

**STEREOTYPES OF SPECIAL ADMISSION STUDENTS: PEER
PERCEPTIONS OF ATHLETE AND NON-ATHLETE SPECIAL ADMIT
STUDENTS**

A Thesis

by

BRIAN R. FOWLER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

August 2007

Major Subject: Kinesiology

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ABSTRACT

Stereotypes of Special Admission Students: Peer Perceptions of Athlete and Non-

Athlete Special Admit Students. (August 2007)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. George B. Cunningham

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the different stereotypes that individuals, within a university's general student population, held toward student-athletes and non-athlete students admitted to the university on a special admission basis (students admitted with requirements less than the stated minimum for admission). Two studies, one qualitative in nature and the other with a quantitative focus, were conducted to assess students' perceptions of special admission students.

The results of this study show that students from a university's general population have more of a negative stereotype or perception of athlete special admissions, as compared to a non-athlete special admission student, when interacting in an academic setting. On the other hand, the general student population indicated a more positive perception for allowing special admission to athletes than they did for allowing special admission to non-athlete students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my beautiful mother, Sharon. Your strength, determination, and focus are the only things that got Christy and me through life after Dad passed. I know raising the two of us must have been the most difficult thing you've ever done, but I cannot express how grateful I am to have been blessed with such a wonderful mother and role model. I do not know how you did it for all those years, lugging both Christy and me around to all the three hundred sports we were involved in, we never missed out on a single experience or opportunity growing up. There is no way I can express how much you mean to me. I am truly blessed. I love you Mother.

Next, I want to thank the most amazing person I've ever met, Victoria. Your love and encouragement is the one thing that I can always count on, no matter how tough life is. You're such an inspiration to me, I just don't know if I could have done any of this without you. There are just no words that can describe how much better you make my life. You are the blessing of all blessings, and I thank God each day that He put you in my life. I love you so much.

I would also like to thank my committee chair, Dr. George B. Cunningham. I truly appreciate you pushing me to accomplish things that I never thought I was capable of. I am truly grateful for this opportunity. It has been an honor and a privilege to have been able to work with you.

Finally, I want to thank my committee members, Dr. Sagas, Dr. Ferreira, and Dr. Welch, for all the help and encouragement afforded me with my thesis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to determine the general student population stereotypes for two different groups of special admission students within a large, public university. The general student population consists of students from within a university's general student body who were admitted to the university through both traditional and special admission basis. A traditionally admitted student is one who received admission by meeting all the stated requisites for entrance, where as, the special admit student is one who received admission without meeting all the stated requisites for entrance. This section describes the differences between traditional admit, athlete special admit, and non-athlete special admit students attending a university.

Admission into many of today's major college and universities has become much more difficult and competitive to receive than in previous years (Office of Planning, Research and Assessment, 2002). Due to the increasing number of people applying for admission into higher education institutions each year, the admissions requirements for many of these institutions has increased as well. Farrell and Lipka (2006, ¶ 9) refer to this fact by stating, "New Hampshire received 10 percent more applications this year... In response to this phenomenon, New Hampshire lowered its acceptance rate to 66 percent from 71 percent last year."

This thesis follows the style and format of the *Journal of Sport Management*.

For this reason, a vast majority of universities have had to institute a process, which Butler (1995) describes as the “universalistic standard”, by which they are able to quickly qualify each applicant, reducing the number of individuals to be evaluated for admission. To do this, a university system must devise a scale that will, with some accuracy, predict the probability that an applicant will be able to perform at a level high enough to meet the scholastic requirements needed to maintain enrollment (Farrell & Lipka, 2006). Most institutions present this through a process of evaluating the academic qualifications (e.g., grade point average and standardized test scores) that previously-admitted students possessed prior to admission, and then track these students performance within the universities curriculum throughout their tenure (Dunlap, Henley, & Fraser, 1998). Over time, this process gives the admissions department a better understanding of what qualifications should be expected and required of an applicant, for that applicant to excel in the classroom, and eventually graduate. This compilation of previous applicant qualifications allows the university to build a framework for minimum requirements for admission by finding the point where the majority of previously admitted students, possessing a certain level of previous academic performance, were not able to maintain the academic demands exhibited within the university (Dunlap, et al., 1998). Since many universities admission departments have incorporated some form of a minimum requirement policy for regular student admission, a number of institutions still allow for about 5-10% of admitted applicants to possess lower qualifications than the general student body (Office of Planning, Research and Assessment, 2002).

In many university systems, a certain few students receive admission with lesser academic qualifications, as discussed above, than the standard admission minimum requirements. When an applicant is admitted without meeting all the university requirements, that student becomes generally considered as a “Special Admissions” students. These “Special Admissions” students, as described by Hinchcliff-Pelias, Lind, and Treinen (2000), are considered to be more of a high risk student, with a lower probability of graduation than the general student population.

The applicants admitted with lesser academic qualifications generally receive the label of “special admit student” (or special admits), and are defined by the Office of Planning, Research and Assessment (2002, p.19) as “applicants who are not admissible under the standards outlined for freshman, transfers, and non-traditional students but who are able to appropriately demonstrate their potential for academic success in a four-year program.” For the most part, a majority of these students are considered to be more high risk student to the universities academic curriculum, largely due to an insufficient or undeveloped educational background. In an effort to combat these potential limitations, “special admissions programs provide academic and administrative support” to help acclimate such high risk students to the academic demands of the university (Hinchcliff-Pelias, et al., p. 2). In many cases, the special admit students are admitted on the basis of some sort of special talent or ability that they possess or produce, which, to some degree, is expected to contribute to the overall growth, diversity, and prosperity of the university (Butler, 1995, p. 263).

For decades, there has been considerable debate within different academic circles on whether or not these special admission privileges should be granted to applicants that do not meet university qualifications (Espenshade & Chung, 2005). A large part of this debate stems, in part, from the fact that 85-90% of the admitted student body is required to meet these qualifications when they applied for admission into the university (Office of Planning, Research and Assessment, 2002). As Smith (2003) describes, the six major factors in the college admissions process are, “grades, standardized test scores, essay, interview, recommendations, and activities”. Furthermore, the fact that there are only a limited number of available spots for applicant admissions each year, allowing unqualified applicants admittance only reduces the number of qualified applicants who can be admitted (Farrell & Lipka, 2006). Therefore, as the number of unqualified applicants accepted begins to increase, the number of qualified applicants denied admission into an institution may begin to increase as well (Espenshade, Chung, & Walling, 2004).

As the college and university systems have evolved over time, there has been a definite increase in the number of non-academic programs and activities available to and performed by the students within the institution. These different programs range in activity and involvement but are all linked by one common element: the participants must be students who are currently enrolled in the university. Bypassing the formation and progression of these different activities within the university, the impact that these different non-academic programs have on, and for, the university is almost immeasurable. For instance, most colleges and universities will have some form of

program in music, theater, dance, art, athletics, debate, or student government (Lang & Lang, 2002). More often than not, these non-academic programs and activities will have some influence on the reason why a student applied for admission to a particular university (Jaworski & Gilman, 1998). As the level of influence of each program increases, so too does the level of support they will receive from the university as a whole. In response to this fact, a university will allow recruiting, provide admission, and give scholarships to highly qualified participants of these activities and programs, even when such a student does not meet the basic requirements for general admission (Butler, 1995). Even though a number of special admit students provide no contribution to any such non-academic programs and are received because of other justifiable reasons, the larger percent of these special admit students are involved in some sort of non-academic program (Jaworski & Gilman, 1998). By doing so, a university can admit a student who does not meet all academic requirements but who will potentially help a particular group or program to become better and/or more successful.

Butler (1995) described this particular scenario in his article about student athlete admission to big-time college athletic programs. He wrote:

On the one hand, test scores are established as a criterion for admission to the university, but on the other hand people who bring to the university a certain skill (which is not in the overall criteria for the university) may not meet the expected standards... which allows some student athletes to enter the university with scores significantly different from other students. (Butler, 1995, p. 263)

Butler (1995) further argued that test scores and grades play far less importance during admission for those students who receive some form of competitive scholarship for their participation in certain activities. Such programs or activities that have been known to receive special admissions students are generally in areas such as athletics, music, art, Reserved Officer Training Corp, and other community organizations (Lang & Lang, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

In this study, I focused on how students from the general student population perceive special admission students. More specifically, do students perceive special admits with more of a positive or negative attitude, compared to other students on campus? Next, is there any difference in perception for special admission students who are admitted into the university because of their involvement in different programs on campus, such as intercollegiate athletics, fine arts, or Reserved Officer Training Corp (ROTC)? Finally, do these perceptions have any influence on a student's willingness to interact with a special admission student in an academic setting?

In this study, I sought to determine if special admission students are perceived differently than traditional admission students, by the overall student body population. Specifically, the purpose of this research was to:

1. Determine if there are any stereotypical perceptions that students formulate about their peers/classmates who are admitted into the university with lesser academic requirements than a university's expected minimum limits.

2. Examine if the reason for admission has any influence on the perceptions of different special admission students.
3. Determine if students are any less likely to interact with someone that they know is a special admission student.

Significance of the Study

This study examines perceptions and stereotypes generated for students who are admitted into colleges and universities with lesser academic qualifications than the general student population. Many times, these students (special admissions students) are admitted because of their participation in some activity or organization within the university system. As described by Lang and Lang (2002, p. 120), these activities generally involve “science, music, performing arts, languages, minority status, athletics, international geographic origin, local geographic origin, and children of alumni” student applicants and are expected contribute to the university’s “well-roundedness” and cultural diversity. For this reason, it is possible to assume that many students admitted through the standard process of requirements and standards might perceive these special admission students as undeserving of their admission into the university system (Hinchcliff-Pelias, et al., 2000). The focus of this study is to examine how students within the general population feel about the presence of these special admission students, and to examine if there is any differences in perception due to the situational circumstances surrounding the reason for admission (i.e. athletics, art, music, or underrepresented/minority programs), as described by Lang and Lang (2002). Once these perceptions are analyzed and recorded, administrative agencies within the

university will be able to address any potential prejudices evoked towards these special admission students to generate the most comfortable learning environment for all students (Hunter & Others, 1996; Walton & Cohen, 2007; Jordan & Lovett, 2007; Ferris, Finster, & McDonald, 2004).

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is arranged into five chapters. Chapter I introduces and explains the fundamental objectives being examined in this study. For the remaining chapters of this thesis, the organizational breakdown will be presented as follows. In Chapter II, an evaluation of previous research and literature is presented and discussed as it applies to the subject. Chapter III contains a description of the research methods generated for executing this study. Chapter IV presents the results of the study, and Chapter V discusses the implications of those findings.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I describe the relevant variables associated with understanding how special admission student-athletes and no-athletes are perceived and treated by their peers and classmates in an academic setting. This includes an examination and review of the previous research findings within university admissions, the activities and programs in which students participate to receive admission assistance, peer perceptions, and stereotypes that students have for special admit students.

University Admissions

The college experience can have a profound social and economic influence on an individual's life and on their future. These effects are often a mixture of both good and bad experiences that can shape and contour the fabric of an individual's personal status values and social perceptions of others (Gibbons, Blanton, Gerrard, Buunk, & Eggleston, 2000). More importantly, college is a time that individuals get the chance to experience life without the constraints of parental supervision. For many individuals, this opportunity will provide a means for them to mature and develop into the economically independent person that they have always dreamed of becoming. For others, the responsibility of this opportunity will be too great for them to handle and a different means of development will have to be sought. In either case, this great opportunity is the admission into a college or university's in pursuit of a degree of higher education.

In today's educational environment, more and more people are applying, attending, and graduating from college. In a recent report conducted by the Office of Planning, Research and Assessment (2002), applicants for admission at state and community colleges in the state of Massachusetts had risen 2.5 percent in a single year with a "5.6 percent increase at community colleges and a 3.9 percent increase at state colleges" (p. 16). Unfortunately, the average increase for acceptance of applicants into Massachusetts public higher education institutes was only increased by 1.3 percent that year (Office of Planning, Research and Assessment, 2002). A comparison of these two percents shows that 1.2 percent of applicants (almost half) were potentially denied admission into college that year (figures do not include or account for applicants applying to multiple institutions). These figures suggest the proportions of applicants are increasing at a rate higher than that of the percentage of applicants receiving admission into those institutions. In situations of applicant surplus, institutions will begin accepting fewer student applicants who are at or below the university's minimum requirements for admission to allow for an increase of more qualified candidates, assuming that the increase in applicants is a proportional increase. By so doing, institutions will have to gradually increase the minimum requirements for admission and ultimately begin to deny admission to average or lower qualified applicants that may have received admission in years prior. This will increase the pressure for the average and lower qualified applicants to work harder and perform better, and to be a more competitive candidate.

The word compete, as defined by Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2006), is "to strive consciously or unconsciously for an objective (as position, profit, or a prize)." It is this strife that causes individuals to identify to situations or persons associated with the same strife, or perceived lack of strife. By this measure, an understanding of what might cause an individual within the general student population, who perceivably believes that they had to work hard and compete for the admission spot that they received, may exhibit such strong emotions toward other student that do not even meet the minimum admissions requirements but were still admitted (Espenshade, et al., 2004).

Institutional admission requirements can vary drastically from one school to another. A certain level of academic achievement or accomplishment may allow an individual to be accepted into one university but denied by another (Cantrell, 1999). The minimum requirements that each university seeks is usually not something that is kept secret or withheld from the individual applicants. Each school is usually very open about what requirements they expect, and these are sometimes displayed on that university's website along with the application for admission. But, there are a few "loopholes" that can help certain individuals still receive admission (Butler, 1995), even though their academic qualifications fall well short of the university's stated minimum requirement. These loopholes are the incorporation of a special admission programs by a university (Butler, 1995).

Special admission programs, as discussed earlier, are designed to grant admission to student applicants with lesser academic qualifications than the standard admission

minimum requirements. These types of students generally receive the label of “special admit student” because they are special circumstance admissions and are defined by the Office of Planning, Research and Assessment (2002), within the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, as “applicants who are not admissible under the standards outlined for freshman, transfers, and non-traditional students but who are able to appropriately demonstrate their potential for academic success in a four-year program” (p. 19). For the most part, a majority of these students are considered to be more high risk student to the universities academic curriculum, largely due to an insufficient or undeveloped educational background. In an effort to combat these potential limitations, “special admissions programs provide academic and administrative support” to help acclimate these students to the academic demands of the university (Hinchcliff-Pelias, et al., 2000, p. 2). In a majority of these cases, the special admit students will be received on the basis of some sort of special talent or ability that they possess or produce, which, to some degree, is expected to contribute to the overall growth, diversity, and prosperity of the university as a whole. On the other hand, Hinchcliff-Pelias et al. (2000) discuss that these special admission students may actually be entering an educational environment where they initially perceive themselves as academically inadequate for the educational experience. Hinchcliff-Pelias et al. (2000) associate special admission student to that of an at-risk student who:

...may exist in academic isolation within their institutions of higher education.

Lacking formal networks or programs for academic support specific to their needs,

they may face alone multiple obstacles that can hinder their success at the university. (p. 3)

These educational obstacles and perceptions will be discussed in more detail in following sections.

In short, university admission is something that can be extremely difficult to obtain for many individuals actively pursuing a degree from a highly competitive institution of higher learning (Dowling, 2001). There are a number of requirements that must be achieved before admission into most universities will be granted (grades, standardized test scores, essay, interview, recommendations, and activities), and for most people, they have to dedicate an enormous amount of time and effort to attain it (Smith, 2003). On the other hand, there are other individuals who receive admission into these same educational institutions who are less academically qualified than the rest of the general student population. These students are generally considered special admission students and are most often accepted on the grounds of their involvement, and potential benefit, of a certain activity or organization within the university system.

University Activities and Programs

Each university will have multiple activity programs and organizations which will operate within and be supported by the university system as a whole. These activities can range from student-run organizations to full-time university staff run organizations. Each of these organizations, no matter how big or how small, contributes some portion to the overall culture and personality of the institution.

In every university, there will be certain organizational groups that will be more popular than others, and because so, these activities will receive certain special exceptions and arrangements from the university (Lang & Lang, 2002). This support can come in several different forms and fashions, such as through financial, facility-related, or academic means. For example, many educational institutions have intercollegiate athletic departments with which they contribute to all three forms of university support (for an overview, see Wolfe, 2000). In so doing, the university will provide money for coaches, uniforms, facilities, utilities, scholarships, travel, and many other miscellaneous expenses that may incur. In the same manner, the university system will many times assist in the admissions process of certain students seeking to participate in such intercollegiate athletic activities (Espenshade & Chung, 2005). In this process, the university will allow students who may not always display all the appropriate academic qualifications for admission, to be admitted because of the students' potential contribution towards the overall success of the organization.

Unfortunately, there is very little public data available on the special admission of students into an institution (Jaworski & Gilman, 1998). With the exception of intercollegiate athletics, there is also very little research about other special admission student group's collegiate experiences. Due to this fact, this study focuses on comparing special admission students involved in intercollegiate athletics with all other special admission students admitted into a university system. Being that intercollegiate athletics is one of the largest and most influential organizations within a college or university systems, there is just as much external, as well as internal, attention and support given to

this group (Clow, 2000). Many times, a university will generate more public recognition and acknowledgement from both the media and the community because of their different special interest program accomplishments, rather than their academic accomplishment. Due to the overall influence and contribution potential these programs have, as mentioned by Lang and Lang (2002), the university will allow programs such as music, theatre, and athletics the ability to recruit, admit, and provide scholarships to certain students who participate and excel in the group activity.

Sigelman (1995) provides a few examples of the academic differences between regularly admitted students and student-athletes within a couple different universities. Sigelman (1995) reported that:

Between 1990-91 and 1992-93, the only schools where the average SAT score for scholarship football recruits topped 1000 were Stanford (1069) and Duke (1003), which were also two of the three schools with the highest mean SAT scores for all entering students (1367 and 1307, respectively). (p. 250)

Along the same lines but with a little less drastic variation were the SAT scores for new football recruits and new students from Texas-El Paso, where the scores were “(772) and (800)”, respectively (Sigelman, 1995, p. 250). He also wrote that, “Across 99 schools, the SAT mean for scholarship football recruits is 852, 165 points below the mean for all incoming students, 1017” (Sigelman, 1995, p. 253).

Although the research about other university entities that receive these special admission benefits is limited, Butler (1995) explains that most universities have a tendency to accept lesser qualified applicants if that applicant “receives a competitive

scholarship for an activity...is an excellent musicians or artists...or receive a competitive scholarship from a community organization” (p. 263). Other known entities or special interest groups to receive the privilege of special admit students acceptance has been seen in “science, music, performing arts, languages, minority status, athletics, international geographic origin, local geographic origin, and children of alumni” (Lang & Lang, 2002, p.120). Furthermore, Lang and Lang (2002) go on to state that some, if not most, college and university admission departments even allow “persons outside the admissions committee” the opportunity to review, appraise, and rank the certain applicant of special interest (p. 120).

Each activity or group, no matter how big or small, can have some form of an impact on a university’s development progress and fundraising potential. A quote of John C. Hoy (1967), Dean of Admissions at Wesleyan University, as described by Lang and Lang (2002):

We know that the opportunities available at Wesleyan are many and varied, but we also know that Wesleyan’s capabilities and capacities are not unlimited or universal. Consequently, the selection process must identify and face those interest, aspirations, and potentials which Wesleyan can serve best. (p. 120)

These special admission students are considered to be very important to the overall cultural diversity and “well-roundedness” of a university, and in some circumstances, this process is the only means for achieving that objective (Lang & Lang, 2002).

Peer Perceptions and Stereotypes

Perceptions and stereotypes of one's peers may be generated through a number of different ways (Harvey, 2001). They may be generated by some sort of trigger mechanism that initially associates a certain individual, consciously or subconsciously, into a certain group or subgroup that they expect that individual to be most associated with. Ridgeway (1991) explains that there are a few different characteristics that contribute to persons overall perception of another individual. These can range in nominal and graduated characteristics around the expectation of a particular individual which will, in some form, help to generate an initial status-value for that individual (Ridgeway, 1991). Nominal characteristics, as defined by Ridgeway (1991), are those which are "socially recognized attributes" such as "religion, region of origin, ethnicity, race, and gender", while graduated characteristics, "such as wealth or education on which people are perceived to vary in the degree to which they possess the characteristic" (p. 368). The combination of these two different characteristics, along with a number of other social and cultural norms and values, may identify contributions to the overall perception process of others.

A variable that Ryska (2002) argues to be very pertinent in the perceptions of others is the "perceived personal competence" of another individual. Ridgeway (1991) supports this claim by stating, "Competence, here, means beliefs about an individual's general capacity to achieve a desired end" (p. 369-370). To go even further, Ridgeway (1991) claims that graduated characteristics and competence expectation both align individuals by the extent that they possess something.

Peer perceptions can have a profound effect on different individuals (Cauthen, Robinson, & Krauss, 1977). These effects can be very positive or very negative in nature, but nonetheless impressionable. Of course, the extent to which an individual is affected by these perceptions depends solely on the individual (Brown, 1998). Previous research indicates that most special admission student, both athlete and non-athlete, experience some form of negative interactions and attitudes from their peers due to the fact that they are special admission students (Martin, 2005). In a study discussing special admission students within a university, Hinchcliff-Pelias et al. (2000) indicate that the psychological state of certain special admission students was affected so intensely by the negative social perceptions and interactions from their peers, they dropped out of school all together (Martin, 2005). Unfortunately, as extreme as this may sound, this reality may indeed exist for these students. Engstrom and Sedlacek (1991) indicate that there might be some other reasons for the differences in interaction and attitudes from their peers. They state that, some of these students, especially student-athletes, often lack social skills, academic skills, self confidence in many areas, and sensitivity to others (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991). Furthermore, Engstrom and Sedlacek (1991) state that “involvement in sports has hindered the accomplishments of normal development tasks such as developing a sense of competence, identity, educational plans, autonomy, and mature interpersonal relationships” (p. 189).

Research Questions

This research, by in large, is directed toward determining how students from the general student body perceive and interact with the special admission students that they

come in contact with on campus. Based on the aforementioned literature, there is some evidence that suggest student-athlete special admits are viewed in a less positive light than are their other special admissions counterparts (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991).

Given the negative implications these findings suggest about a students university experience and success (Martin, 2005), the following research questions were advanced to identify how special admission students are perceived by the student population:

1. What is the perception of students who are admitted to a school with lesser academic qualifications than everyone else (a special admission student)?
2. Do situational circumstances, such as the reason for granting a student special admission, have any effect on how a special admission student is perceived by other students?
3. Are individuals any less likely to interact with a student-athlete that they know is a special admission student?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the procedural and statistical methods utilized in the two studies administered for this research. In Study 1, participants were asked to respond to five different open-ended questions. The results for Study 1 addressed Research Question 1 (What is the perception of students who are admitted to a school with lesser academic qualifications than everyone else?). In Study 2, participants were afforded the opportunity to express their attitudes and feelings about special admission students in different situations and contexts through quantitative means. Study 2 addressed both Research Question 2 (Do situational circumstances, such as the reason for granting a student special admission, have any effect on how a special admission student is perceived by other students?) and Research Question 3 (Are individuals any less likely to interact with a student that they know is a special admission student?).

While both studies address the same topic, the results of Study 2 were completely independent of the results recorded for Study 1. Study 1 and Study 2 are presented and discussed in separate sections within this chapter.

Study 1

Participants

The participants of this study included both male and female students from two undergraduate physical activity classes at a large Division I university in the southern

United States. To help ensure the most accurate responses were recorded, given the size of the sample surveyed ($n = 44$) and the sensitive nature of each individual's response, participants were not asked provide any kind of demographic information that could potentially compromise the anonymity and confidentiality of their involvement. Consequently, no direct demographic statistics were recorded for the participants of Study 1.

Procedures

Two physical activity classes were randomly selected to participate in the study. First, the permission was sought from the course instructor to distribute questionnaires in the class. Students received a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study (see Appendix A) and an open-ended questionnaire which asks them a series of questions concerning their attitudes toward the special admission students. Participation required approximately 10 minutes and was voluntary. See Appendix B for a list of the questionnaire items.

Analysis

Data were transcribed verbatim. Two analysts independently coded the responses into themes. The two analysts then met with one another to discuss the responses and come to agreement upon common themes.

Study 2

Participants

The participants of this study were male ($n = 73, 64.6\%$) and female ($n = 40, 35.4\%$) students from five different physical activity classes within a large southern

Division I university. The racial backgrounds for the participants were as follows: African American (n = 11, 9.7%), Asian (n = 6, 5.3%), Hispanic (n = 20, 17.7%), White (n = 69, 61.1%), and other (n = 5, 4.4%). The participants age ranged from 18 years to 26 years old with a mean age of 20.19 years ($SD = 1.64$). The classification of the participants was broken down into the following four classes: Freshman (n = 46, 40.7%), Sophomore (n = 11, 9.7%), Junior (n = 28, 24.8%), and Senior (n = 28, 24.8%). Most participants (n = 99, 87.6%) participated in interscholastic athletics. Fewer (n = 42, 37.2%) participated in performing arts while in high school, and relatively few (n = 45, 39.8%) personally knew a student who had been admitted as a special admit.

Procedure

First, a test-retest was performed on the survey instrument by a group of willing participants. Five physical activity classes were randomly selected to participate in the study. Then, the permission was sought from the course instructor to distribute questionnaires in the class. After such permission was granted, students received a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and a questionnaire assessing their attitudes toward different special admit students and the likelihood that they would interact with the students (see Appendix C). Participation in the survey was completely voluntary and participants could choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and paired-sample t -tests, were computed for the data. Bonferroni correction was applied in cases where multiple analyses were performed to account for pairwise error.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter is focused on examining the results of the two studies that were used in the thesis. In the first section, the results of Study 1 are detailed and analyzed to answer research question number one. The second section of this chapter details the results of Study 2, which was conducted to answer research questions two and three.

Study 1

Percentages

This section outlines the different percentages that were generated within the results of Study 1. For this study, participants were asked to answer five different open-ended questions. These five questions offered the respondents an opportunity to express their attitudes and opinions for different students being granted special admission into their university. For the purpose of this study, the only results that will be discussed in detail are those from question's 1 and 2 of the questionnaire. Reason being, questions 3 and 4 asked participants to explain what they thought about students who receive special admission because of their involvement with different activities or programs within the university. More specifically, student's who receive special admission because of their participation in either the Reserved Officer Training Corp (question 3) or Visual and Performing Arts (question 4). On both question 3 and question 4, a majority of participants ($n = 25, 56.8\%$) responded by answering both questions with either the same response, or the same opinion. In addition, an even greater majority of respondents ($n =$

35, 79.6%) answered both question 3 and question 4 with the exact same response as they did on either question 1, question 2, or both question's 1 and 2. More simply put, just about every participant answered question 3 and question 4 in the same manner, or with the same exact response, as they did in question 1 and/or question 2.

For question number 5, which was a control type question, asked participants to express how they felt about students who were admitted into the university because they met all the requirements for admission. The results for question 5 were almost exclusively “positive” (n = 39, 88%), which was expected, but did not produce any real variation in reasoning for the “positive” response attitude. The remaining responses to question 5 included a “negative” attitude (n = 1, 2%), which stated, “I think that the school is already too large and they lose a huge amount of students after freshman year. They need to require more than just meeting the minimum.”, along with a few “no responses” (n = 4, 9%). Since the results to question 5 focused on elements that were not directly related to answering Research Questions 1, 2, or 3, the details for these responses were not included in the overall results.

After recording all the open-ended responses produced by the participants for each question, they were grouped and categorized by common themes accordingly. Given the fact that each question produced a variety of different responses, each response was placed into one of four different attitudinal groups. These groups organized each response into either a “positive”, “negative”, “neutral”, or “excluded” reaction set, which was determined by the participants opinion or feeling about the topic. Then, within each attitude groups, the responses were categorized into common themes,

usually by the reasons described or referenced by the participant for why they feel the way they do about the topic. The results from these analyses serve to address the Research Question 1: “What are perceptions of individuals admitted to school by lesser academic standards than everyone else?”

Special admission students in general. For question number 1, which asked, “In general, what do you think about special admission students?”, the plurality of the respondents replied with a “negative” attitude (n = 21, 47%) towards the topic. These “negative” responses were generalized into groups and then categorized into the three main topics (see Table 1). The first topic, “Not Fair” (n = 12, 27%), reflected the idea that the special admission students were receiving undue advantage. For example, one student wrote, “I don’t believe it is fair and they shouldn’t be admitted directly into the university,” while another student wrote, “I think that sucks because the other people had to work harder than they did to get in.” The second theme was “Reduces School Prestige” (n = 5, 11%). One student commented: “Everyone should have the same qualifications to get into the university in order to maintain A&M reputation of academic excellence over other Texas universities.” In the last category, “University Requirements” (n = 4, 9%), students expressed that such practices seemed to go against university policies (e.g., “It’s not fair because they are requirements not loose guidelines”).

The next highest category of responses had a “positive” (n = 17, 38%) attitude toward the topic. These “positive” responses were generalized and then categorized into the three main topics of “Provides Opportunities” (n = 7, 16%), “Situational” (n = 6,

14%), and “Improves Diversity” (n = 4, 9%). For example, in the “Provides Opportunities” category, one student commented, “I think it’s okay. Gives more opportunities...in the end its up to the student to stick it thru.” Others, such as those in the “Situational” category, placed contingencies on their responses: “I think it may or may not be good. Some people can excel when placed in adverse situations, while others will fail as predicted. Nevertheless, it is important to allow everyone to have a chance.” Finally, other responses seemed to express that such practices could enhance the university because it “improves diversity”. For instance, one student commented, “I think it contributes to diversity on campus and promotes higher education for those who would normally not have the opportunity. I think they should have different requirements.”

The last two groups, “neutral” (n = 3, 6%) and “excluded” (n = 3, 6%), were not generalized into categories. The results for question 1 are displayed in Table 1.

Table1

Response Grouping Types, Total Number in Each Response Group, Response Categories, & Total Number in Each Category for Question 1

| Response Group | No. in Group | Response Categories | No. in Category |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Positive | 17 | Provides Opportunity | 7 |
| | | Situational | 6 |
| | | Improves Diversity | 4 |
| Negative | 21 | Not Fair | 12 |
| | | Reduce Prestige | 5 |
| | | Requirements | 4 |
| Neutral | 3 | With a Qualifier | 3 |
| Excluded | 3 | (No Direction in Response) | 3 |
| N = | 44 | | |

Note. No. = Number; N = Total number of responses; Question 1 = “In general, what do you think about special admission students? Why?”.

Student athletes as special admission students. The majority of the respondents replied with a “positive” attitude (n = 22, 50%) when asked the question, “What do you think about students participating in intercollegiate athletics being admitted into a university with requirements less than the stated minimum for admission?” These “positive” responses were generalized into groups and then categorized into three main topics which included, “Improves University”, “Athletes”, and “Contingency”. For “Improves University” (n = 9, 20%), one student felt that, “People take pride in the success of their university. When a school is winning, no one asks if the athletes had the minimum requirements to enter the school.” In the cases which were generalized into the “Athletes” (n = 8, 18%) category, responses reflected a tone similar to the one stating, “They may not have the academic ability but they have the athletic ability to pursue a higher level. Athletes in college are preparing for their future.” The remaining “positive” responses were categorized into “Contingency” (n = 5, 11%), which is described by the example, “If they can maintain the requirements here, ok.”

The next highest category of responses had a “negative” (n = 19, 43%) attitude toward the topic. These “negative” responses were generalized into groups and then categorized into the two main topics of; “Academic Standards” (n = 11, 25%), and “Not Fair” (n = 8, 18%). An example from a participant that referred to the “Academic Standards” category stated, “I am not in favor of this at all. I think that if the university is going to set standards, then everyone should follow them.” The remaining responses included some sort of reference to the situation being “not fair”. An example of this

category was, “Again, so many students work hard to gain college admission, so it seems so unfair that one can be admitted to their school of choice solely because of athletic ability...”

The last two categories, “neutral” ($n = 1, 2\%$) and “excluded” ($n = 2, 5\%$), were not generalized or grouped into topics. The results for question 2 are displayed in Table 2.

Study 2

Test-Retest

The instrument for Study 2 was first introduced to a sample group of respondents ($n = 34$) willing to participate in the test-retest of this survey. One week elapsed between response times. The mean scores, standard deviation, and correlation values for Time 1 and Time 2 are presented in Table 3. The results demonstrate a moderate to strong association between responses (average $r = .57$), suggesting that they were relatively stable.

Table 2

Response Grouping Types, Total Number in Each Response Group, Response Categories, & Total Number in Each Response Category for Question 2

| Response Group | No. in Group | Response Categories | No. in Category |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Positive | 22 | Improves University | 9 |
| | | Athlete | 8 |
| | | Contingency | 5 |
| Negative | 19 | Academic Standards | 11 |
| | | Not Fair | 8 |
| Neutral | 1 | With a Qualifier | 1 |
| Excluded | 2 | (No Direction in Response) | 2 |
| N = | 44 | | |

Note. No. = Number; N = Total number of responses; Question 2 = “What do you think about students participating in intercollegiate athletics being admitted into a university with requirements less than the stated minimum for admission? Why?”.

Table 3

Time 1 and Time 2 Mean, Standard Deviation, & Correlation for the Test-Retest Results

| Item | T1 Mean (SD) | T2 Mean (SD) | Correlation |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Given athlete as member | 3.82 (1.45) | 3.82 (1.42) | 0.81 |
| 2. Given visual and performing arts as member | 4.71 (1.32) | 4.52 (1.28) | 0.47 |
| 3. Given a regular student as member | 5.41 (1.18) | 5.52 (1.15) | 0.39 |
| 4. Picked an athlete as member | 3.82 (1.40) | 3.58 (1.50) | 0.53 |
| 5. Picked a visual/performing arts student as member | 4.79 (1.49) | 4.24 (1.35) | 0.35 |
| 6. Picked a regular student as a member | 5.85 (.99) | 5.85 (.94) | 0.65 |
| 7. Any Student Admission | 2.85 (1.64) | 2.85 (1.60) | 0.53 |
| 8. An Athlete Admission | 4.32 (1.70) | 4.52 (1.48) | 0.77 |
| 9. An Artist Admission | 3.53 (1.21) | 3.73 (1.33) | 0.69 |
| 10. A Musician Admission | 3.56 (1.28) | 3.73 (1.35) | 0.66 |
| 11. A ROTC's Admission | 3.29 (1.53) | 3.48 (1.58) | 0.75 |
| 12. Athlete Academic Dedication | 3.82 (1.51) | 3.70 (1.38) | 0.54 |
| 13. ROTC's Academic Dedication | 4.74 (1.56) | 4.73 (1.49) | 0.64 |
| 14. Regular Student Academic Dedication | 5.68 (1.12) | 5.64 (.86) | 0.30 |
| 15. Athlete Academic Performance | 3.59 (1.35) | 3.64 (1.27) | 0.71 |
| 16. Musician Academic Performance | 4.88 (.91) | 4.82 (1.01) | 0.24 |
| 17. ROTC's Academic Performance | 4.44 (1.35) | 4.52 (1.18) | 0.70 |

Note. T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2; SD = standard deviation. Each item is an abbreviated description of the questions presented on the Study 2 questionnaire. The items in this table do not contain “special admission” labels as displayed on the questionnaire. The only characters listed in this table that do not receive the label of “special admission” are the items which include “regular student”.

Descriptive Statistics

For the first set of questions, participants were asked to place themselves into a situation where they were forced, by their professor, into partnership with another student in the class to work on a project worth 70% of their grade for that class. The participants then ranked their level of satisfaction for a particular partnership given by a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*very unsatisfied*) to 7 (*very satisfied*). Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 4. In this first set of questions, the significance level of .05 was adjusted using the Bonferroni correction to account for the three pairwise comparisons. Each comparison was significant at the .017 level. Paired-sample *t*-tests indicated that student satisfaction levels with a regular admission student ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.21$) were significantly higher than they were with a special admission student athlete ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 1.65$), $t(111) = 5.62$, $p < .001$, or a special admission visual and performing arts student ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.42$), $t(111) = 4.85$, $p < .001$.

On the second set of questions, participants were asked to place themselves into a situation where they were allowed to choose a partner to work on a project worth 70% of their grade for that class. The participants then ranked their level of satisfaction for a particular partnership given by a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*). Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4. In this second set of questions, the significance level of .05 was adjusted using the Bonferroni correction to account for the three pairwise comparisons. Each comparison was significant at the .017 level. Students expressed greater satisfaction choosing a regular admission student ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.17$) compared to a special admission student athlete ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.69$),

$t(111) = 7.29, p < .001$, or a special admission visual and performing arts student ($M = 4.64, SD = 1.54$), $t(111) = 5.75, p < .001$. Satisfaction levels with the two special admission students did not differ.

The third set of questions was arranged to see how acceptable the participants felt allowing admission to a list of students, when those students did not meet the same academic requirements that every other student had to meet to get accepted into the university. The participants then ranked their level of acceptance for a particular type of student by a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*very unacceptable*) to 7 (*very acceptable*). Results are presented in Table 4. The third set of question also used a Bonferroni correction to adjust the significance level of .05 for of the five pairwise comparisons. Each comparison was significant at a .01 level. Providing special admission to “any student” ($M = 3.50, SD = 2.01$) was seen as less acceptable than was providing admission to a student-athlete ($M = 4.62, SD = 1.80$), $t(112) = -6.04, p < .001$, an artist ($M = 3.99, SD = 1.68$), $t(112) = -2.98, p < .005$, or a musician ($M = 4.08, SD = 1.74$), $t(112) = -3.17, p < .005$. Granting admission to the exceptional athlete ($M = 4.62, SD = 1.80$) was also seen as more acceptable than was granting admission to the ROTC member ($M = 3.79, SD = 1.79$), $t(112) = 5.03, p < .001$, an artist ($M = 3.99, SD = 1.68$), $t(112) = 4.99, p < .001$, or a musician ($M = 4.08, SD = 1.74$), $t(112) = 4.43, p < .001$.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Variables in Survey 2

| Variables | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| Assigned by the professor | | |
| Special admission student athlete | 4.57 | 1.65 |
| Special admission visual and performing arts student | 4.84 | 1.42 |
| Regular admission student | 5.44 | 1.21 |
| Choose a student | | |
| Special admission student athlete | 4.29 | 1.69 |
| Special admission visual and performing arts student | 4.64 | 1.54 |
| Regular admission student | 5.66 | 1.17 |
| Attitudes toward university offering special admission: | | |
| Any student | 3.50 | 2.01 |
| Exceptional athlete | 4.62 | 1.80 |
| Exceptional artist | 3.99 | 1.68 |
| Exceptional musician | 4.08 | 1.74 |
| Member of ROTC | 3.79 | 1.79 |
| Perceived dedication toward academic excellence: | | |
| Athlete | 4.12 | 1.65 |
| ROTC | 4.79 | 1.54 |
| Regular admissions student | 5.64 | 1.03 |
| Expected academic performance in class of 100 | | |
| Athlete | 3.75 | 1.49 |
| Musician | 4.81 | 1.23 |
| ROTC | 4.46 | 1.33 |

The fourth set of questions asked participants to indicate the level of “dedication” they feel each group of students possess about academic excellence and graduation. The participants identified the level of expected dedication for a particular type of student by a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*very undedicated*) to 7 (*very dedicated*) (see Table 4). In this fourth set of questions, the significance level of .05 was adjusted using the Bonferroni correction to account for the three pairwise comparisons. Each comparison was significant at a .017 level. Athletes ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.65$) were seen as less dedicated than were ROTC members ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.54$), $t(112) = -4.52$, $p < .001$, or regular admission students ($M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.03$), $t(112) = 9.66$, $p < .001$. ROTC students ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.54$) were seen as less dedicated than their regular-admission ($M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.03$) counterparts, $t(112) = -6.02$, $p < .001$.

In the fifth and final section, participants were asked to rate how they felt each particular type of special admission student would academically perform, compared to the rest of the class. The participants rated the level of expected academic performance for each special admission student by a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*lowest grade*) to 7 (*highest grade*). Results are found in Table 4. For this fifth set of questions, the significance level of .05 was also adjusted using the Bonferroni correction to account for the three pairwise comparisons. Each comparison was significant at a .017 level. Athletes ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.49$) were perceived to perform less well than the ROTC member ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.32$), $t(111) = -4.78$, $p < .001$, or a musician ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.23$), $t(111) = -7.18$, $p < .001$. The musician ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.23$) was also expected to out-perform the ROTC member ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.32$), $t(111) = 2.66$, $p < .01$.

Interpretations Relative to Research Questions 2 and 3

Research Question 2 asked, “Do situational circumstances, such as the reason for granting a student special admission, have any effect on how a special admission student is perceived by other students? Results indicate that students generally felt more positive toward the special admission of an athlete, relative to the special admission of “any students,” musicians, artists, or persons involved in ROTC.

The third research question asked, “Are individuals any less likely to interact with a student-athlete that they know is a special admission student?” Interestingly enough, even though students reported that they were more likely to be in favor of admitting the student-athlete on a special admission basis, these results indicated that students were least enthusiastic about actually working with a special admission student-athlete than other student in an academic setting. The results also reported that students perceived, academically speaking, the special admission student-athletes to exhibit the lowest level of dedication, and would performance poorer than that of other special admission and regular admission student.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Within this chapter, I provide an overview of the findings for Study 1 and Study 2, and I also discuss the implications of each. Prior to the conclusion of this thesis with limitations and future research recommendation, a brief summary of each discussion set will be provided.

Discussion

The primary focus of this thesis was on: how students from the general student population perceive special admission students and if there is any difference in perception for certain special admission students who were admitted because of their involvement in activities such as (e.g., intercollegiate athletics, performing arts, or Reserved Officer Training Corp...). In so doing, traditionally-admitted students were questioned to help determine the perceptions and feelings they possess towards the fore told special admission students.

Study 1

In Study 1, each participant was asked to state what they think about the admission of certain students who do not possess all the minimum requirements for admission into the university. In doing so, each participant provided a very thorough descriptive analysis of what they feel about each special admissions case, followed by the reasoning behind these feelings. Results indicate that students, on a whole, do not have a positive feeling or attitude towards the university admitting students that posses

lesser requirements than the stated minimum. Such practices are seen as unfair, as threatening the integrity of the university, and/or as against standard policies and procedures. When students did express positive attitudes toward special admission students, they did so primarily because it provided opportunities or benefited the university.

Interestingly, the results of the questionnaire indicated that some students, even the ones who did not have a positive attitude toward special admissions in general, did in fact feel that allowing special admission into the university for student that participated in intercollegiate athletics was more acceptable and than that of other special admission students as a whole. The reasons for such favorable attitudes were varied; however, the results do show that the attitudes toward special admission students are complex and require a nuanced perspective.

Study 2

Similar to Study 1, it appeared that the students involved in Study 2 also considered the special admission of a student-athlete to be more acceptable than other special admission candidates. Why then do the results also indicate that the student body expects these athletes to perform so poorly, once they are admitted? Could these results indicate an alternative explanation for why the student population disagrees with the concept of special admission, except when it concerns an athlete?

Based on the results of Study 2, athlete received the lowest mean rating for every single set of questions, except for the one section addressing the perceived acceptability of certain special admission groups. For this question, respondents all of the sudden

indicated that, no matter how bad of a student these individuals might be, the athletes are the only type of applicant that should receive special admission benefits. Interestingly enough, if you take a look at some of the responses recorded in question 1 and 2 of Study 1, a few common themes start to form.

For example, when participants were asked to describe how they feel about special admission in general (question 1), there were fewer positive responses than there were negative ones. But, if you look at the very next question which asks the very same question, except with an additional independent variable, you see an immediate transition over to a more positive tone. Within the positive tones of the question 2 responses, there are several different responses that were not included in the positive tone of question 1. One of the most obvious differences for positive responses incorporated into the description of athlete special admits, compared to special admits in general, was the overwhelming increase of responses indicating these athletes “improved the university”.

An unfortunate conclusion can be drawn from these findings. The student population expects the athlete special admission students to be the “poorest performing” and “least dedicated” group, academically speaking, of any type of special admission student; thus, the responses indicating “improving the university” as the leading explanation for why the student population finds only athlete special admissions to be acceptable, can only truly be congruent if the student population is suggesting a “non-academic” improvement to the university. This suggests that the student population

really only accepts the addition of the athletes because of their abilities as athletes, and the potential improvements in the university that are experienced from a teams success.

Implications

After a thorough analysis of all the results generated from this research, administrative departments within a university should be aware that there some perceptual differences exhibited by students from the general student population for students that receive special admission (Dawn, 2000). To some degree, these results do support the previous research that special admission student, both athlete and non-athlete, could experience some form of negative interaction from their peers, based solely on the fact that they are special admission students (Martin, 2005). In response to such findings, programs like the one run by the National Collegiate Athletic Associate (NCAA), called Champs/Life Skills Program (National Collegiate Athletic Associate, 2006), would be provided with the means for determining what aspects are really affecting the way the student body interacts with student athletes (Hobneck, Mudge, & Turchi, 2003). Even though the results of this study were generated to explain aspects not completely associated with all student-athletes, programs similar to the Champs/Life Skills program would at least have some explanation for why the athlete experience is the way it is.

Other implications might even involve the recognition self-limiting behaviors that both athlete and non-athlete special admission students may be experiencing, but never completely recognized the source (Sartore, 2006). For example, these results do provide evidence that, with further research, could define the overall cost benefit for

allowing the special admission of students into a university and if the perceptions that were generated in this research do in fact predict interaction and treatment of a population for a subgroup.

Limitations and Future Directions

Given the results of this study, there is a great need to understand how much of a special admission student's perception really comes from the fact that the special admit student is a special admission student, or from the fact that the student population stereotypes a student into a certain demographic by other factors. The main difficulty about identifying how the general population perceives a special admission student is for the general population to easily identify who is one. Being that no student, special admit or regular admit, is required to publicly announce the means by which they were admitted into the university, the potential for people to falsely identify a person or group of people as being special admit students increases. For example, in the last question of Study 2, participants were asked, "Do you know any special admission students?" In all, fewer than half ($n = 45, 39.8\%$) of the participants ($n = 113$) indicated that they did in fact know a special admission student. This finding suggests that the rest of the participants ($n = 66, 58.6\%$) had never been in contact with someone they believed to be a special admission student. Of course, there is the possibility that all of the participants that responded "No" ($n = 66, 58.6\%$) to knowing a special admission student, could be accurate. Determining how a person identifies someone as being a special admission student should have been incorporated into the survey instrument to help increase the reliability of these results. If someone can not effectively determine the difference

between a special admission student and a regular admission student in class, then determining the validity for the perceptions may come into question. For this reason, future research should attempt to first address how people identify a special admission student (if at all), and then address perception and stereotype accordingly.

Furthermore, there are a number of different extraneous variable that might, if actually account for, produce a more valid and accurate representation for the research questions. For example, when exploring survey results by different demographic variables, there were some very interesting possible correlations. For instance, when comparing the mean responses by race, I noticed that the White participant responses represented the lowest average mean for every single question in survey 2. On the other hand, when the results were arranged by “play high school sport”, the mean values were almost an entire point more positive (“Given an athlete” by “yes”: $M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.63$; “no”: $M = 5.21$, $SD = 1.76$) for the students who did not play high school sports than the results from those students who did. This suggests that, just because you expect someone who was involved in a similar activity or programs at a previous point in time might demonstrate a better understanding and appreciation for the cause, might in fact turn out to be one of that activities harshest critics.

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APPENDIX A**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY**
Laboratory for Diversity in Sport
Department of Health and Kinesiology

Dear TAMU Student:

Your participation in a survey related to special admission students is needed. As a sport management researcher at Texas A&M University, I am conducting research to understand the influence that different situational variables have on peer perceptions and stereotypes of special admission students. In total, some 200 people will be asked to participate in this study.

You have been *randomly selected* to participate in this study. Participation will require about 10 minutes to answer the questionnaire. You may refuse to answer any question on the survey if it makes you feel uncomfortable. All data will be dealt with confidentially and no institution or individual taking part in the study will be identified. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Further, there are no risks associated with participation. Finally, you will benefit by gaining a better understanding of the potential prejudices that may be exhibited toward special admission students. You can also request a copy of the results to be sent to you, and thus have a better understanding of the perceptions and stereotypes that students have for special admission students admitted to the university.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Ms. Melissa McIlhaney, IRB Coordinator, Office of Research Compliance, (979) 458-4067, mcilhaney@tamu.edu.

Hopefully you will find time in your busy schedule to participate in this study. If you have any comments or concerns with the study, please contact me at the correspondence given below. Thank you for your time and participation; we look forward to your response.

Thank you,

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APPENDIX B**OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

In general, what do you think about special admission student (students admitted with requirements less than the stated minimum for admission)? Why?

What do you think about students participating in intercollegiate athletics being admitted into a university with requirements less than the stated minimum for admission? Why?

What do you think about students participating in Reserved Officer Training Corp (ROTC) being admitted into a university with requirements less than the stated minimum for admission? Why?

What do you think about students who participate in the visual and performing arts being admitted into a university with requirements less than the stated minimum for admission? Why?

How do you feel about students that were admitted into the university because they met all the minimum requirements for admission? Why?

APPENDIX C

SCENARIOS

Given a partner in class:

You are in class and the professor assigns you and another student to work together on a project (the project is worth 70% of your final grade). You are not given any choice in who your partner will be and once partners are assigned, they will not be changed. Based on this information, how would you rate your attitude toward being forced to:

1. Partner up with a special admission student-athlete?

Very Unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied

2. Partner up with a special admission visual and performing arts student?

Very Unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied

3. Partner up with a regular admission student?

Very Unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied

Pick a partner in class:

You are in class and the professor allows you to pick one partner to work on project with (the project is worth 70% of your final grade). Once you choose your partner you cannot change. Based on this information, how would you rate the likelihood of you to:

1. Partner up with a special admission student-athlete?

Very Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

2. Partnering up with a special admission visual and performing arts student?

Very Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

3. Partnering up with a regular admission student?

Very Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

Admissions:

How do you rate your feeling about the university allowing admission to the following students, when they do not meet the same academic requirements that every other student had to meet to get accepted to the university?

| | Very Unacceptable | | | | Very Acceptable | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|---|------------------------|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1. Any Student | | | | | | | |
| 2. An Exceptional Athlete | | | | | | | |
| 3. An Exceptional Artist | | | | | | | |
| 4. An Exceptional Musician | | | | | | | |
| 5. A Member of ROTC | | | | | | | |
| 6. A Non-Athlete Student | | | | | | | |

Student Dedication:

How dedicated and committed do you feel the following students are toward academic excellence and graduation?

1. Special admit student-athletes

Very Undedicated 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Dedicated

2. Special admit ROTC students

Very Undedicated 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Dedicated

3. Regular admission students

Very Undedicated 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Dedicated

Students in class:

There are 100 students in one of the classes that you are taking this semester. On the first day of class you find out that there are a three different special admission students enrolled for the class as well. One of them was admitted to the university because of athletics, one because of music, and the other because of Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC). Based on this information, how would you expect:

1. The student-athlete to perform academically, compared to the rest of the class?

Lowest Grade 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Highest Grade

2. The music student to perform academically, compared to the rest of the class?

Lowest Grade 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Highest Grade

3. The ROTC student to perform academically, compared to the rest of the class?

Lowest Grade 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Highest Grade

Please tell us a little about yourself:

Sex: Male _____ Female _____

Race: African American _____ Asian _____ Hispanic _____

Native American _____ White _____ Other _____

Age: _____ years

Class: Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____

Senior _____ Graduate _____

Did you play high school sports? Yes _____ No _____. If yes, which sport _____

Where you involved in the performing arts in high school?

Yes ___ No ___. If yes, which _____.

Do you know any special admission students? Yes _____ No _____.

If yes, how would you describe them?

VITA

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