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Logan W. Roberts

Erianne A. Weight

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In Pursuit of Sport Sustainability

Fund-Raising and the NCAA Division I Track and Field Core Product

Logan W. Roberts
Erianne A. Weight

Abstract

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I track and field programs have been a target of elimination in recent decades (Irick, 2011) as funds are often allocated to sports that provide the largest perceived potential return on investment (Marburger & Hogshead-Makar, 2003). Building on research that documents the influential role coaches can play in sport sustainability efforts (Cooper, 2012; Weight, 2010; Weight & Cooper, 2011), this study examines fund raising and fortification strategies of 111 Division I coaches through survey methodology. Important fund raising strategies emerged including communication with donors, maintaining an up-to-date contact database, and providing thank-you notes and/or gifts to donors. Fortification strategies to enhance demand for collegiate track and field included decreasing the length of competitions and scoring regular season meets.

Keywords: *College sport, fundraising, track and field*

Logan W. Roberts holds a master's degree in Sport Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he currently serves as an assistant track and field and cross country coach.

Erianne A. Weight is an assistant professor in the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Please send correspondence regarding this article to Lwroberts1@gmail.com.

Track and field programs have been a target of elimination in the most recent decades despite tremendous participation and popularity for both male and female collegiate and high school participants (Irick, 2011; National Federation of State High School Associations, 2011). In fact, track and field is the second most popular male sport by participation in high school and ranked first among most popular sports for females, yet at the Division I level, track and field leads all sports in most programs dropped since the 1988–1989 season (Irick, 2011; NFHS, 2011). Between 2000 and 2010, there were 33 Division I men's and women's outdoor track and field programs and 50 indoor programs eliminated (Irick, 2011). Notable eliminations in this decade include West Virginia University (men, 2003); James Madison University (men, 2006); Seton Hall University (men and women, 2010); University of Delaware (men, 2011); and University of Richmond (men, 2012).

A variety of explanations have been levied in an effort to explain the torrent of programs that have been eliminated. Title IX, and in particular the proportionality prong of participation compliance, has been a popular scapegoat as administrators argue they must reduce the number of participation opportunities for men in order to offer substantially proportionate opportunities (Ridpath, Yiamouyianis, Lawrence, & Galles, 2008). A growing body of literature, however, supports the conclusion that the discontinuation decisions are in fact not driven by Title IX, but rather reductions in spending in all nonrevenue sports are due to excessive spending in football and men's basketball and an arms race of expenditures in intercollegiate athletics as administrators seek to maximize revenue in the two most potentially-lucrative sports (Leland & Peters, 2003; National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, 2002; NCAA, 2010; Staurowsky, 2003). Economically driven athletic administrators, therefore, might seek to phase out unprofitable programs completely were it not for NCAA minimum sport sponsorship requirements and the educational justification for the existence of intercollegiate athletics (Marburger & Hogshead-Makar, 2003; Weight, 2010). Following this rationale, a growing body of literature has examined efforts to enhance sustainability of nonrevenue sports through marketing and fund-raising efforts (Cooper, 2012; Giannotto, 2012; James & Ross, 2004; Weight, 2010).

Despite the aforementioned demand for track and field participation opportunities on the high school and college levels, consumer demand continues to lag as demonstrated by the inability to draw stakeholders to support track and field programs through financial means, attendance, and media exposure. Although the majority of intercollegiate track and field meets are not ticketed events, the NCAA records attendance at its annual outdoor championships. Over the last 50 years, the top five single-day crowds at this meet all took place before 1990 (Perelman, 2011). In addition to attendance difficulties, the lack of media coverage has also played a role in diminishing publicity in this sport. A two-hour live segment on the final day of competition on CBS is typically the extent of television cover-

age for the outdoor championships. Only eight media outlets were present at the 2011 championships aside from local stations in the host city of Des Moines. Only two of those eight were nationwide outlets: the Associated Press and ESPN.com (Perelman, 2011). This study explores ways to create demand for the sponsorship and consumption of the sport on campuses, in communities, and around the country so that programs will not be threatened with discontinuation.

Review of Literature

Nonrevenue Sport Discontinuation

Several scholars have surveyed athletic directors in order to understand the underlying reasons why athletic departments eliminate nonrevenue sport programs (Gray & Pelzer, 1995; Weight & Cooper, 2011; Williamson, 1983). Williamson (1983) reported that athletic directors cited lack of student interest, high cost, lack of recruitable prospects, and lack of spectator appeal as primary factors that influenced sport discontinuation. In a follow-up study, Gray and Pelzer (1995) demonstrated some overlapping findings in reporting conference alignment, shifting resources, inconvenient travel, cost, and lack of student interest as primary influences. Weight and Cooper (2011) compared athletic director and wrestling coach perceptions of factors that influenced discontinuation decisions. Athletic directors cited financial strain of the program as a primary discontinuation criteria followed by gender equity implications, success on the mat, and regional sport popularity, while coaches indicated gender equity implications as the primary criteria followed by regional sport popularity, donor support, and athlete actions demonstrating variance between the two populations (Weight & Cooper, 2011). In this study, the authors described athlete actions as performance in the classroom, service initiatives in the local community, and behavioral conduct on campus.

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) released a report in 2001 about four year colleges' decisions to discontinue nonrevenue programs. Primary discontinuation decisions cited by athletic director respondents included insufficient student interest, gender equity considerations, and resource allocations. Institutions that were able to add one or more teams did so through "creative strategies" that could produce revenue (e.g., fund-raising, renting facilities, hosting events) and contain costs (e.g., limit team travel and roster sizes, recruit via telephone) to avoid program eliminations (GAO, 2001, p. 25). This research supports the notion that cost-containment or revenue-generating practices can increase the chances of program sustainability. Nonrevenue coaches must not rely on the athletic department for a fully funded budget. Development initiatives become vital in preventing a program from being eliminated.

Role of the Coach in Nonrevenue Sport Sustainability

Weight (2010) was one of the first to take a thorough look at the role of the coach in the financial sustainability of nonrevenue sports. Her study examined Division I athletic director beliefs about the influence of a wrestling coach on program discontinuation decisions. Athletic directors credited coaches with holding a moderate amount of influence on whether their sport is cut, and several common themes were repeated among athletic director respondents related to a coach's role in sustaining program vitality. While this study was specific to the sport of wrestling, its findings are useful to the study of other collegiate nonrevenue sports.

Relationship building was mentioned several times as a key practice in order to build buy-in with key decision-making individuals on the campus and in the community. A complementary coaching staff led by an entrepreneur with the ability to fundraise, promote the sport, build a positive brand, promote the program's public perception, and build relationships with stakeholders is what Weight (2010) defines as "complementary entrepreneurship promotion," which could decrease the likelihood of the sport being eliminated (p. 27). If nonrevenue coaches can take advantage of the community support surrounding their program, the demand that is created can give athletic directors one less reason to eliminate their program. Weight proposes that the marketing efforts of the entrepreneurial coach are a key step in creating demand for nonrevenue sports. Although this study was specific to wrestling coaches, much can be learned and applied toward all nonrevenue coaches.

The role of the entrepreneurial coach in working toward the sustainability of a sport program holds significance for a few reasons as highlighted in a study performed by Weight and Cooper (2011). Their research sought to understand the reasons given by athletic directors for eliminating programs as given by athletic directors. As the latest trends have shown major eliminations in track and field with no signs of a plateau, it is of utmost importance that coaches know what criteria is used to make elimination decisions as well as what athletic directors most value. Understanding criteria does not guarantee survival; however, coaches can aim their efforts toward practices that athletic directors have deemed influential when making difficult program discontinuation decisions. The study showed a significant difference between athletic directors and coaches related to the value placed on financial criteria. This exemplifies the emphasis that needs to be placed on fund-raising practices in addition to other "complementary entrepreneurship promotion" initiatives that will be favorably received by athletic directors (Weight, 2009; Weight & Cooper, 2011).

The role of the coach has also been likened to the position of CEO by drawing similarities in the ability to manage individuals for the purpose of facilitating maximal productivity (Cooper, 2012). As increased pressure has been placed on nonrevenue programs, expectations have also changed for coaches. No longer are coaches only expected to field a competitive team that provides opportunity for

student-athletes. Coaches must now engage in initiatives to build interest with key stakeholders. Cooper (2012) published a marketing manual directed toward collegiate wrestling programs to offer specific practices that coaches can implement, and many can be used across all nonrevenue programs.

Fund-raising in Intercollegiate Athletics

In order to find resources outside of those that are allocated directly from the athletic department and university, programs can improve their chances of sustainability by engaging in fund-raising. As a preface to the fund-raising strategies utilized by NCAA Division I track and field coaches explored within this study, a brief review of fund-raising literature is outlined in this section.

Donor motivation. There is a substantial literary foundation exploring why donors give to athletic departments. Research has uncovered donor motivation stemming from factors such as visiting college campuses, renewing old friendships, meeting coaches and players, and obtaining tickets (Gladden, Mahony & Apostolopoulou, 2005; Staurowsky, Parkhouse & Sachs, 1996). Other donors are motivated by priority seating, special parking, and/or special recognition (Isherwood, 1986; Verner, Hecht & Fansler, 1998). Verner, Hecht, and Fansler also found that some donors give in order to receive inside information on athletics that non-donors would not have access to (1998). Philanthropic motives have also been identified such as contributing to the academic success of student-athletes and promoting the image of the university and state through supporting athletic programs, coaches, facilities, recruiting, and conference membership (Comstock, 1988; Gladden, Mahony & Apostolopoulou, 2005; Hammersmith, 1985).

Fund-raising methods. One of the main components of fund-raising is the cultivation of relationships to convey to donors that the projects and goals are worthy of their financial support (Leonhardt, 2011). Wedgeworth (2000) stated, “the process of creating and maintaining a relationship is at the heart of any successful fund-raising campaign” (p. 536). Lowman and Bixby (2011) also stressed the importance of building relationships with the community to develop good will and raise the possibility of future gifts. The cultivation of relationships begins with a clear mission and strategic plan, and is reinforced through integrated methods of communication and service quality (Leonhardt, 2011; Lowman & Bixby, 2011; Warwick, 2011).

These relationships can be sustained by thanking donors for their gifts, communicating how contributions are being used, and assuring donors of the importance of their contribution regardless of the size (Leonhardt, 2011; Shapiro, 2010). As we pursue research questions related to fund-raising practices in intercollegiate track and field, it is important to draw upon this base of empirical literature.

Conceptual Rationale

The conceptual rationale of this study combines the theory of resource allocations with core product literature. The theory of resource allocations was concep-

tualized in 1776 when Adam Smith originally explained the basic idea of supply and demand theorizing the supply of products is naturally regulated according to the demand by those who are willing to pay to bring the product to market (Smith, 2007). Applied to collegiate track and field, Smith's principles would hold that sports are being cut (or no longer being brought to market) because there is a lack of demand. This "demand" may be consumer and financially driven as we see in the "revenue-producing" sports, or it may take the form of regulatory mandates including NCAA sport sponsorship minimums and gender equity legislation. Where once the educational value of nonrevenue sports was enough to justify their existence, an increasing commercial landscape in intercollegiate athletics is intensifying the economic pressure of nonrevenue sports. Because of this, programs in question need to have stakeholders "who are willing to pay the whole rent, labor, and profits which must be paid in order to bring the product to the market" (Smith, 2007, p. 37).

Hackman examined resource allocation within colleges and universities in 1985 and found a strong relationship between environmental power and the ability to acquire outside resources, and resource allocations. This correlation between environmental power (or fans, community support, political prowess with administrators) and the ability to fundraise, "may be stronger in times of financial stress than in periods which there is more budgetary slack" (Hackman, 1985, p. 74–75). This suggests an increase in importance of environmental power (via sport support) during the current strained financial environment in higher education.

This theory was used as a lens to approach the issue of track and field sustainability. Prior research on sport discontinuation has supported the theory of resource allocations in application to Division I intercollegiate wrestling (Weight & Cooper, 2011). In this study, Division I athletic directors maintained when demand is present through supportive fans, fund-raising efforts, brand-building efforts and community support, they would be unlikely to cut a sport (2011). Building on this theoretical foundation, this study examines methods through which track and field coaches can build demand for their sport.

One direct method to enhance consumer support is through modification of the core product. "In game" alterations can be implemented to enhance the entertainment value of a sport (Aylott & Aylott, 2007; Cooper & Weight, 2009; Partovi & Corredoira, 2002). Literature suggests a three-prong approach to improving sport marketability: eliminate confusing rules (Hanning, 2007), develop rules that encourage action between participants and teams (Aylott & Aylott, 2007; Partovi & Corredoira, 2002), and facilitate high amounts of scoring between athletes and teams (Paul & Weinbach, 2007). Toward this end, we have seen many adjustments throughout the years in multiple sports. The implementation of the shot clock in basketball to maintain a rapid tempo and the reduction in goal-tending equipment to encourage more scoring in the National Hockey League (NHL) represent a few examples (Allen, 2008). These modifications can facilitate increased

fan satisfaction (Greenwell, Fink, & Pastore, 2002; McDonald, Sutton, & Milne, 1995; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995), increased consumption habits (Anderson & Mittal, 2000; Laverie & Arnett, 2000), and word-of-mouth advertising (Kotler, 1994).

Significance of this Study

In a time when budgets for track and field programs are seeing cuts and reallocation of monies, it has never been more imminent for coaches to engage in the cultivation of demand. Although most Division I athletic departments have a designated fund-raising and marketing staff, these skills, if also performed effectively by a coach, can enhance the long-term viability of the program (Cooper, 2012; Weight & Cooper, 2011; Weight, 2010). The findings in this study will add to the literature related to Olympic sport sustainability practices and will equip coaches in their efforts toward being effective fund raisers for their programs. Combined, these findings will provide a foundation for enhancing the demand of intercollegiate track and field.

Research Questions

[RQ1] What fund-raising strategies are utilized by NCAA Division I track and field coaches to support the sustainability of their program?

[RQ2] How do NCAA Division I track and field coaches believe the sport of track and field can be enhanced in order to create a more marketable product?

[RQ 3] What changes to the core product could create and maintain market demand for track and field?

Method

Instrument Design

This study was completed through the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods to examine current NCAA Division I coach perceptions of track and field fund-raising and marketing practices. An online survey was constructed to explore practices that programs have in place while also polling track and field coaches on their perceptions of the core product of NCAA Division I track and field. The survey was tested for validity through review by a panel of experts including two sport administration professors, a member of the athletic fund-raising staff at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, staff members of the United States Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA), and an expert in survey design from the Odum Institute. In an effort to enhance construct validity, a pilot study was conducted by having a select sample of coaches around the country complete the survey to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness of questions and to address the research questions.

Data Collection

The population of interest was NCAA Division I track and field coaches who were most knowledgeable about marketing strategies for their programs. By including every Division I school in the survey, the sample aimed to be representative of the population including schools of varying size and conference within the Division I membership. The study was approved by an Institutional Review Board and appropriate steps were taken to ensure confidentiality for each survey respondent. The survey was distributed via an e-mail invitation directly to the track and field coaching staffs within each school in the NCAA Division I membership that sponsors at least one track and field team (n=325), with the invitation asking for a response from the coach most knowledgeable about program marketing strategies. Qualtrics, an online survey tool, was used to distribute the survey and record results. The survey yielded a response rate of 34.2% after 111 coaches completed the survey.

Quantitative data were analyzed utilizing Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data analysis included basic frequencies and descriptive statistics in order to provide a framework of the wide array of respondents that are represented. Additionally, t-tests and one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were run to determine whether significant relationships existed between any of the independent variables (institutional NCAA Division I sub-classification, coach age, coach staff position, and coach marketing responsibility). Qualitative data was independently coded by two researchers and organized into categories based on the nature of the responses to open ended question pertaining to demand-enhancing strategies. Inter-coder reliability was high for both coded narratives indicating a clear code and perfect level of agreement between coders with a Scott's Pi of 1.0, respectively.

Results

The vast majority of survey respondents were head coaches (44.1%, n = 52) and of these coaches 46.6% (n=55) were from Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) institutions. Of the 31 NCAA Division I conferences, 28 were represented, including every (FBS) conference (n=11). Data analysis showed that 61.8% (n=71) of the respondents were between the ages of 30–49, while 15.6% (n=18) were between 20–29 and 22.6% (n=26) were over the age of 50.

Survey respondents were asked to identify the specific track and field teams that their athletic department sponsored. The four teams, recognized as separate sports by the NCAA, are women's and men's indoor and outdoor track and field. All respondents (n=116) identified women's outdoor as a sponsored team, while 88.8% (n=103) sponsored men's outdoor. Women's indoor was almost equally sponsored as compared to women's outdoor (99.1 %, n=115) while men's indoor was less at 82.8% (n=96). See Table 1 for a complete listing of demographic data.

Table 1*Demographic Information*

	%	N
Coaching Position		
Head Coach	44.1%	52
Assistant Coach	43.2%	51
Graduate Assistant Coach	1.7%	2
Volunteer Coach	2.5%	3
Other	8.5%	10
Age		
20-29	15.6%	18
30-39	32.2%	37
40-49	29.6%	34
Over 50	22.6%	26
Conference Affiliation		
Football Bowl Subdivision	46.6%	55
Football Championship Subdivision	28.8%	34
Division I (Non-Football)	24.6%	29
Sponsored Teams		
Women's Indoor	99.1%	115
Women's Outdoor	100%	116
Men's Indoor	82.8%	96
Men's Outdoor	88.8%	103

Coach's Perceptions of Fund-Raising Importance and Strategy Usefulness

Coaches were asked how important they felt it was to the athletic department that they fund raised. There were a wide range of responses on a 5-point scale ranging from *not important* (1) to *very important* (5). The mean of responses was 3.80 approaching "moderately important" while the mode indicated most coaches felt fund-raising was *very important*. The standard deviation of this measure was 1.33 indicating a high level of variance between respondents.

Coaches were given a list of fund-raising strategies to rate on a 5-point scale of usefulness. Three strategies were rated significantly higher than "moderately

useful” utilizing a one sample t-test against a sample mean of 4. These strategies included: (1) maintaining communication with donors (M = 4.52; SD = 0.85), (2) maintaining an up-to-date contact database (M = 4.45; SD = 0.95), and (3) writing thank you notes/giving gifts for donations (M = 4.42; SD = 0.87). Analysis of variance revealed significant interactions between one independent variable. Coaches aged 40-49 years-old (M = 4.16) rated sending thank you notes in response to donations lower than coaches over 50 years-old (M = 4.81), $F(3, 108) = 2.89, p = 0.039$. A complete listing of related statistics can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Fund-Raising Strategies to Support Sustainability of Program

Fund-Raising Strategies	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	p
Maintaining communication with donors	*4.52	0.85		
Maintaining up-to-date contact database	*4.45	0.95		
Thank-you notes/gifts in response to donations	*4.42	0.87	2.89	
<i>40-49 vs. Over 50</i>			-0.65	0.039
Hosting home competitions	3.95	1.20		
Gaining corporate sponsorships	3.86	1.24		
Benefits for individuals who give	3.74	1.08		
Allowing special interactions with coaches/athletes	3.74	1.13		
Special giving campaigns	3.68	1.16		
Ticket benefits to donors	3.16	1.39		

Note. The scale ranged from (1) “Not Useful at all” to (5) “Extremely Useful”

* $p < .001 (\mu \geq 4)$

Modifications to Enhance the Core Product

To understand coach’s perceptions on the current structure of the sport as it pertains to the core product, respondents were asked to rate modifications to the sport in an effort to enhance spectator appeal. Only two modifications were rated in the *somewhat useful* range, including (1) shortening the length of daily competition (M = 3.87; SD = 1.21) and (2) scoring of postseason championships (M = 3.75; SD = 1.26).

Analysis of variance revealed significant differences between coaches who reported control over marketing responsibilities who identified moderate usefulness in shortening the length of daily competition (M = 4.12; SD = 1.13), and programs that used non-coaching staff members for marketing purposes who believed it was not as necessary (M = 3.56; SD = 1.21), $F(1,106) = 5.89; p = 0.017$. See Table 3 for a complete listing of statistics related to the modification of core product questions.

Table 3*Modifications to Enhance the Core Product*

Modifications to the Core Product	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Shortening the length of daily competition	3.87	1.21	5.89	
<i>Coaching Staff vs. Non-coaching Staff</i>			0.56	0.017
Scoring of postseason championships	3.75	1.26		
Modifying the order of events within a competition	2.91	1.29		
Modifying qualifying procedures for National Championships (Indoor season-Descending order list)	2.80	1.35		
Modifying qualifying procedures for Preliminary rounds (Outdoor season-Top 12 in each event)	2.79	1.45		
Shortening the length of the regular season	1.64	1.03		

Note. The scale ranged from (1) "Not Useful at all" to (5) "Extremely Useful"

* $p < .05$ ($\mu \geq 4$)

Creating Demand

The survey gave the respondents an opportunity to provide input on modifications to the sport that could create greater consumer demand. As listed in Table 4, six coding categories emerged, including 1) modify and implement team scoring of regular season meets, 2) increase television coverage of competition, 3) create spectator-friendly environment, 4) improve packaging of television product, 5) increase institutional and athletic administration support, and 6) modify NCAA Championships.

Of 65 responses, over 35% of the coaches mentioned the need to practice team scoring of competition in order to create demand for the sport. One assistant coach plainly stated, "Track and field regular season meets need to be scored. Rivalries with local schools need to be cultivated and marketed to fans, friends, and alumni of programs with an increased amount of smaller, shorter meets" (Respondent 1). Most current track and field meets are either not scored or scored without informing the fans/teams until post-event.

Equally important according to the respondents was catering to the spectators in a way that creates a friendly environment. Over 21% of coaches mentioned decreasing length of daily competition and other ways to make the sport more friendly to spectators. Some of the notable improvements included shortening the meets, publishing results in feet and inches instead of meters, and splitting the competitions into sections based on the performance level of athletes (Respondents 15 and 28).

Almost one-third of respondents identified the need to improve television coverage and packaging of the track and field product on television. One coach stated the need for "better production on live broadcasts and more live action with

less interviews. During the long-distance events, they need to cut away to field events to keep the attention of viewers” (Respondent 40). Also highlighted, by respondent 34, was the need for “more coverage on networks coupled with the education of the audience on rules and procedures of the sport. Also we need to better market our top athletes to become household names with dynamic personalities.”

Table 4

Creating Demand on Intercollegiate Level

Strategies to create demand for sport between Olympic years	(%)	N
Modify and implement team scoring of regular season meets <i>Implement dual meeting scoring with win/lose outcome, maintain head-to-head competition, instill a W/L component with rivalries</i>	35.4%	23
Create environment of spectator-friendly competition <i>Decrease length of daily competition, refrain from reporting metric lengths in results</i>	21.5%	14
Increase television coverage of competition <i>More televised competition and highlights/results of larger meets</i>	18.5%	12
Improve packaging of product on television <i>Market the events, knowledgeable announcers, highlight athlete personalities, variety of event coverage</i>	13.8%	9
Increase Support Staff <i>Improve institutional and athletic administration support</i>	6.2%	7
Modify NCAA Championships	4.6%	3
Total		65

Discussion and Implications

Consistent with the findings of Marburger and Hogshead-Makar (2003), it appears that coaches understand the importance placed on financial sustainability, although there was a fair amount of perspectives expressed on the issue. As increasing amounts of athletic department funding flow away from track and field toward the revenue sports, it will become increasingly important for nonrevenue programs to find ways to reach their constituents and build relationships with stakeholders for the purpose of financial support. Relying on the theory of resource allocations, we approach this discussion through a lens of understanding that the more attractive the core product of the sport, the more demand will flow to the program, facilitating sustainability (Smith, 2007).

Fund-Raising Strategies

Coaches rated three fund-raising strategies that shared a common theme of building relationships with stakeholders as more useful than the others. Division I coaches place importance on these relational interactions in order to lay a foundation strong enough to ask for assistance in funding in the future. This practice follows research in relationship marketing that has found developing relationships is important to gain financial support consistent with the perceptions of coaches in this study (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Wedgeworth, 2000). Literature suggests the practicality of maintaining a contact database to keep in contact with a large donor base (Olsen & Frazier, 2001). A database can help a coach track, understand, and service donors by increasing the ease of outgoing correspondence and maintaining contact with them. Once in contact, it becomes easier to direct donors by way of email or phone to increase the convenience of giving. (Sargeant, 2001; Warwick, 2011).

Attaining corporate sponsorships ($M = 3.86$; $SD = 1.24$) as a means to financially supplement an operating budget, rated relatively neutral yet opinions were widely varied in the overall strategies. Although not statistically significant, the younger coaches (20–39 years of age; $M = 4.16$; $SD = 1.08$) believed this strategy to be fiscally beneficial while the older age bracket (Over 50 years old; $M = 3.35$; $SD = 1.47$) rated it closer to the neutral in its usefulness. As programs host larger and higher profile home competitions, consistently mentioned as a useful fund-raising strategy, the signage in stadium and naming opportunities as well as brand association with a successful program can become a desired commodity. The younger generation of coaches appears to more fully support the value in forming mutual partnerships with local businesses and organizations that can provide financial resources in exchange for displaying their name or logo at a stadium.

A goal of all programs should be to find what motivates stakeholders to give to their program. While literature has provided a foundation for donor motivation to give to revenue programs, benefits such as tickets, premium seating and special parking hold little value for nonrevenue sports, most of which do not charge for entry (Staurowsky, Parkhouse, & Sachs, 1996). In line with this logic, coach respondents noted that ticket benefits as a means to reward donors was the least useful of fund-raising strategies presented. Past research has noted that donors give to improve a program as well as for the philanthropic value which favors the nonrevenue sports, but coaches must take it one step further to enhance the donor's experience with the program to encourage long-term relationships and giving (Gladden, Mahony, & Apostolopoulou, 2005). These experiences can include exclusive interactions with athletes and coaches or apparel and special recognition for certain levels of financial commitment.

Modifications to the Core Product

Coaches only rated two modifications to the core product of track and field above neutral: shortening the length of daily competition and scoring of post-

season championships. T-testing produced no significant finding which would lead one to postulate that coaches believe the core product needs to be changed in structure. However, the organization of daily competition signaled a significant finding among coaching staff members who take part in the marketing of their program. Literature suggests that modifying competition format can enhance the entertainment value of the sport (Aylott & Aylott, 2007; Cooper & Weight, 2009; Partovi & Corredoira, 2002). Suggestions to tackle the long, drawn-out competition day include separating the elite athletes, which might include athletes with the top eight past performances in each event (shorter segment) from the majority of athletes (long segment) to create a two-part meet in which spectators can practice decision making in choosing their preference.

Since one of the strengths of the sport is its high participation levels, coaches can still promote inclusiveness for each competitor despite varied levels of talent, and student-athletes can take advantage of valuable competition experience. The strengths of the sport do not have to be threatened by a shortened schedule if programs implement this split-day structure.

Creating Demand for Track and Field

The sport of track and field has many opportunities to maintain interest and demand between Olympic years. According to feedback from the respondents, each program must successfully promote the sport on their campus in order to gain national exposure. The two most frequently identified enhancements involved modifying and improving the team scoring of regular season meets and creating a spectator friendly competition format. One FBS coach believes that once regular season competitions have a win or lose outcome in which fans can track as the meet progresses, fans and spectators will become more engaged in each event despite the length of competition or down time through the day (Respondent 48).

The foundation of literature suggests implementation of scoring, when facilitated in team sports, can increase consumer interest (Paul & Weinbach, 2007). This marketing approach can take advantage of drawing spectators with loyalties to a specific team. The unique nature of track and field offers a wide range of events and races occurring simultaneously that each could be enhanced if the overall team element and associated drama were infused into the meet. Public interest may be peaked if established institutional rivalries from other scored sports with head-to-head competitions can be played out on the track. Any school can implement these changes because there is no cost associated with changing the scoring format.

This scoring adjustment could add to the spectator-friendly environment if spectators are educated about the scoring system, kept up to date as the competition progresses, and given measurements in feet/inches as opposed to the widely used metric system (Respondent 15). Spectators should be educated during the meet and reminded of certain rules (Hanning, 2007). Each event has specific rules that pertain only to how competition is orchestrated. For instance, a tie-breaker in

the high jump is decided by the number of misses totaled during competition. In contrast, a tie-breaker in the long jump is determined by the athlete who had the second longest jump during competition. Spectator interest can ebb and flow with the knowledge of how events are conducted and scored as well as being updated throughout competition. These informational additions can be complementary to an overall marketing plan to enhance the atmosphere specific to the facility, demographics of the spectators and nature of the competition (Bee & Kahle, 2006).

Increasing and improving television coverage for track and field was mentioned frequently as a means to create demand for the sport. Some of the proposals included an improved marketing of personalities, more knowledgeable announcers presenting the product on television and showing a variety of events during broadcasts (Respondent 40). In order for an increase in television coverage to occur, however, it must be able to demonstrate an established audience and the sport has not proven it can do that. Attendance has dropped in recent national championships and the event has not been hosted in a top-10 market since 1976 (Perelman, 2011). The emergence of subscription-based websites that provide live race content will continue to be a reliable indicator of the commitment of the sport's followers. If a network can see value in producing the content and justify the costs by the amount of viewers it attracts, the sport may begin to find its way into homes all across America.

Limitations and Future Research

This study relied on the opinions and perceptions of the most knowledgeable Division I coach on each staff as it pertains to marketing and fund-raising, however it is hard to measure who this individual would be on each staff, so it is possible that there were some respondents with little knowledge of sustainability efforts related to their program and/or the sport. Further, those who may consider themselves knowledgeable may not be engaging in the most effective strategies. As such, it would be interesting to build on the findings in this study related to leaders in track and field marketing and research those programs in an effort to understand some "best practices." It could also be useful to expand the research to the other divisions of the NCAA. Due to variation in size, budget, and resources of the Division I membership institutions, it is hard to apply each strategy to every program, thus it would be interesting to compare the results to this study with results from data collected from other divisions.

Analyzing individual track and field program marketing plans in a case-study format could provide concrete examples of specific objectives and action steps to proactively target a consumer base. As program eliminations have become prevalent the last decade, it could be beneficial to perform a longitudinal study to document the challenges and threats of a program that is facing elimination (e.g., University of Maryland) while learning how to overcome such obstacles given fund-raising ultimatums from athletic department administration.

Conclusion

At the core of creating demand for a nonrevenue program is the cultivation of relationships. It is through the never-ending practice of connecting with people and effectively communicating the values and importance of the program that economic challenges do not become threats to the program's existence. Coaches who recognize the close relationship between demand, fund-raising, and sustainability have the opportunity to achieve the most success. The financial success of a program is a team effort from the student-athletes and coaches to the administrators and stakeholders. As Respondent #55 pointed out of marketing leader University of Oregon, "they involved a vast array of people and invest in the infrastructure to attain success as a program." When coaches take this team approach to their program's sustainability and target activities toward the practices that athletic directors value most, they should have little concern about elimination.

In the future, it is crucial for track and field coaches to reach out to advocate groups such as the United States Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) to equip coaches with strategies to guard against elimination but also explore and implement modifications to the sport that will garner increased demand from the public. As television contracts are currently negotiated at the conference level, track and field governing bodies should be participating in those conversations to voice the consistent value of the sport. Producing an engaging product that showcases the skilled athleticism and charismatic personalities of the sport can enhance demand from the general public. While negotiating for television spots is not a worthwhile expenditure of a coach's time and energy, he or she can be proactively connecting with the local community to garner support and interest.

In future years, coaches and scholars alike should continue to explore ways to modify the core product while protecting the inherent nature of the sport to reach new consumers. Drawing interest from different demographics can expand the audience that could eventually cover the costs associated with bringing the product to the market. Until then, coaches have the challenging task of building interest at the local and regional levels to assist in keeping the sport on campus.

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Management Whitepaper

In Pursuit of Sustainability
*Fund-Raising and the NCAA Division I
Track and Field Core Product*

Logan W. Roberts and Erianne A. Weight

I. Research Problem

The purpose of this study is to explore fund-raising practices of NCAA Division I track and field programs in an effort to extrapolate and define strategies that programs can implement to encourage sustainability initiatives in addition to examining the core product in an effort to enhance the demand of the sport.

In a time when budgets for track and field programs are seeing cuts and reallocation of monies, it has never been more imperative for coaches to engage in the cultivation of demand. The findings in this study will add to the literature related to Olympic Sport sustainability practices and will equip coaches in their efforts toward being effective fund raisers for their programs. Combined, these findings will provide a foundation for enhancing the demand of intercollegiate track and field.

This article would likely be useful to intercollegiate Division I track and field coaches, particularly those that are searching for ways to increase stakeholder interest in their program.

II. Issues

Athletic directors' decisions to pour resources into the revenue sports of football and basketball are incentive-based as the payouts from bowl games and the NCAA men's basketball championship continue to increase. Some athletic directors have used financial criteria as reasons for eliminating nonrevenue programs. Track and field, a nonrevenue sport, has been eliminated at alarming rates over the past two decades despite having such high participation on the high school and collegiate level. Coaches must justify their existence through demand-based initiatives centered around fund-raising practices.

If nonrevenue coaches can take advantage of the community surrounding each program, the demand that is created can give athletic directors one less reason to eliminate their program. As increased pressure has been placed on non-revenue programs, expectations have also changed for coaches. No longer are coaches only expected to field a competitive team that provides opportunity for

student-athletes. Coaches must now engage in initiatives to build interest with key stakeholders.

One direct method to enhance consumer support is through modification of the core product. Literature suggests a three-prong approach to improving sport marketability: eliminate confusing rules (Hanning, 2007), develop rules that encourage action between participants and teams (Aylott & Aylott, 2007; Partovi & Corredoira, 2002), and facilitate high amounts of scoring between athletes and teams (Paul & Weinbach, 2007).

The theory of resource allocations was conceptualized in 1776 when Adam Smith originally explained the basic idea of supply and demand theorizing the supply of products is naturally regulated according to the demand by those who are willing to pay to bring the product to market (Smith, 2007). Applied to collegiate track and field, Smith's principles would hold that sports are being cut (or no longer being brought to market) because there is a lack of demand. Taking into account the current economic environment, financial and demand-based justification is needed along with the inherent educational value of the sports to keep them around. The programs in question need to have stakeholders "who are willing to pay the whole rent, labor, and profits which must be paid in order to bring the product to the market" (Smith, 2007, p. 37).

III. Summary

Coaches believed their athletic department felt it was moderately important that their program practice fund-raising. The most important fund-raising practices as rated by coaches include maintaining communication with donors, maintaining an up-to-date contact database and writing thank-you notes/giving gifts in response for donations. Coaches also believed that shortening length of daily competition and scoring of postseason championships were somewhat useful modifications to the core product.

Track and field can improve to increase demand between Olympic years and coaches were asked to offer suggestions to that end. The most widely referenced modifications are 1) modify and implement team scoring of regular season meets, 2) increase television coverage of competition, 3) create spectator-friendly environment, and 4) improve packaging of the television product.

IV. Analysis

Coaches rated three fund-raising strategies as more useful than the others that shared a common theme of building relationships with stakeholders and donors. Division I coaches' place importance on these relational interactions in order to lay a foundation strong enough to ask for assistance in funding in the future. A database can help you track, understand, and service your donors by increasing the ease of outgoing correspondence and maintaining contact with them.

As programs host larger and higher profile home competitions, which was consistently mentioned as a useful fund-raising strategy, the signage in stadium

and naming opportunities as well as brand association with a successful program can become a desired commodity.

The goal of all programs should be to find what motivates stakeholders to give to their program. Coaches noted that ticket benefits as a means to reward donors was least useful of the strategies presented, therefore, they must create a unique experience with added value to those individuals who contribute to their program. These experiences can include exclusive interactions with athletes and coaches or apparel and special recognition for certain levels of financial commitment.

Coaches only rated two modifications to the core product of track and field above neutral: shortening the length of daily competition and scoring of postseason championships. The organization of daily competition signaled a significant finding among coaching staff members who take part in the marketing of their program. Suggestions to tackle the long, drawn-out competition day include separating the elite athletes (shorter segment) from the majority (long segment) to create a two-part meet in which spectators can practice decision making in choosing their preference. Since one of the strengths of the sport is its high participation levels, coaches can still promote inclusiveness for each competitor despite varied levels of talent, and student-athletes can take advantage of valuable competition experience. The strengths of the sport do not have to be threatened by a shortened schedule if programs implement this split-day structure.

Each program must successfully promote the sport on their campus in order to gain national exposure. The two most frequently identified enhancements involved modifying and improving the team scoring of regular season meets and creating a spectator friendly competition format. When established rivalries from basketball and football can be played out on the track, programs have a better chance at gaining public interest. Any school can implement changes because there is no cost associated with changing the scoring format. The scoring adjustment will add to the spectator-friendly environment as long as spectators are educated about the scoring system and kept up to date as the competition progresses.

V. Discussion/Implications

Any collegiate coach can use the results of this study and modify it to his or her program's culture by gauging threats and opportunities to implement different practices. Coaches can use this research to combat the threat of elimination and work toward building a sustainable model for their sport programs.