the legislation. There might be little that the legislation could do in terms of financial impact but eventually more issues will arise from cost of attendance funding for many institutions. As with the financial impact, there is little that could be implemented in the legislation that will improve competitive balance or even bridge the gap between big budget institutions and those using subsidies. But as the legislation is further put into action, institutions will find loopholes in this piece of legislation and amendments will be necessary so that all institutions are at least viewed as being on a level playing field.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Imagine having an extra \$2,000 or more to do anything you see fit. Would you pay off bills, buy groceries, travel, save it, or use all the money for entertainment? This is a reality and a dilemma for thousands of student-athletes across the country in various sports. This is the result of the NCAA allowing student-athletes to receive money that equates to the cost to attend their institution above tuition, room and board and books (Goodwin, 2013). With the ever changing landscape of intercollegiate athletics, we can expect to see shifts from year-to-year, but more drastic amendments could occur in the next three to five years, especially relating to cost of attendance or even compensation for student-athletes. With these inevitable changes on the horizon, NCAA compliance officers at all NCAA member institutions, should be consulted. With their knowledge and expertise of the various bylaws, these officers will be able to offer guidance in crafting future legislation that is both understandable and effective in the environment today and the future of intercollegiate athletics.

Current NCAA Legislation

One of the key elements when investigating NCAA legislation is to know what the overall mission and principles are that guide the NCAA toward assisting the thousands of student-athletes that participate in the various sports and the administrators that use the rules and regulations drawn by the NCAA. One of the main purposes of the NCAA is to "...initiate, stimulate and improve intercollegiate athletics programs for student-athletes and to promote and develop educational leadership, physical fitness, athletics excellence and athletics participation as a recreational pursuit..." (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015a, p. 1).

Based on one of the main purposes of the NCAA, it is key to note that one of the first elements mentioned pertains to athletics programs and then the educational factor comes into play later in their purpose. With the NCAA coining the term student-athlete, it would appear that this purpose does not align the NCAA with their definition of a student-athlete. However, according to the NCAA Constitution Article 1, “The competitive athletics programs of member institutions are designed to be a vital part of the educational system” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015a, p. 1). With this purpose in mind, the NCAA appears to realign themselves with the notion that student-athletes are to be students first and athletes second, an idea that the NCAA firmly stands by. The NCAA Constitution and the NCAA itself are built on the approach that student-athletes are and need to be amateurs in order to compete on the collegiate level, but this conception is being challenged in today’s society. With their commitment to amateurism, that NCAA states that:

Member institutions shall conduct their athletics programs for students who choose to participate in intercollegiate athletics as a part of their educational experience and in accordance with NCAA bylaws, thus maintaining a line of demarcation between student-athletes who participate in the Collegiate Model and athletes competing in the professional model. (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015a, p. xiv)

With this commitment to amateurism, the NCAA reinforces the fact that those participating in intercollegiate athletics shall have a primary ambition of pursuing an education but are doing so with their participation in what the NCAA would deem as recreational activities. The NCAA also goes on to state in their Constitution that participation in intercollegiate athletics is a minor occupation, however those participating shall be insulated from both commercial and professional endeavors (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015a). With this amateurism

rule in place across the entirety of intercollegiate athletics, this allows member institutions of the NCAA to earn millions and possibly billions of dollars in revenue off of participants who, by rule, are not allowed to take one cent or they risk being ineligible for an extended period of time (Freedman, 2003).

Even though the student-athletes are not permitted to take money for their athletic ability, they are offered and accept scholarships that are primarily awarded to them for their athletic performance. These scholarships can range from a few hundred dollars to a full scholarship that will cover various educational expenses such as books, tuition, and room and board (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015a). Then with the recent legislation that allows institutions to “pay” student-athletes extra funds known as cost of attendance or miscellaneous expense (hereafter cost of attendance), those funds are not being used for tuition or books directly, but are given to the student-athletes to do what they see fit.

Recruiting Advantage?

With the new cost of attendance legislation being passed and implemented across many institutions, several have pondered the question as to whether a distinct recruiting advantage could occur for institutions that have a relatively high cost of attendance figure (Wolken, 2015). The meaning of cost of attendance refers to the total cost to attend a specific institution, including the cost of tuition, room and board and books, as well as other educational supplies and transportation to and from home (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015a). More specifically, the stipend that is distributed to various student-athletes is for expenses that are not covered by a full scholarship such as trips home or extra educational supplies, among other examples (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2015b).

However, the NCAA does not put guidelines on what the additional funds should be used for, which could result in student-athletes committing to an institution that has a higher cost of attendance so they can have extra money for the academic year. Even before the legislation was enacted, one school, Boston College, voted against the cost of attendance legislation citing the issue that a recruiting advantage might occur with institutions awarding various amounts (Wolverton & Kambhampati, 2015). With this vote, many athletic directors took the stage to voice their concerns over the passage and implementation of the legislation. Kansas State athletic director, John Currie, stated that, "...when K-State can show a larger cost of attendance differential that Kansas, which is the case, that is going to put pressure on people because it becomes a recruiting thing" (Prisbell, 2014, para. 14).

Even though one athletic director illustrates that cost of attendance figures will eventually become a key point in a recruiting pitch that did not stop the legislation from being enacted. Other athletic directors have also voiced concern after the legislation was passed and now wonder if there is a way to make everyone be on the same playing field. Mark Coyle, Boise State athletic director, commented, "You can imagine two rival schools recruiting someone and with cost of attendance, are they going to use that in the recruiting pitch? That will create a lot of conversation on a national level. Is there some way to make sure we are all counting it the same way?" (Prisbell, 2014, para. 16). But Auburn athletic director Jay Jacobs believes that cost of attendance will not be a deciding factor in a recruit choosing his institution but will have an impact on that decision stating, "We think student-athletes are going to choose Auburn because it's the best place for them to come and get an education and compete, but certainly having a higher number than most in the Southeastern Conference is going to be helpful" (Wolken, 2015, para. 14).

With the debate ongoing many coaches have weighed in on this matter and a consensus cannot fully be reached with those coaches on whether the cost of attendance stipend is viewed as a recruiting advantage. From a 2015 ESPN survey, according to more than seventy percent of men's basketball coaches in Division I that participated in the survey (136 total respondents), the newly implemented cost of attendance legislation will be a recruiting advantage (Katz, 2015). One coach from a non-Power Five conference stated that, "COA could be a deciding factor for kids, especially those who come from low-income areas" (Katz, 2015, para. 6). However one coach noted that the cost of attendance legislation is not a recruiting advantage stating, "I don't think it will become one. I think it is great for our student athletes. I don't think it is a recruiting advantage because everybody benefits from it" (Katz, 2015, para. 18).

Not only have basketball coaches chimed in on the matter, but football coaches have been asked about how the cost of attendance might impact their programs. Penn State head football coach James Franklin mentioned that only a few recruits last year even asked about the legislation but did note that institutions with higher cost of attendance figures are going to be using that in recruiting pitches to sway prospective student-athletes to their institution (Wolken, 2015). On the other end is current University of Tennessee head football coach Butch Jones and he believes that the cost of attendance legislation will not impact a recruits decision stating, "...they're going to choose a school based on their relationships with coaches, opportunity to play early, the area of the country and just the overall relationships" (Williams, 2015, para. 19).

While it appears that both basketball and football coaches are split on whether this legislation is going to be a recruiting advantage, one former football student-athlete disagrees. Former Penn State football student-athlete LaVar Arrington said, "I would have to assume that's not going to make or break a recruiting situation. I ultimately want to play for a team and for a

coach that's going to help me get real dollars at the end of the day rather than just go somewhere where I can get \$4,000 per year" (Snyder, 2015, para. 17). While the cost of attendance legislation is beneficial for the student-athletes, one glaring misconception is that everyone will benefit from it because not every institution is going to offer this new legislation, mainly due to budgetary concerns. One coach from an institution that is undecided on offering the cost of attendance stipend commented, "Some of us are having a hard time keeping up budget-wise period, before cost of attendance is even considered" (Katz, 2015, para. 9).

Financials

The debate to compensate student-athletes partially stems from the assumption that intercollegiate athletics are found to be a multi-million or even billion dollar business venture, with the main performers receiving nothing in terms of compensation. Much of this debate centers around the amount of revenue generated by the NCAA, with them generating over \$870 million in 2012, and showing an increase of revenue in 2013 with a total of over \$910 million (Lush, 2015). Much of this money that the NCAA develops in revenue can be traced back to the immense television contracts in which they partner with various broadcast channels.

Previously in 2002, the NCAA partnered with both CBS and ESPN for contracts that each totaled eleven years in length and were for a \$6 billion and \$200 million respectively (Lush, 2015). However, those figures pale in comparison to the \$10.8 billion agreement that the NCAA and CBS/Turner have come into partnership with that will last for over fourteen years (Lush, 2015). With all of this money flowing into the NCAA and their member institutions, it is instrumental to know that many still face budget constraints. One men's basketball coach noted that, even before awarding a cost of attendance stipend, which his institution currently does not, they are still facing difficulties keeping a balanced budget (Katz, 2015).

With many institutions struggling to keep a balanced budget, it is somewhat staggering to see the amounts that various institutions are committing to cost of attendance stipends. The University of Cincinnati has one of the highest cost of attendance figures in the country with at least \$5,504 going to student-athletes in the sports of Men's and Women's Basketball, Football, Women's Tennis, and Women's Volleyball (Berkowitz & Kreighbaum, 2015).

The funds that various institutions are committing to cost of attendance stipends for student-athletes pose the institution and athletic department with an expense in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, an expense that most institutions could barely afford but are finding a way to implement. While most would like to see the student-athletes receive some form of compensation beyond cost of attendance, it is important to note that if student-athletes would receive compensation above their cost of attendance stipend, institutions might resort to shifting funds from operating budgets of athletic teams to compensation, possibly resulting in various programs being cut from the athletic department (Lush, 2015). But these institutions have another source of revenue in terms of state appropriations and often these appropriations can be impacted by the on-field success of the various athletic programs.

In a 2003 study, on-field success, particularly an appearance in a football bowl game was found to have a positive impact on state appropriations for the following year (Humphreys, 2006). This impact on state appropriations is profound for all institutions but another form of revenue for all institutions are donations from alumni, fans, or the general population. Any form of postseason appearance for an institution's athletic program such as a bowl game or postseason tournament, will increase donations to the institution (Goff, 2000). But even with donations and cost of attendance stipends being awarded to student-athletes, those student-athletes are still being afforded the great opportunity to represent their institution on the field of play.

Regardless of if a student-athlete is on an athletic scholarship, they are still being provided services such as academic support and athletic training advisement as well as nutrition guides and possibly a sport psychologist, all elements that typical students do not have the luxury of using (Osborne, 2014). Even with all of these services, it becomes clear why institutions across the country are committing vast amounts of money towards cost of attendance stipends to assist student-athletes so they can excel on the field and show success due in part to a correlation between on-field success and various benefits that are brought into the institution (Freedman, 2003).

Impact on Student-Athletes

With the ongoing debate related to compensating student-athletes, this deliberation indirectly brought about change similar to changes in academic standards in the late 1970s (Barnes & Marley, 2009). Even though many student-athletes may not realize how this legislation can be put into place, they can direct their attention on this matter to those within intercollegiate athletics since they heard the student-athletes concerns and decided to set out and change the dynamic of student-athletes not receiving a fair share of benefits.

There is no doubt that the cost of attendance stipend has been beneficial to those student-athletes who receive it, but one common misconception is that this stipend is a form of compensation, when it is actually a part of a student-athlete's scholarship (Hosick, 2015). One main concern is how this legislation will impact student-athletes in terms of Title IX. Title IX comes into play with cost of attendance legislation since you must afford the same opportunities to both males and females, similar to an athletic department offering the same opportunities in terms of programs offered (Lush, 2015). One easy solution is to award all student-athletes on

scholarship the same amount of a stipend but then the concern shifts to the financial impact that it will have on the athletic department and the institution as a whole.

Another concern among athletic department administrations was the fact that many of these student-athletes would likely spend their stipend on items unrelated to the cost of attending that institution, such as video games or other entertainment items. Many institutions prepared those student-athletes on financial responsibility. Branden Jackson, a senior defensive lineman at Texas Tech showed how far that preparation has gone by saying, “So far I only know about five people that have a new Madden [video game], so we haven’t been spending that money too crazy” (Krakosky, 2015, para. 13). Other student-athletes have been a little more frugal with their stipend, understanding that this does not come often to student-athletes. Clemson right guard Maverick Morris mentioned that this stipend has resulted in him not having to ask his parents for money, and fellow Clemson football student-athlete Ben Boulware, stated that “We get so little money, I just save it” (Auerbach, 2016, para. 5). Others have learned that this stipend can assist them in ways they have not been able to enjoy in the past. Another football student-athlete, Alabama’s Reggie Ragland pointed out that his parents taught him to make sure the bills were always paid and that is where Mr. Ragland is primarily using his stipend (Auerbach, 2016).

CHAPTER III

METHOD

In order to gain a perspective from compliance officers' perceptions on cost of attendance legislation, this study will utilize a quantitative approach. Using a quantitative approach will allow the participants to use likert scales in order to showcase their thoughts on cost of attendance legislation and allow for consistent interpretation among all participants.

Research Design

The research design is a quantitative analysis of NCAA compliance officers and their perceptions on cost of attendance legislation. With the recent implementation of this legislation, it is critical to showcase the thoughts of those handling the legislation and illustrate where they believe changes may need to take place. Using the responses from the participants, further examinations can take place with cost of attendance viewpoints and further attitudes can be gathered on the legislation to aid in expanding and elaborating the legislation.

In the current state of intercollegiate athletics, student-athlete welfare is at the forefront of many discussions regarding new legislation or amendments to already enacted legislation. With cost of attendance legislation currently in place, the compliance officers are the ones that are enforcing the legislation and are arguably the ones with the most knowledge on this topic. Thus the importance of gaining the compliance officers perceptions is paramount on amending this legislation so that all institutions implementing cost of attendance are on a level playing field. This study focuses on the possible recruiting impact, financial burden on institutions, competitive balance, and the benefits to student-athletes, all topics that can assist in amending the legislation so all institutions are implementing the legislation correctly and not achieving a benefit that other institutions are not.

Participants. The survey was sent to the most senior staff member within the compliance office at each full member of the American Athletic Conference as of January 20th, 2016. The American Athletic Conference was chosen due in part to many of the members holding a national spotlight in various sports, while the entire conference is not included in the Power 5 conferences. Among the 11 participants that were sent the survey, a total of five participants responded.

Gaining Access. The small sample size is the result of attempting to showcase a foundation on perceptions related to cost of attendance and that can be best illustrated through the examination of one athletic conference. Also, a difficulty that impacts the sample size is that there is no universal truth related to cost of attendance due in part to this being a relatively new piece of legislation and not many individuals think to ask the compliance officers about their perceptions on this legislation. The participants were sent a recruitment email outlining the study and survey, along with a link to complete the survey. The 11 participants' email addresses were obtained through their respective institutions online staff directory.

Data Collection Procedures. After HSRB approval was obtained (Appendix C), the initial contact was made with all 11 participants on January 21st, 2016 via email. The email contained basic information regarding the study and survey including the topic of the study, length of time to complete the survey, as well as a link to complete the survey through the Qualtrics survey software system (Appendix B). Each participant was given the same survey that contained the same questions (Appendix A). This method was employed to gain an overall perception from compliance officers on one topic rather than showcase each individual perception on various topics within cost of attendance legislation. Before the participants were able to proceed onto the survey, they were presented with the consent form for the survey

(Appendix A). In order to proceed to the survey, participants were asked to fully read the consent document and once they read and comprehended the document, they were instructed to proceed onto the survey. The survey includes statements regarding financials, possible recruiting benefit, and the student-athletes use of their cost of attendance stipend. These categories were selected since many questions have risen and more clarification is needed in order to fully incorporate this legislation fairly across the board.

Data Analysis. Once the surveys had been completed, an analysis of each participant's responses was conducted. No questions were excluded from the analysis since all questions and statements in the survey were vital to the study. The main themes of the study include financial impact on the institution, a possible recruiting benefit and the perceptions of the compliance officers on what student-athlete are spending their stipend on. The survey responses were input into the SPSS software application where histograms were ran for each of the questions that used a likert scale response. Once histograms of each statement were constructed, the mode was used for analysis of each statement to show the most frequent scale chosen (Boone & Boone, 2012). For the questions and statements that used a ranking system, the top responses were looked at to see what the respondents stated was the most likely item for each question. The only ranking system question that differed was the final question regarding expenses at the respondents institutions. With this question, the top response was a key item but the most important analysis was in regards to the ranking of the expenses related to cost of attendance. Showcasing each participant's response allows for a general understanding to be illustrated regarding cost of attendance. By combining the thoughts and opinions of compliance officers within the American Athletic Conference, a basic viewpoint can be gathered on what compliance officers perceive about the cost of attendance legislation

Confidentiality. In order to exhibit trustworthiness and confidentiality all identifying marks such as name, were not asked for in order to keep the surveys confidential. As mentioned in the consent form, the responses were to remain anonymous resulting in trustworthy responses from all participants. Establishing the trust with the participants was vital so that they could give honest and accurate answers that will result in thorough analysis and accurate interpretation.

The responses of the participants will be interpreted by an individual who has experience and knowledge regarding NCAA legislation. With this experience and knowledge, I will be able to accurately describe the responses of the participants and form solid perceptions from the overall group of participants. This close association with NCAA legislation allows myself a better understanding of the thoughts of the participants over an individual with little to no background on NCAA legislation.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The survey administered in this study was sent out to 11 participants in total, with five returned, a retention rate of approximately 45%. The participants were also asked to include the number of years they have worked in NCAA compliance and a mean was determined to be 10.4 years with the longest participant being in NCAA compliance for 19 years. Along with total years in NCAA compliance, the participants also included the number of years in their current position and that average was 2.1 years. When asked about their educational history, three respondents revealed that they have earned a Master's degree and two showcased they have earned a Juris Doctorate (JD) degree, with no participants possessing both a Masters and Juris Doctorate degree together. In the last of the demographic questions, the participants were asked if they were a student-athlete while pursuing their undergraduate degree and three showed they were not a student-athlete while two illustrated they were a student-athlete at the Division I level.

One of the main aspects of this study was to see if a recruiting benefit is being created with the cost of attendance legislation. Among the respondents, the most frequent response was to agree with the statement of a possible recruiting benefit (n=2). Along the lines of a recruiting benefit, respondents both disagreed (n=2) and somewhat agreed (n=2) that the Power 5 conferences are going to become too powerful and separate from the Group of 5 conferences even further than they are already perceived. Then when asked if the competitive balance within their conference will shift over the next three years, two respondents disagree and when asked if the competitive balance across the NCAA will change, three respondents disagreed with this statement.

One issue that has come into play regarding cost of attendance is the debate on whether institutions should be able to fine student-athletes (Munson, 2015). In response to this statement, two respondents strongly disagreed while two other respondents agreed that institutions should be able to fine student-athletes for team rule violations. One idea that could be implemented to combat a possible recruiting advantage is to institute a salary cap that could be applied to an institution, various sports, or even per student-athlete. Overall the respondents were not in favor of this system as two disagreed with the statement and two others strongly disagreed. In an attempt to decipher the importance of various expenses at their respective institutions, the respondents were posed the question to rank the following items from most important expense to least important expense: scholarship funding, coaches' salaries, facilities, cost of attendance, and recruiting (see Table 1). Four of the five respondents (80%) indicated that scholarship funding was the most important expense. In the same question, the respondents ranked cost of attendance funding anywhere from 2nd to least important, with the most common placement being last of the five expenses listed.

Another hot button issue relating to cost of attendance is focused on what the student-athletes who are given cost of attendance are spending those funds on (see Table 2). When the participants were asked to rank what they believe the student-athletes will spend their funds on, three of the five respondents stated that entertainment (i.e., movies, music, video games, etc.) was the most likely area among the following: food, clothes, entertainment, transportation, school supplies, and living expenses. One interesting element that was also investigated was to ask the participants, if they were given a cost of attendance stipend, what they would rank as the order they would spend their stipend on (see Table 3). Two respondents stated they would have used their stipend on clothes while another two respondents stated they would use it for

entertainment. Lastly, in ranking why student-athletes chose their respective institution, the respondents were split as two chose athletics and two others chose education as determining factors over others such as location, cost, student life, size, and friends attending the institution (see Table 4).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

When analyzing the data that has been presented, overall the compliance officers in this study did not show conclusively that they believe a strong indication towards a recruiting benefit is being gained from the cost of attendance legislation. This is contrary to a few opinions from various athletic directors and coaches that believe a recruiting benefit is being gained from this legislation (Katz, 2015; Prisbell, 2014; Wolverton & Kambhampati, 2015). The compliance officers also did not believe conclusively to a shift in competitive balance taking place, which you be an unintended consequence of the legislation if a recruiting advantage was being exploited. Based on the statement given, the compliance officers believe that cost of attendance will not shift the competitive balance but the balance could shift due to other factors that are unrelated to cost of attendance. With the respondents not decisively agreeing or disagreeing on cost of attendance impacting competitive balance within their conference it is consistent that they believe the competitive balance will not change across the NCAA landscape. Over the past few years a great concern has been illustrated that the Power 5 conference institutions might break away from the NCAA but cost of attendance does not impact competitive balance then this breakaway will be less likely to happen (Dodd, 2013).

As pointed out earlier, one of the main concerns regarding cost of attendance is that the student-athletes are free to use those funds on anything, when they are expressly awarded for costs related to attending the institution. According to a few student-athletes, they were spending those funds on video games for example, an item that should not be purchased with cost of attendance funds (Krauskosky, 2015). Attempting to regulate what student-athletes can use their cost of attendance on would be an extremely difficult task, but a task that should be considered.

A change in the legislation would be one way to curb the spending on unrelated items to attend the institution but proof would be need to exhibited from the student-athletes on what they are using their stipend for, something that will be unlikely to pass into legislation or be implemented by individual institutions.

Many of the student-athletes who choose an institution based on the athletics of the institution often do not present satisfactory academic standards to attend the institution but are still admitted solely based on their athletic pursuits (Nagy, 2005). The respondents stated that student-athletes often chose their institution based on athletics or the education they will receive. This perception is often true, where the majority of student-athletes in the non-revenue sports choose an institution for the education but the sports of football and basketball are the ones who choose an institution for athletics since that is their main pursuit. This pursuit among football and basketball student-athletes does not match up with the student-athlete definition that is often placed on them throughout their time in college. With the cost of attendance legislation being put into place, it is becoming more evident that the NCAA is not placing the student-athlete definition at the forefront of legislation since the cost of attendance stipend can be viewed as compensation for participating in athletics.

Implications. With no clear answer regarding a recruiting benefit with the cost of attendance legislation, the legislation will need to be in play a little longer before any consequences are developed. Although there is no clear consequence yet to be developed, the legislation could be discussed further to get ahead of any possible loophole that may be created in the coming years. In gaining initial thoughts after the legislation has been in place for a year those surveyed could show the positives and negatives with the legislation. These positives and negatives could be debated even further to show how the legislation could impact intercollegiate

athletics in the future if no amendments will be made in the coming years. But, since this legislation is relatively new, it will need to have its due course without any amendments taking place so that everyone in intercollegiate athletics can see what the legislation can and will do to the NCAA as a whole.

Limitations. This study was limited in that a small sample size was used to construct a basic viewpoint regarding the new cost of attendance legislation. With the initial survey being sent out to 11 participants, the sample size was initially limited but this was important so that a direct perspective could be gained. Another limitation was that only one athletic conference was administered the survey. This choice was essential for the same reason that a small sample was administered. By gaining the perspective of one conference, a fundamental perspective can be gained regarding the cost of attendance legislation. A third limitation was that the conference that was included in the survey is classified as a Group of 5 conference. These Group of 5 conferences and their institutions are not thought of as being on the same level as the Power 5 conferences and their institutions, but the Group of 5 conferences are implementing the same legislation that the Power 5 conferences are implementing. One final limitation was that only compliance officers were included in the study. This limits the study in that only one department across intercollegiate athletics is used to voice their opinion but this department is the one that handles the legislation on a daily basis.

Suggestion for Further Research. One of the main suggestions for further studies regarding cost of attendance would be to include multiple conferences from both the Power 5 and Group of 5. This inclusion will allow for a more diverse sample size and will assist in gaining a perspective across the NCAA rather than just within one conference. Also, further studies should include all staff members in a compliance department rather than the most senior

member. Expanding the study to an entire compliance department will allow for more individual opinions and could assist in bringing about amendments to the legislation. One final suggestion would be to include other athletic department staff members such as coaches and senior administrative staff as well as student-athletes. The coaches and student-athletes can offer viewpoints from a different perspective since they are the ones who are recruiting, awarding, and accepting scholarships that possibly could include cost of attendance. In regards to senior administrative staff, such as Assistant Athletic Director's, they can offer a viewpoint in terms of a financial implication on the budget of the department and the budget of a specific program. The inclusion of multiple areas within an athletic department will help everyone associated with intercollegiate athletics gain a better understanding of the cost of attendance legislation.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

Instructions: Please answer each demographic question as accurately as possible by typing in your response or checking the appropriate box or boxes.

Demographic Q1: Check all degrees that you have received.

- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Juris Doctor (JD) Degree
- Other: _____

Demographic Q2: Total number of years working in NCAA Compliance.

Demographic Q3: Total number of years working in your current position.

Demographic Q4: Were you a student-athlete while in college? (Check all that apply).

- No
- Yes, Junior College
- Yes, NCAA Division I
- Yes, NCAA Division II
- Yes, NCAA Division III
- Yes, NAIA

Instructions: The following pages contain statements related to cost of attendance. Please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with these statement by clicking the appropriate box.

COA Q1: There is a recruiting benefit to awarding more cost of attendance than rival institutions.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

COA Q2: With most Power 5 institutions offering more in terms of a cost of attendance stipend, as a result, the Power 5 conferences are going to become too powerful and separate themselves further from the Group of 5.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree

- Agree
- Strongly Agree

COA Q3: Teams/institutions should be able to fine student-athletes cost of attendance for various team rule violations.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

COA Q4: A “salary cap” should be instituted. (For example, a maximum cost of attendance stipend allowed per conference, per sport, or per student-athlete).

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

COA Q5: With institutions offering various amounts of cost of attendance stipends, the competitive balance within your conference will change over the next three years.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

COA Q6: The competitive balance across NCAA sports will change over the next three years, specifically against Power 5 conference opponents due to the various amounts of cost of attendance stipends.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Instructions: Based upon what you have experienced, please rank the following questions. Please drag and drop the answer choices in your order of preference.

Ranking Q1: What do you think the student-athletes will spend their cost of attendance on? (1=most likely, 6=least likely).

- Food
- Clothes
- Entertainment (Movies, Music, Video Games, etc.)
- Transportation
- School Supplies
- Living Expenses

Ranking Q2: If you were awarded a cost of attendance stipend in college, what would you have spent it on? (1=most likely, 6=least likely).

- Food
- Clothes
- Entertainment (Movies, Music, Video Games, etc.)
- Transportation
- School Supplies
- Living Expenses

Ranking Q3: Why do you perceive student-athletes choose your institution? (1=most likely, 7=least likely).

- Education
- Athletics (Coaches, Playing Time, etc.)
- Location
- Friends attend the institution
- Cost
- Student Life
- Size

Ranking Q4: Where does cost of attendance rank in importance of expenses at your institution? (1=most important, 5=least important).

- Scholarship Funding
- Coaches' Salaries
- Facilities
- Cost of Attendance
- Recruiting

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL & CONSENT FORM

Dear [Participant's name],

My name is TR Nisonger and I am currently a graduate student from the School of Human Movement, Sport & Leisure Studies (HMSLS) at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about NCAA Compliance Officers perceptions on cost of attendance. You are eligible to participate in this study due to your current position as a Compliance Officer within the American Athletic Conference. I have obtained your contact information from your respective university's athletic department staff directory.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be given a survey that will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and will measure your interpretation on various cost of attendance statements. Once the survey has been completed, please submit your responses and those will be used within the study to achieve an overall view of what various NCAA compliance professionals perceive of the new cost of attendance legislation.

Please remember your participation is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate please click on the link at the bottom of this email. If you have any questions about the study please email me at tnisong@bgsu.edu.

The following is the link to the survey:

https://bgsu.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1BNOP1RIM2c9FiJ

Thank you,

TR Nisonger
HMSLS Graduate Student
Bowling Green State University



BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Human Movement, Sport, & Leisure Studies

227C Eppler Complex
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0280
419-372-3165

<http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/edhd/hmsls/index.html>

Consent Form

Project Title: NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Compliance Officers perceptions on the new cost of attendance legislation.

Researcher: Thomas Nisonger, Graduate Student, Sport Administration

Advisor: Dr. Amanda Paule-Koba, Associate Professor, Human Movement, Sport & Leisure Studies

Study Purpose and Procedure

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in my research study that I am completing for my Master's project. This study is going to evaluate how current NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) compliance officers perceive the recent cost of attendance legislation. The aim of this study is to help the general college sports fan become informed of the basics of the new cost of attendance legislation from a group of professionals that handle the legislation on a regular basis. Due to the fact that this is a new piece of college athletics, not much has been gathered and the perspective of compliance officers will allow everyone to be informed of the legislation and allow for further studies to be conducted.

The first step in this study is for the participant to take the survey, which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. There are 14 questions that the participant may answer, with six using a likert scale, four using a ranking system, and four demographic questions. Once the survey has been distributed to the participant, they may complete the survey during their own availability. Please note that your employer may be using tracking software thus it is advised that you complete the survey on a personal computer. The participant shall clear their internet browser and page history after completion of the survey.

Your participation is completely voluntary and responses shall be anonymous. If you do choose to terminate your participation you can do so by closing the survey before submitting your responses. Once you have submitted the survey you will not be able to terminate your participation. Deciding whether or not to participate will not affect you or your relationship with Bowling Green State University.

There is no anticipated discomfort for those participating in this study, thus the risk to the participants is minimal.

The researcher and advisor will be the only people who have access to the participants' information and responses. The researcher will maintain full confidentiality aside from the advisor's assistance.

Please contact Thomas (TR) Nisonger at (937) 441-1590 or tnisong@bgsu.edu if you have any questions about the research or your participation in the research study. You may also contact the advisor, Dr. Amanda Paule-Koba at (419) 372-7229 or apaule@bgsu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research.

Proceeding to the next page of the survey indicates your consent to participate.

APPENDIX C: HSRB APPROVAL



BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Compliance

DATE: December 23, 2015

TO: Thomas Nisonger
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subject Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [835778-2] NCAA compliance officers perceptions on cost of attendance legislation

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: December 22, 2015

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has determined this project is exempt from IRB review according to federal regulations AND that the proposed research has met the principles outlined in the Belmont Report. You may now begin the research activities.

Note that an amendment may not be made to exempt research because of the possibility that proposed changes may change the research in such a way that it is no longer meets the criteria for exemption. A new application must be submitted and reviewed prior to modifying the research activity, unless the researcher believes that the change must be made to prevent harm to participants. In these cases, the Office of Research Compliance must be notified as soon as practicable.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Kristin Hagemyer at 419-372-7716 or khagemy@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Table 1

Responses for the importance of expenses at the participant's institution

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
Scholarships	4	-	-	-	1
Coaches' Salaries	-	2	2	1	-
Facilities	1	1	1	-	2
Cost of Attendance	-	1	1	1	2
Recruiting	-	1	1	3	-

Note. The numbers in the table indicate the number of times that option was ranked first, second third, etc. If an option was not ranked in that particular order, a dash (-) is placed in the appropriate box.

Table 2

Responses for student-athlete stipend spending

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
Food	1	1	2	-	1	-
Clothes	1	-	-	3	1	-
Entertainment	3	1	-	-	-	1
Transportation	-	1	1	-	3	-
School Supplies	-	-	-	1	-	4
Living Expenses	-	2	2	1	-	-

Note. The numbers in the table indicate the number of times that option was ranked first, second third, etc. If an option was not ranked in that particular order, a dash (-) is placed in the appropriate box.

Table 3

Responses for stipend spending if participants were awarded cost of attendance in college

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
Food	-	1	1	2	1	-
Clothes	2	1	1	1	-	-
Entertainment	2	2	-	-	-	1
Transportation	-	-	1	-	4	-
School Supplies	-	-	-	1	-	4
Living Expenses	1	1	2	1	-	-

Note. The numbers in the table indicate the number of times that option was ranked first, second third, etc. If an option was not ranked in that particular order, a dash (-) is placed in the appropriate box.

Table 4

Responses for why student-athletes choose participants institution

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th
Education	2	1	1	-	1	-	-
Athletics	2	2	-	1	-	-	-
Location	1	2	1	-	-	-	1
Friends	-	-	1	1	-	1	2
Cost	-	-	-	-	2	2	1
Student Life	-	-	1	3	1	-	-
Size	-	-	1	-	1	2	1

Note. The numbers in the table indicate the number of times that option was ranked first, second third, etc. If an option was not ranked in that particular order, a dash (-) is placed in the appropriate box.