

SWA DESIGNATION

AN EXAMINATION OF THE SENIOR WOMAN ADMINISTRATOR  
DESIGNATION

AT NCAA INSTITUTIONS IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI

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A Dissertation presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by

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May 2022

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE SENIOR WOMAN ADMINISTRATOR  
DESIGNATION AT NCAA INSTITUTIONS IN THE STATE OF  
MISSOURI

presented by Katherine “Katy” Schwartz Drowns,  
a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education,  
and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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**Dedication**

The Original Codger, Don Schwartz.

1935-2019

### **Acknowledgements**

**Bill and Dayla Schwartz** – first, thank you for giving me life. I know I haven't always made it easy, or been as grateful as I should be, but I am so thankful for the sacrifices you've both made for me, and all the opportunities you've given me. Dad – you're the first man I ever loved, and I know completing this doctorate will be a great point of pride for you. I am thankful for your unending support, for helping me create my tables ☺ and always being there for my early morning phone calls. Mom – you are my best friend, whether you like it or not. You have always been an amazing sounding board for me, the only person who can talk me down when I'm getting crazy, and my most favorite person to spend time with. I love you both so much. Thank you. MIZ.

**Phil, Lindsey, Kayla, Avery, and Phillip Pitts** – thank you for allowing me to be part of your family. There is no way I could have survived Summer 1 in Columbia without having the best roommates a doc student could ask for. I appreciate you all more than words can say. Kayla and Avery – you can do hard things, anything you put your mind to, don't let anyone stop you.

**Kyle and Amy Farmer, et al.** – I can't imagine having completed this process without you both. You are the ultimate hype friends and I love that about you. This is not the end for the four of us, this is only the beginning.

**Dr. Nissa Ingraham** – thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for being the best hype-guy I could have asked for. I know this was a step outside your comfort zone, but I appreciate you taking a chance on me, and learning with me. Thank you for your unending support, and always being a positive energy in every room you're in! An **extra**

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**thank you** to Dr. Ongaga, my summer one evaluator, and Dr. Wall at Northwest for their unending support, and Emily Witsell for her awesome editing abilities!

**Cooper Drowns** – You will probably not remember anything about me getting my doctorate, but I am so glad I did it now. I don't want to miss another moment of your life, because you – not this degree – are the thing I am most proud of in my life. I can't wait to see where life will take you, and how far you will spread your wings. Never forget where your home is, and that you are the strongest, bravest, smartest, best boy I know.

**Trey Drowns** – I have no words to express how thankful I am that you are the rock of our family. You're an amazing father and husband, and I know putting up with me is a full-time job. I think you thought I was crazy when I announced I wanted my doctorate, and I think you feared this dissertation process would go on forever, but we made it! There is nothing in the world we can't overcome, and now the rest of our life begins. I love you!

It was not by accident that this research was done in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Title IX.

Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Title IX.

You quite literally changed the game.

1972-2022

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### **Abstract**

There is significant disagreement about the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation and how it should function within the overall structure of the athletic department (Smith et al., 2020). The purpose of this policy analysis case study is to fill the gap in research and better understand what people in Missouri who hold the SWA designation do day-in and day-out.

Much of the current research related to this topic is quantitative in nature because the NCAA collects and reports mainly descriptive or directory data (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). This policy analysis case study was qualitative in nature, to gather information and personal stories that cannot be quantified so those women's voices may be amplified. Women's experiences, however they are described, are crucial to the advancement of the feminist cause (Chamallas, 2003).

Between the fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022, this study was done on the Senior Woman Administrator designation at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri. From the practitioner's perspective, this is a study that policy makers and educational leaders can look to when asking themselves if they are truly, fully utilizing their SWAs. Contributing to literature and institutions around the state, this study creates an opportunity to have a long-term impact on the future of the SWA designation and its sustainability in the future of athletic departments.

The study found two potential ideas for changes to be made to the SWA designation: first, further role definition, and second, the elimination of the role in its entirety. The study also found reason to believe further research could be done on the Russell Rule and its implications on the SWA designation.

## **Section One: Introduction To The Dissertation-in-Practice**

### **Background of the Study**

In 2019 ESPN premiered a television special called “A Lifetime of Sundays” that featured four women who own teams in the National Football League (NFL Films, 2019). Virginia McCaskey, daughter of the late Chicago Bears owner, George Halas, as well as widows Norma Hunt of the Kansas City Chiefs, Martha Firestone Ford of the Detroit Lions, and the now-late Patricia Rooney, who passed away in January of 2021, of the Pittsburgh Steelers are the “Fab Four” (NFL Films, 2019). They include the only woman to attend every Super Bowl (Gutierrez & Covitz, 2020), a woman who worked in the team’s front office when she met her true love, the team’s now late owner (Pierce, 2019), and a woman with an impressive pedigree in her own right who married into an NFL franchise (Shea, 2018). The stories these women can tell would wow even the most seasoned sports fans (NFL Films, 2019). The remaining members of the “Fab Four” still attend their teams’ games, both at home and on the road, and they still make administrative decisions in the billion-dollar-a-year industry known as the National Football League (Barrabi, 2020). These women make up 12% of NFL team owners, and yet in the realm of collegiate sports, the gender gap is the same as it was in the 1920s (Women’s Bureau, 2021).

Pat Summitt coached the Lady Volunteers basketball team at the University of Tennessee for 38 years (Tikkanen, 2020). She led the Lady Vols to an astonishing eight NCAA national championships and became the winningest coach in NCAA basketball, men’s or women’s, history in 2005, a record that would stand for 15 years (Tikkanen, 2020). Pat was coached by Nadine Gearin (Stark, 2017), the first women’s basketball

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coach at the University of Tennessee at Martin (Stark, 2017). Yet now, when more women play college sports than ever before, the number of women in coaching and administrative roles is decreasing (Stark, 2017).

In 2012, when Gabby Douglas stepped off the plane in London for the Olympics, she was already a superstar (CNN, 2017). In 2016, she helped the American women's gymnastics team win back to back team gold for the first time in the history of the sport (CNN, 2017). In 2017, when she announced that former USA Gymnastics team doctor, Larry Nassar, had assaulted her, she gave a voice to all survivors (CNN, 2017). Female athletes are more publicized for their sexuality than athleticism (Brake, 2007), and the "win-at-all cost" of competitive sports marginalizes those same athletes (Brake, 2007). Along with her teammates Aly Raisman and Simone Biles, Gabby Douglas used one of the world's largest platforms to bring attention to systemic abuse within the gymnastics community (CNN, 2017). When young, female athletes have female role models, mentors, and leaders in sports, it challenges the cultural connection between masculinity and gender differences in sport (Brake, 2007).

All these women have proven their leadership abilities in athletics, as they have reached the pinnacles of their chosen fields. The problem presented in collegiate athletics is having a Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) and knowing what she does. As Deborah Brake (2007) explains, the professional ranks of sports are still largely reserved for men.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem this policy analysis case study sought to address is the lack of literature related to the duties of the SWA role. The SWA designation is given to the

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highest-ranking female in each National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletic department or conference office (NCAA, 2018). However, the NCAA does not stipulate what specific responsibilities the woman with this designation should have (Stark-Mason, 2018). There is a lack of clarity of the SWA designation's purpose, role, and obligations (Hoffman, 2010b). Studies have examined the history of the designation, the job trajectory associated with the designation, and what the designation means within athletic departments across the country, but they have not identified what the designation *does* (Hoffman, 2010b). The job tasks of the designation, and what it looks like on a daily basis, are unclear.

There is significant disagreement about this designation and how it should function within the overall structure of the athletic department (Smith, Taylor, Siegele, & Hardin, 2020).

Common misconceptions surrounding the SWA designation include (1) confusing Senior Woman Administrator with "Senior *Women's* Administrator," suggesting the purpose is to oversee women's sports, (2) confusing the SWA as the longest serving woman in the department instead of the most senior woman, and (3) believing the SWA designation is required by the NCAA. (NCAA Inclusion, 2018)

Little to no further research has been done on the topic since 2018, but there is still much to learn about the professional women who hold this designation.



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### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this policy analysis case study is to fill the gap in research, and better understand what people in Missouri who hold the SWA designation do *day-in and day-out*.

Much of the current research related to this topic is quantitative in nature, because the NCAA collects and reports mainly descriptive or directory data (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). This policy analysis case study is qualitative in nature, gathering information and personal stories that cannot be quantified. The pivotal tenet in feminist scholarship is the understanding of women's truths (Brake, 2007). Women's experiences, however they are described, are crucial to the advancement of the feminist cause (Chamallas, 2003). This policy analysis case study has heard the stories of the women who hold this designation, so those voices may be amplified.

### **Research Question**

Merriam & Tisdell (2016) stated that an overarching research question can give a qualitative study focus while simultaneously leaving room for the various directions the participants' voices take the study. What are the job tasks and basic daily functions of the SWA in today's collegiate athletics?

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

Two conceptual underpinnings and one theoretical framework will guide this study.

### **Senior Woman Administrator Policy**

NCAA institutions are encouraged to give the highest-ranking female involved in the management of the intercollegiate athletics program the designation of SWA (NCAA,

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2009). At the conference office level, this woman is the highest-ranking female involved with the conduct and policy processes of the office (NCAA, 2009).

### **Leadership**

Leadership is a complex and ever-changing concept (Goleman, 2011; Northouse, 2019). By the end of the 20th century, leadership was being identified as a process (Northouse, 2019). At its core, leadership involves influence, occurs in groups, and involves common goals (Goleman, 2011; Northouse, 2019). Leadership is identified not as a characteristic one may possess, but as a transactional event occurring between the leader and followers (Northouse, 2019). Thus, leadership is achievable by anyone, not just those born with the trait (Northouse, 2019). Leaders are seen as those with vision and goals aligned to their organizations' core values (Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010).

Educational leaders are often labeled as scholar-practitioners (Schultz, 2010). Scholar practitioner leadership exists on the bases of core values, two of which are equity and social justice (Schultz, 2010). According to Schultz, "social justice as a core value functions to remove barriers to equal treatment of students, citizens and social groups" (2010, p. 56). Theoharis (2008) stated that there can be no separation between leadership and justice and equity work; everything has to be about social justice. We must also focus on the value of equity, which similarly to social justice, refers to evening the power systems related to gender, class, and race (Schultz, 2010). Scholar practitioners who focus on equity and social justice can foster conversations to address structures that marginalize groups of people based on gender, class, and race (Schultz, 2010).

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### **Feminism**

“Feminist scholars have offered a broad definition of feminism that includes issues of equality, valuing what is female, political inclusion, and freedom of choice” (Jackson et al., 1996, p. 687). Feminism is also the examination of issues that may advantage men and disadvantage women, even if not intendedly (Bensimmon & Marshall, 2003). Because women are advancing rapidly in leadership roles in government, business, and education, there is increasing importance on gender and leadership issues (Bligh & Kohles, 2008). Women’s experiences are crucial to the advancement of the feminist cause (Chamallas, 2003).

Feminist scholars often begin with the idea that the law has been unfair to women (Chamallas, 2003). These scholars assume the worst, are generally suspicious, and believe the law works to women’s disadvantage (Chamallas, 2003). These scholars seek to uncover hidden gender bias in antiquated policies and investigate the impact that bias has on all women (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003). “Feminist legal theory stands out because of its unapologetic connection to a specific political movement and its clear focus on women” (Chamallas, 2003, p. 2). This theory also creates adaptations to correct for gender discrimination and gender limitation (Smith, 2009; Francis, 2017).

Many people understand that gender inequality exists, but do not necessarily believe it is due to discrimination (Chamallas, 2003). This disregard is evident when Brake stated, “In comparison with men, women are relatively powerless in sports” (2007, p. 528). The leadership structure of athletics is still almost exclusively male, and the format of participation does not fit with traditional women’s lives (Brake, 2007). Traditional women’s lives include running the home and caring for the family (Brake,

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2007). Feminists generally do not want to change the institution of sport, but instead ensure equality for women in similar positions (Brake, 2007). However, those who study women in sports are inclined to transform institutions for the better, not just add female specific leadership roles (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003). Thus, in sport we see that “it appears the NCAA created the SWA designation to provide women a seat at the table, but did not include any mechanisms to assist in their skill development while they were there” (Smith et al., 2020, p. 135).

### **Collegiate Athletics**

After input from President Theodore Roosevelt, a group convened in New York City and the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) was born (NCAA, 2010). Officially constituted in March of 1906, the IAAUS became the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1910 (NCAA, 2010). In its infancy, the NCAA was simply a rules-making body, and it was not until 1921 that the first NCAA national championships were held in Track and Field (Crowley, 2006). Because men’s athletics were more appealing to audiences, the NCAA began as a group that strictly handled men’s teams.

It was not until the late 1970s that there was interest in collegiate women’s athletics (NCAA, 2010). From 1972 to its dissolution in 1983, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) hosted as many as 41 annual national championships in 19 sports, exclusively for women (Smith et al., 2020). The organization grew out of a need for a centralized group to solve the challenges that faced coaches, athletes, and supporters of women’s collegiate athletics (Kasiak & Hensley, 1983; Smith

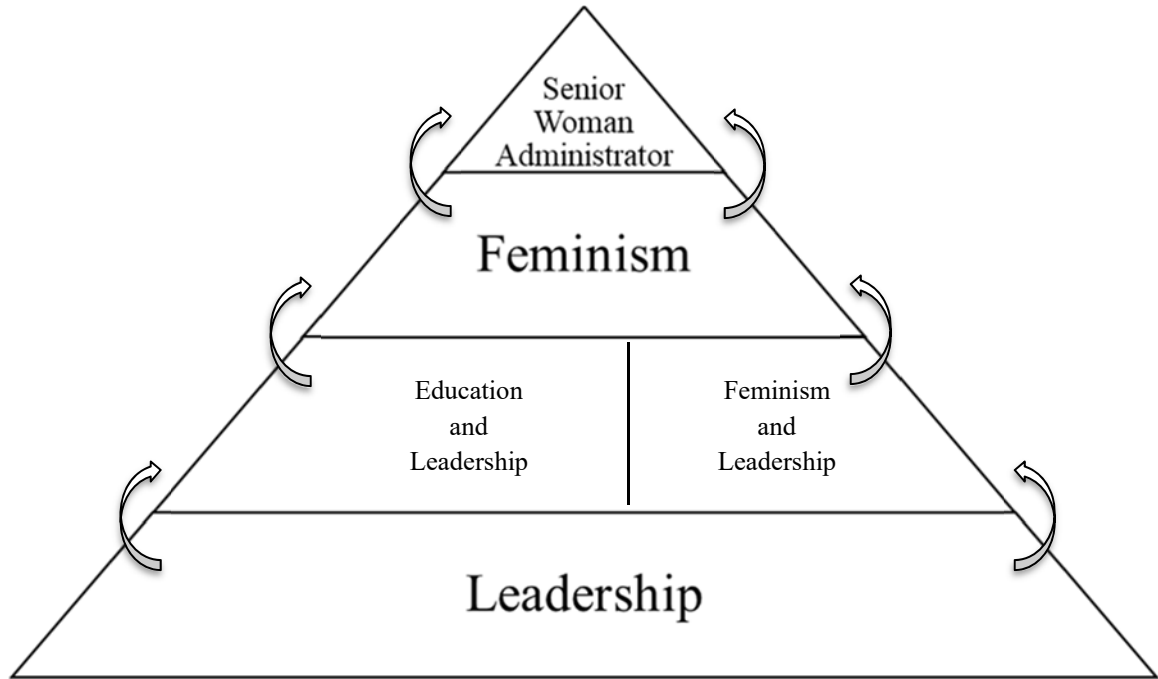
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et al., 2020). In 1981, the NCAA decided to offer Division I championships for women, and the AIAW began to dissolve (Kasiak & Hensley, 1983).

The SWA designation was created in 1981 (Smith et al., 2020). The purpose of the designation is “to promote meaningful representation of women in the leadership and management of college sports” (NCAA, 2018). This designation does not create a leadership position within senior leadership of the department. Instead, it is simply a designation; a role, not a position (Smith et al., 2020; Hoffman, 2010b). When surveyed, 92% of SWAs believed they should have a more specific title, as it would provide clarity on the daily tasks and responsibilities of this role (NCAA Inclusion, 2018).

It is essential that the woman holding the role of the SWA builds on their foundational knowledge in leadership (Figure 1), specifically education and leadership and feminism and leadership, to be elevated to the designation (Smith et al., 2020). The SWA must also have knowledge of feminism and feminist issues in order to achieve the designation (Brake, 2007).

Figure 1. Foundational knowledge for SWA.



### Design of the Study

#### Methodology

This policy analysis case study has investigated the role of the SWA in NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri. The goal was to find out what the women who hold the designation do on a daily basis as part of their SWA role. Data was collected in the form of surveys, interviews, and documents to achieve triangulation (Kruger & Casey, 2015). The women selected for this study were those identified as the SWA by their institution.

#### Setting

The setting of this policy analysis case study was at NCAA institutions throughout the state of Missouri. In the state of Missouri there are 38 four-year colleges and universities (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2021). After reviewing those institutions' websites, there are 37 that have athletic departments,

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which fall into two categories. 23 schools are part of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and the other 14 are part of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Only the NCAA has a recommendation for a Senior Woman Administrator designation (NCAA, 2010); therefore, only those colleges and universities were selected for this study. Of NCAA universities, there are 12 public, four-year schools and 11 private, four-year schools that have intercollegiate athletic departments.

### **Participants**

The selection of participants, or the person from whom data is collected (Mertens, 2020), in this study was purposeful, as the participants met a specific and limited criterion. However, the case boundaries are the state of Missouri, thus only allowing participants within those constraints. The participants were women who have been designated as their institution's SWA within the athletic department. The sample size is 23 SWAs from the same number of institutions. A chart with pseudonyms for the 23 SWAs is included in Appendix A.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Survey.**

As described in Krueger & Casey (2015) and Seidman (2019), the proposal and details of the study were submitted for review and approval from the Institutional Review Board prior to data collection. With the nature of this policy analysis case study, there was little to no risk to participants, and the integrity and confidentiality of all participants has been meticulously maintained. The survey responses were submitted through SurveyMonkey, with the researcher obtaining the data from that service. Surveys were

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anonymous, with any identifying information redacted. Prior to any research-based communication, an email was sent (Appendix C) to all potential participants explaining the policy analysis case study. According to Fink (2017), this type of communication can boost participatory rates for self-administered questionnaires. The study first consisted of a SurveyMonkey survey of no more than ten questions and one frequency table (Appendix B). This length of survey helps boost response rates, as it is not overly cumbersome to complete (Fink, 2017). Survey data was collected digitally, and data retrieved from the SurveyMonkey service, to protect participants' anonymity (Mertens, 2020). This survey was sent to all women listed on their institution's website as the SWA, and each participant was asked for informed consent prior to beginning their participation in the study (Appendix D). In case any identifiable information was collected, it was redacted. Survey questions were plain and simple (Fink, 2017). Data collected from the survey "describes the facts and characteristics" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 5) of the SWA.

At the conclusion of the survey, the SWA was asked if she could provide any documents via email related to her official job responsibilities. This helped ensure saturation and triangulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), both of which involve checking information that has been collected from different sources (Mertens, 2020). Data has been kept anonymous and confidential by redacting names, institutions, and other identifying information.

### **Interviews.**

After the survey time period concluded, requests for interviews were sent to all members of the sample set. Interviews offered the opportunity to get different



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information than a survey, in a more open-ended fashion (Seidman, 2019). The follow-up virtual interviews were no more than 45 minutes, as to prevent what Seidman (2019, p. 26) describes as “watching the clock.” The process was semi structured, as laid out in Merriam & Tisdell (2016), by using a list of questions as a guide (Appendix H). Semi structured interviews allowed for the slight changes in wording of questions and the order of the questions so as to adapt to the interview in real time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The guide Krueger & Casey (2015) lay out for good questions and questions to avoid was used. This guide is constructed for Focus Groups, but it was modified for one-on-one interviews. The interviews were done synchronously over Zoom (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and were audio recorded for transcription purposes.

### **Documents.**

As previously stated, survey participants were asked for any documents related to their jobs. They were asked to submit these via email, at which time any identifying information was redacted. These documents, as well as the institutions’ websites, were analyzed for relevant information (Mertens, 2020) and to confirm triangulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Data Analysis**

Survey responses were categorized by descriptive statistics, as laid out in Fink (2017). Qualitative data analysis (Fink, 2017) and text analysis (Fink, 2017) were completed to identify “certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters or sentences” (Fink, 2017, p. 152). Survey data was coded and re-coded a week later, as described in Fink (2017). The constant comparative method was utilized, as it “calls on the researcher to seek verification... that emerge[s] throughout the study” (Mertens, 2020, p. 257).

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Following the interview process, the transcription data was coded and categorized to develop themes (Newcomer et al., 2015).

Documents provided by the SWA were compiled and analyzed for further theme development. Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey (2015) impress the important difference between coding and categorizing (p. 564), and as such, these documents, the interview transcripts, and open-ended survey answers were coded and categorized in the manner laid out by Newcomer et al. (2015).

After the data was collected and analyzed and the themes identified (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), there was an opportunity to compare and contrast the information collected against pre-existing data and literature. Since thick, rich descriptions were present through direct participant quotes, the clarifying of major and minor themes could be done (Mertens, 2020).

### **Efforts to Support Quality of Research**

#### **Limitations**

A limitation facing this study is the fact that there is only one woman who holds this position at each institution of higher education. In the state of Missouri there are 23 four-year institutions that offer athletics and are member schools of the NCAA. Thus, the sample size for this study was relatively small.

#### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are the boundaries that the researcher has set (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). As described in Mertens (2020), there are no perfect research studies. Every study has delimitations, in particular the sampling methods Mertens (2020). The most impactful delimitation in this study is the boundaries of the state of Missouri. There

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are 11 public and 12 private NCAA institutions in the state, which will provide enough data for the study, without being cumbersome. Due to the nature of this policy analysis case study, the data is not being generalized to other SWAs; however, providing the context to the bounded policy analysis case study can help in understanding transferability of results.

### **Biases**

Bias is an issue all researchers face (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mertens, 2020). Bias should always be avoided, but heightened special consideration should be taken when the researcher is a member of the respondent group being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When facing potential bias, the researcher's transparency of their experience is crucial in ensuring the success of the study.

Due to the researcher being a female, and as a way to mitigate for any potential bias, a researcher who does not identify as a woman and who does not work in the field of college athletics was asked to check for potential insider-outsider bias that may have occurred as the researcher is a woman, working in higher education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher is considered an "insider" by Merriam & Tisdell (2016), and it is important the researcher did not intentionally or unintentionally find favor in any respondents' answers. In order to further eliminate possible biases, interviews were audio recorded to ensure accurate responses from participants, as well as ensuring that the researcher did not offer any ideas or opinions.

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### Key Terms

National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) <https://www.ncaa.org/>: a diverse, voluntary, unincorporated Association of four-year colleges and universities, conferences, affiliated associations and other educational institutions (NCAA, 2009).

Division I, <https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-are-ncaa-divisions-1-vs-2-vs-3>: Division I schools have to offer at least six sports for men and eight sports for women, and both genders must be represented during each playing season (Berkman, 2020).

Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) <https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-are-ncaa-divisions-1-vs-2-vs-3>: The FBS is the highest level of collegiate football, and they participate in bowl games as their post season (Berkman, 2020). An FBS team must average 15,000 people in attendance per home game (Berkman, 2020).

Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) <https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-are-ncaa-divisions-1-vs-2-vs-3>: FCS is the next highest level of collegiate football after FBS, and these schools participate in an NCAA-run championship tournament for their post season (Berkman, 2020). FCS teams do not need to meet minimum attendance requirements (Berkman, 2020).

Division II <https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-are-ncaa-divisions-1-vs-2-vs-3>: Division II schools and athletic department budgets are smaller than Division I, and these schools compete regionally, as opposed to nationally (Berkman, 2020). Division II schools have to offer at least five sports for men and five for women, with two team sports for each gender, and both genders must be represented during each playing season (Berkman, 2020).

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Division III <https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-are-ncaa-divisions-1-vs-2-vs-3>: Division III is the largest of all of the NCAA divisions (Berkman, 2020). Division III does not offer athletic scholarships; however, a majority of the athletes receive institutional aid (Berkman, 2020).

Tokenism: A token employee is defined as a member of a small minority (15% or less) in an environment with a dominant homogenous group (Kanter, 1977).

Marginalization: Occurs when women are segmented to less desirable positions within the same profession in comparison to their male peers (Kanter, 1977).

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Scholarship**

This policy analysis case study is significant to the scholar in that it can shed light on the role of SWA in intercollegiate athletic departments in the state of Missouri. Through surveys and interviews of women who hold this designation, this policy analysis case study can further identify and define what this designation means for the women who hold it. This study is adding new information to the existing literature base by looking at a different subsection of women who hold the SWA designation. This is an important issue because it demonstrates the intersectionality of feminism and the typically male-dominated world of collegiate sport.

#### **Practitioner**

From the practitioner's perspective, this is a study that policy makers and educational leaders can look to when asking themselves if they are truly, fully utilizing their SWAs. Contributing to literature and institutions around the state, this study is

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creating an opportunity to have a long-term impact on the future of the SWA designation and its sustainability in the future of athletic departments.

### **Summary**

This policy analysis case study has examined the role of the SWAs in the state of Missouri through surveys, interviews, and document analysis. The setting, participants, data collection and analysis, as well as any potential biases have been taken into consideration. The information gleaned can help answer questions about the job tasks of a SWA.

## **Section Two: Practitioner Context For The Study**

### **Introduction**

From its humble beginnings in the early 1900s to the billion-dollar-a-year industry of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has proven itself a force to be reckoned with (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). The association now includes over 1,000 member schools in 50 states, and over 500,000 college athletes, who are awarded over \$3.5 billion in athletic scholarships annually (NCAA, 2021).

### **History of Organization**

At the turn of the 20th century, President Theodore Roosevelt sought to engage collegiate athletic leaders in reforming their sports in order to appeal to a broader audience (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). After a meeting at the White House, a group convened in New York City, and the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) was born (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). Officially constituted in March of 1906, the IAAUS became the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1910 (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). In its infancy, the NCAA was simply a rules-making body, and it wasn't until 1921 that the first NCAA national championships were held in Track and Field (Crowley, 2006; NCAA 2010). More and more committees were formed, and national championships were added, including the first national basketball championship in 1939 (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010).

After the second World War the organization handled its biggest issue to date: how the growing popularity of television would impact football ticket sales (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). More problems arose and membership grew, and thus the association named its first executive director in 1951 and established its first national

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headquarters in 1952 (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). Because men's athletics were more appealing to audiences, the NCAA began as a group that strictly handled men's teams (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010), and at that juncture, the association still represented exclusively male athletes and sporting events (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010).

Membership continued to grow, and in the mid-20th century, the scope of the nation's athletics programs diverged, forcing the NCAA to create a structure that recognized varying levels of emphasis (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). In 1973, the Association's membership was divided into three legislative and competitive divisions – I, II, and III (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). Five years later, Division I members voted to create subdivisions I-A and I-AA (renamed the Football Bowl Subdivision and the Football Championship Subdivision in 2007), representing differences in football programs (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010).

It was not until the late 1970s that there was any interest in collegiate women's athletics (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). In 1980, Divisions II and III established 10 championships for women beginning in the 1981-82 school year (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). A year later, the 75th NCAA Convention adopted a plan to include women's athletics programs, services, and representation (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). The Convention also voted to add 19 women's events and National Collegiate championships in all divisions for those events (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010).

The SWA designation was created by the NCAA in 1981 and was first called the Primary Woman Administrator (PWA) (Smith et al., 2020). When first created, this title was given to the individual, man or woman, in charge of overseeing women's athletics (Smith et al., 2020). It was renamed and modified to require the designee be a woman in



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1989 to ensure women were more involved in the senior management and decision-making process of collegiate athletics (Smith et al., 2020). The idea is that each NCAA institution, and each athletic conference, Divisions I-III, would have its own SWA (NCAA, 2018). The Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) is now the highest-ranking female in each NCAA athletics department or conference office, and although schools and conferences are not required to have the designation, 99% of schools do (NCAA, 2018).

In the late 20th century there was a massive restructuring of NCAA governance that provided greater autonomy for each of the divisions and placed institutional presidents in charge of the divisions and of the Association in general (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). The association is led by two different structures. One structure is that of the member schools, and the other is the leadership of the national office staff and governance groups.

### **Organizational Analysis**

One way to navigate the differences in organizations is analysis through the four frames identified by Bolman & Deal (2017). Bolman and Deal (2017) explain that a frame is a set of values and beliefs that allow one to understand the world around them in a more coherent fashion. The NCAA is a large organization, with many moving parts, making it hard to navigate to a layperson (Crowley, 2006; NCAA, 2010). The organization can be dissected into two areas of analysis, structural and political. The structure is complex because of the amount of member institutions, and the political aspect is just that, political. The structure includes the political concepts of differing

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values and beliefs (Bolman & Deal, 2017), as well as the more commonly referenced idea of political: the NCAA testifies before the US Congress with great regularity.

### **Structural**

Looking at an organization like the NCAA from a structural perspective offers an individual the opportunity to examine the organization's roles and relationships internally and externally (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Analyzing an organization based on its structural components is not an easy task (Bolman & Deal, 2017). It is even more difficult when the organization represents 1,094 member schools in three divisions across the country (NCAA, 2021). There are two different structures within the organization: The structure of the member schools belonging to the association, and the structure of the governance/national office staff of the association. The nature of the structure demonstrates a phenomenon that is called loose coupling (Baldrige & Weick, 1983). Loose coupling means the events are connected, but still maintain their own identity (Baldrige & Weick, 1983). The association, including its governance and staff, are loosely coupled to the member schools and conferences.

First, it is important to look at the structure of the members schools and conferences. According to the NCAA's website (2021) there are 1,094 member schools and 145 member conferences. Member schools are broken into one of three divisions, and there are different things that determine what division a school can be a part of. "Structural logic dictates that an organization's success requires alignment of strategy, structure, and environment" (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The NCAA adheres to this principle well, as there is a strong structure, and the strategies of each division are well defined.

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Division I schools have to offer at least six sports for men and eight sports for women, and both genders must be represented during each playing season (Berkman, 2020; NCAA, 2021). Division I schools are also divided into two subdivisions (Berkman, 2020). The Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) is the highest level of collegiate football, and they participate in bowl games as their post season (Berkman, 2020; NCAA, 2021). An FBS team must average 15,000 people in attendance per home game (Berkman, 2020; NCAA, 2021). The Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) is the next highest level of collegiate football after FBS, and these schools participate in an NCAA-run championship tournament for their post season (Berkman, 2020; NCAA, 2021). FCS teams do not need to meet minimum attendance requirements (Berkman, 2020; NCAA, 2021).

Next are Division II schools. These schools' and athletic departments' budgets are smaller than Division I, and these schools compete regionally, as opposed to nationally (Berkman, 2020; NCAA, 2021). Division II schools have to offer at least five sports for men and five for women, with two team sports for each gender, and both genders must be represented during each playing season (Berkman, 2020; NCAA, 2021).

Last is Division III, the largest of all of the NCAA divisions (Berkman, 2020; NCAA, 2021). Division III does not offer athletic scholarships; however, a majority of the athletes receive institutional aid (Berkman, 2020; NCAA, 2021).

The NCAA works through three bodies to ensure organizational success, and they convene representatives from these groups routinely to ensure group efforts and local initiatives are linked to accomplish system-wide goals. Bolman and Deal (2017) tell us there are two primary ways to do this: Laterally, through meetings, committees,

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coordinating roles, or network structures, and vertically, through the formal chain of command. The divisions represent the lateral structure, while the structure of the governance/national office staff of the association represents the vertical structure. These bodies are loosely coupled to the member schools through the association (Baldrige & Weick, 1983), and Bolman & Deal (2017) tell us the correct mix of goals and relationships will determine an organization's success.

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First, the Board of Directors (see *Figure 1*) is the highest decision-making body in the NCAA (NCAA, 2021). Its voting members include eight institutional presidents from DI Football Bowl Subdivision, two institutional presidents from DI Football Championship Subdivision, two institutional presidents from DI schools without football, two institutional presidents from DII, two institutional presidents from DIII, and five independent directors (NCAA, 2021). It also includes ex officio, non-voting members, including Chairs of DI Council, DII Management Council, DIII Management Council, and the current NCAA President (NCAA, 2021).

*Figure 1.* Board of Directors

<b>Board of Directors</b>																										
FBS	FBS	FBS	FBS	FBS	FBS	FBS	FBS	FBS	FCS	FCS	FCS	DI	DI	DII	DII	DII	DIII	DIII	DIII	Independent	Independent	Independent	Independent	Independent	Independent	
<b>President</b>																										
<b>Division I Board of Directors</b>									<b>Division II President’s Council</b>									<b>Division III President’s Council</b>								
<b>Division I Council</b>									<b>Division II Management Council</b>									<b>Division III Management Council</b>								

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Next, the Senior Management Team (see *Figure 2*) is a group of advisors at the national office, who work most closely with the NCAA President (NCAA, 2021). This group ensures accountability in management and operations throughout the work of the Association. They also provide guidance to key leaders within the Association’s membership (NCAA, 2021).

*Figure 2.* Senior Management Team

<b>President</b>								
Chief Operating Officer / Chief Legal Officer	Executive Vice President of Regulatory Affairs	Senior Vice President of Championships	Senior Vice President of Basketball	Senior Vice President of Inclusion, Education & Community Engagement	Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer	Senior Vice President of Administration	Senior Vice President of Communications	Vice President of Policy and Chief of Staff

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Finally, the President’s Cabinet (see *Figure 3*) includes the Senior Management Team and other vice presidents working at the national office (NCAA, 2021). The Cabinet meets monthly to provide input and updates on issues facing the Association (NCAA, 2021). The Cabinet’s role is to share information between departments and member schools (NCAA, 2021).

*Figure 3.* President’s Cabinet

<b>President</b>	
Chief Operating Officer / Chief Legal Officer	
Executive Vice President of Regulatory Affairs	
Senior Vice President of Championships	
Senior Vice President of Basketball	
Senior Vice President of Inclusion, Education & Community Engagement	
Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer	
Senior Vice President of Administration	
Senior Vice President of Communications	
Vice President of Policy and Chief of Staff	
Vice President of Legal Affairs and General Counsel	
Vice President of Enforcement	
Vice President of Division II	
Vice President of Hearing Operations	
Vice President of Women's Basketball	
Vice President of Division I	
Vice President of the Eligibility Center	
Vice President of Division III	
Vice President of Academic and Membership Affairs	

When looking at the NCAA through the structural lens, we see the loose coupling (Baldrige & Weick, 1983) of the association and the member schools, as well as the

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vertical and horizontal structures (Bolman & Deal, 2017). But we still have another perspective from which to analyze the organization.

### **Political**

Looking at an organization like the NCAA from a political lens offers one the chance to understand that political processes are universal (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Part of the political frame focuses on how competing groups utilize power to get what they most desire (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Much like Bolman & Deal (2017) describe the idea of a manager as a politician, often the NCAA is called into the actual political arena to address issues governed by Congress.

Mark Walker, US Congressman from North Carolina, has been quoted as saying “the NCAA is a very powerful organization, and I don’t think they’ll just roll over” (2019). While he was talking about intricate, internal changes within the association, this quote is applicable to other aspects of the organization. The NCAA wields significant power in multiple realms of American society (Johnson, 2019). Organizations like the NCAA are alliances of different individuals and interest groups (Bolman & Deal, 2017). These alliances tie the divisions and governing bodies of the NCAA together. Unfortunately, members, and in the case of the NCAA, member schools, of these alliances have differences in values and beliefs. They see reality from their point of view, which varies greatly amongst the group members, and often they are provided with differing information (Bolman & Deal, 2017). During the 2020 Congressional session, eight pieces of legislation were filed related directly to collegiate athletics and the NCAA (Jenkins, 2021). Americans are electing senators and representatives to go to Washington and fight for education, roads and bridges, and the security of our elections, and instead



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they are listening to six elderly men talking about the rights of college athletes (Jenkins, 2021).

According to Jenkins (2021), Congress is suffering from “input bias” when it comes to the NCAA. Institutional administrators, athletic administrators, conference commissioners, and others are so focused on protecting their own pockets, they are willing to misuse information in order to form false impressions that lead to flawed conclusions (Jenkins, 2021). “Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own interests” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 184). These institutional representatives are using their coercive power, reputation, alliances, networks, and personal power (Bolman & Deal, 2017) to control the narrative. The NCAA’s athletes are responsible for so much revenue that without their existence, institutions would see drastic decreases in overall profits (Jenkins, 2021).

The NCAA makes about \$1 billion per year (Jenkins, 2021), and 96% of that goes back to member schools or is spent on championship activities (Jenkins, 2021). Thus, the NCAA spends a lot of its time justifying its existence. As Senator Claire McCaskill (D) of Missouri said to Mark Emmert in 2014 at a Congressional hearing, “I can’t even tell whether you’re in charge or whether you’re a minion [to the universities]. If you’re merely a monetary pass-through, why should you even exist?” (Johnson, 2019). Senator McCaskill was using her political skills (Bolman & Deal, 2017) to advance her agenda (Bolman & Deal, 2017), but she is not the only one who has questioned the association’s formal leader about his role in the machine that is the NCAA (Jenkins, 2021).

### **Leadership Analysis**

Leadership can be conceptualized in a multitude of ways (Northouse, 2019). Central to the idea of leadership are the components of process, influence, and goals (Northouse, 2019). The analysis of the leadership of the NCAA looks at these leadership components in a critical way, in hopes of providing insight into leadership as a phenomenon (Northouse, 2019).

There are two sides to Mark Emmert, president of the NCAA: one put out by the association on their website, and the other being most available by a quick Google search. The NCAA website will tell you Mark Emmert became the fifth president of the NCAA in October 2010 (NCAA, 2021; Tramel et al., 2020). Before joining the association, the website tells us, he worked at a number of high-profile, Division I schools, in numerous different administrative roles (NCAA, 2021). The website goes on to tout his successes at the NCAA. “As president he has championed greater support for student-athlete wellness and academic success” (NCAA, 2021). The website also talks extensively about his work on behalf of student athletes and institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic (NCAA, 2021).

With a quick Google search, you will get a different viewpoint. From the outside looking in, people will tell you Emmert is the consummate president, a politician always (Schrotenboer, 2013). Northouse (2019) describes this as one of the “Big Five” basic factors that make up personality. Mark Emmert is nothing if not extraverted. Northouse (2019) further goes on to tell us that this quality is the most important trait of an effective leader. He is a talented fundraiser, communicator, and a smooth operator (Schrotenboer, 2013; Tramel et al., 2020). Emmert started his career at the University of Colorado,

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moving then to Montana State, the University of Connecticut (UConn), Louisiana State University (LSU), and then to his alma mater, the University of Washington (Schrotenboer, 2013). He assured stakeholders at Washington that the school would be his “last stop” (Schrotenboer, 2013), but left for the NCAA six short years later (Schrotenboer, 2013).

Interestingly, Mark Emmert’s career before joining the NCAA has been embattled with issues related to NCAA violations (Schrotenboer, 2013). He has been known to move on to more lucrative jobs before the full extent of the violations is known (Schrotenboer, 2013; Tramel et al., 2020). The NCAA found that Montana State was guilty of “lack of institutional control” while Emmert was on their leadership team (Schrotenboer, 2013). While Emmert was at UConn, \$100 million was lost due to mismanagement of a construction project (Schrotenboer, 2013). Later, at LSU, a fraud scandal erupted in the football program while Emmert was Chancellor, going so far as Emmert meeting with the NCAA on behalf of the team (Schrotenboer, 2013).

Mr. Emmert’s leadership style can best be described as adaptive. He engages in activities that motivate, organize, and mobilize his subordinates (Northouse, 2019). Emmert utilizes his adaptive leadership style to mobilize people to effect change (Northouse, 2019), as seen in his roles at previous universities. In his case, this change often occurs after he has moved on to a new role elsewhere. Setting all these issues aside, in 2013 the NCAA Executive Committee gave Mark Emmert a unanimous vote of confidence for his ongoing efforts to implement reforms (Schrotenboer, 2013; Tramel et al., 2020).

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Mark Emmert has the confidence of his Executive Committee, but they do not represent the full structure or all the political coalitions within the NCAA. His leadership role is intact for now, but it is still unclear what the future holds for the association.

### **Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting**

Following the completion of this policy analysis case study, the NCAA will have the opportunity to use the findings to further develop the SWA designation. Since its inception, the role has been inherently vague (Smith et al., 2020), and a qualitative study, such as this, is long overdue. The goal is for change to be affected, and a more definitive description of the designation created.

### **Summary**

The NCAA is made up of many schools, administrators, athletes, staff, and other supporters. Understanding the intricacies of the organization is difficult, and the structure and politics within the association are complex. Through the organizational and leadership analysis the context of the study will be illuminated and may provide understanding for potential transferability of results.

### **Section Three: Scholarly Context For The Study**

#### **Scholarly Context**

“You can’t be something there isn’t” (Carol Hutchins, 2017). As a female athlete growing up in the 1970s, Carol Hutchins had scores of male coaches (Stark, 2017). It was not until high school that she was able to learn from a coach of her own gender (Stark, 2017). She credits those women with giving her the courage to enter the coaching realm (Stark, 2017). Carol began coaching in 1981, and at the time, 55% of NCAA women’s teams had female head coaches (Stark, 2017). In 2016, that number had declined to just over 40% (Stark, 2017). This begs the question, where did all the female coaches go? (Stark, 2017). In a 2015 article on the National Federation of High Schools’ website, two female high school athletic directors were asked about the demanding hours and commitment involved with their positions, and how these women balanced the seemingly endless role as Athletic Director with family (Hoch, 2015). In 2015, women who had achieved top leadership roles in their field were still seen as managers, not leaders (Kotter, 2011; Keohane, 2020). This literature review will provide an overview of two conceptual underpinnings and one theoretical framework guiding this policy analysis case study. The conceptual underpinnings and theoretical framework are leadership, feminism, and collegiate athletics.

#### **Senior Woman Administrator**

The administrative position that has inspired this study is that of the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA). NCAA institutions are encouraged to give the highest-ranking female involved in the management of the intercollegiate athletics program the designation of SWA. At the conference office level, this woman is the highest ranking

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involved with the conduct and policy processes of the office. From the 2011 NCAA Division I Manual, including Constitution, Operating Bylaws, and Administrative Bylaws, the NCAA's guidelines on the position are as follows:

### 4.02.4 Senior Woman Administrator.

#### 4.02.4.1 Institutional Senior Woman Administrator. [#] An institutional senior

woman administrator is the highest-ranking female involved in the management of an institution's intercollegiate athletics program. An institution with a female director of athletics may designate a different female involved with the management of the member's program as a fifth representative to the NCAA governance structure. (Adopted: 11/1/01 effective 8/1/02, Revised: 10/27/05)

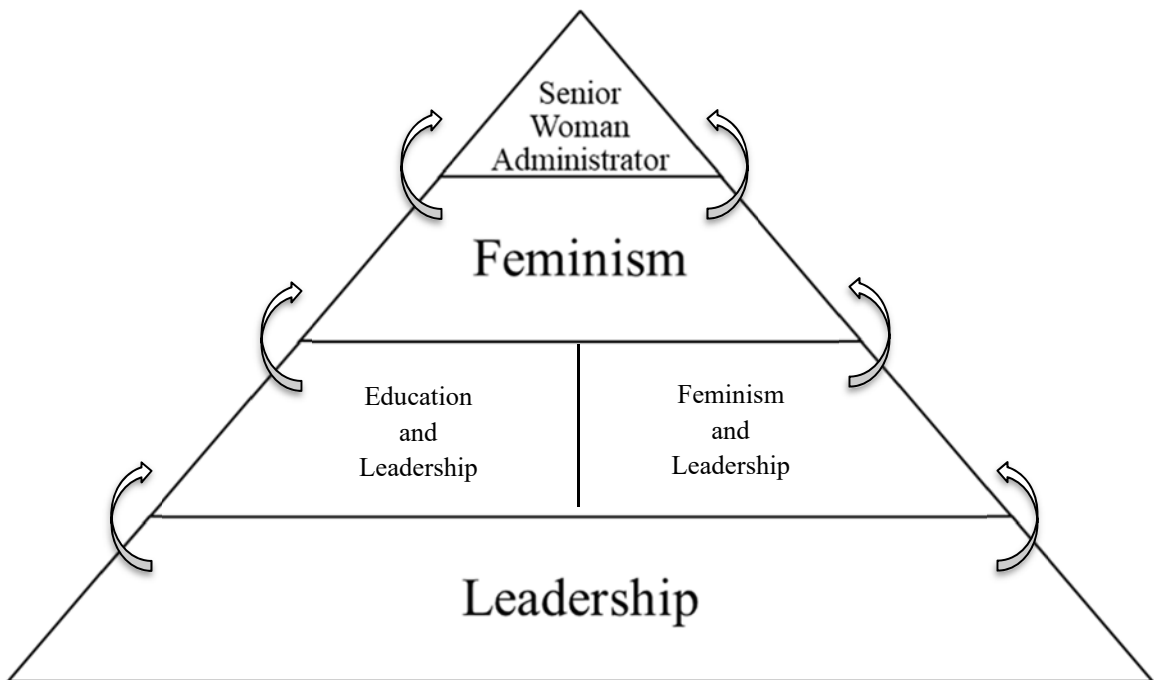
#### 4.02.4.2 Conference Senior Woman Administrator. A conference senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female involved with the conduct and policy processes of a member conference's office. A conference with a female commissioner may designate a different female involved with the management of the conference as a representative to the NCAA governance structure. (Adopted: 11/1/01 effective 8/1/02, Revised: 10/27/05)

This study will only be examining the role of SWA at the institutional level, although it is important to recognize NCAA Conferences also have women who hold this designation.

**Policy Analysis.**

Frances Fowler (2014) gives several examples of how to design successful policies, and the SWA fails on almost all of them. The biggest two examples of this are evidence and discourse. Fowler (2014) and Morestin (2012) tell us that descriptive material should be presented to accompany the policy in order to support claims the policy alleges to solve. Discourse is important because it appeals to deeply held values, hopes, and fears (Fowler, 2014; Morestin, 2012). The NCAA’s SWA policy indicates a solution without a description of the problem or any other supportive materials that make a good policy. The policy analysis case study will be informed by the framework in Figure 1.

*Figure 1.* Foundational knowledge for SWA.



## **Leadership**

Leadership is a complex and ever-changing concept (Northouse, 2019). Over the course of the 20th century, the concept of leadership evolved greatly from control and power in the first three decades of the century, to the idea of leadership influencing people towards shared goals in the 1960s, with leadership being identified as a process as the 20th century came to a close (Northouse, 2019). Even though leadership is defined in an infinite number of ways, “the following components can be identified as central to the phenomenon: (a) Leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs in groups, and (d) leadership involves common goals” (Northouse, 2019, p. 5). Leadership is also defined as “setting goals, formulating strategies, providing guidelines, and/or incorporating values” (Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010, p. 353). Leaders are often people with a high level of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2011). These people generally are self-aware, motivated, and empathetic, have the ability to self-regulate, and have advanced social skills (Goleman, 2011).

When looking at leadership as a process, it is identified not as a characteristic one may possess, but as a transactional event occurring between the leader and followers (Northouse, 2019). This is important because this lens of looking at leadership makes it achievable by anyone, not just those born with the trait. Leadership also involves influence and how leaders communicate with their followers (Northouse, 2019). Leadership focuses on spontaneity and the ability to hone in on others’ feelings (Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010). Holmberg and Tyrstrup (2010) tell us that a lot of leadership is about finding the right answers to the right questions at the right times, and that in doing that leaders assure that work can continue. Another important facet of



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leadership is that it occurs in groups. While these groups may be large or small, it is important that the leader is influencing a group with a common purpose (Northouse, 2019). Common purpose is another defining characteristic of leadership. In order to be leading, all the individuals following the leader must be trying to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2019). In addition, leaders must have followers (Northouse, 2019).

According to Northouse (2019, p. 6), “it is the leader who often initiates the relationship, creates the communication linkages, and carries the burden for maintaining the relationship.”

### **Education and Leadership**

Carol Hutchins credits the coaches in her life for leading her into education and coaching (Stark, 2017). Leaders within education are often labeled as scholar-practitioners (Schultz, 2010). Scholar practitioner leadership exists on the bases of five core values: community, democracy, equity, social justice, and caring (Schultz, 2010). While this study will not focus on all five of these core values, it is important to address two of them. First, it is crucial that we focus on the value of social justice. According to Schultz, “social justice as a core value functions to remove barriers to equal treatment of students, citizens and social groups” (2010, p. 54). We must also focus on the value of equity, which, similarly to social justice, refers to evening the power systems related to gender, class, and race (Schultz, 2010). Scholar practitioners who focus on equity can foster conversations to address structures that marginalize groups of people based on gender, class, and race (Schultz, 2010).

### **Feminism and Leadership**

Prior to research that began in the 1970s, the question “can women lead?” was not uncommon (Northouse, 2019). Women were seen as homemakers, and their role was to tend to the children (Keohane, 2020). In that scenario, women were not seen as leaders, they were seen as managers. They planned, organized, and problem solved, all key characteristics of managers, not leaders (Kotter, 2011; Keohane, 2020). Historically, men were considered rational, aggressive, competitive, political, and dominating leaders; and women were seen as emotional, passive, nurturing, domestic, and subordinate followers (Smith, 2009; Francis, 2017). Some arguments from both sides of the leadership gap conversation are based on the idea that women and men are just different (Northouse, 2019). But, after years of study, it has been shown that women are not less effective as leaders, and they are not less committed to their jobs than men (Northouse, 2019).

People have the notion that women are underrepresented in leadership because they exhibit different leadership styles and effectiveness (Northouse, 2019). One of the major gender differences is not interpersonal skills, as many have assumed, but instead, women leading in a more democratic and participative way (Northouse, 2019). Moreover, the mainstream press is beginning to discuss the factual differences in gendered leadership styles and that women’s leadership style is more effective in contemporary society (Book, 2000; Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1995).

The fact is not that women do not exist in leadership roles, but worldwide they are more concentrated in lower-level and lower-authority positions than their male counterparts (Northouse, 2019). College-aged women were more likely to work behind the scenes and/or hold a leadership position in a smaller organization, more closely

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aligned to their personal values, than a large-scale campus leadership role (Keohane, 2020). Similarly, studies have shown that women tend to place more importance on social values and promoting the welfare of those around them than their male colleagues (Northouse, 2019).

The principle of similarity tells us that people hire people who look and believe similarly to them (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). The same holds true about mentoring (Keohane, 2020). Unfortunately, women often struggle to develop informal mentor relationships, which is a key developmental experience, leading to career success (Northouse, 2019; Keohane, 2020). Women are less likely to voluntarily take on formal leadership roles and less likely to negotiate on their own behalf (Northouse, 2019; Keohane, 2020), which leads to more men in these roles, as they actively pursue advancement more than women (Northouse, 2019). Often, women find it difficult to ascend to positions of leadership due to antiquated workplace roles and norms (Northouse, 2019) An example of one such norm is that women in leadership roles often face pressure to be tough, but not too manly, or as Keohane describes it, “you may be described as shrill or bitchy” (Northouse, 2019; Keohane, 2020, pg. 243).

### **Feminism**

“Feminist scholars have offered a broad definition of feminism that includes issues of equality, valuing what is female, political inclusion, and freedom of choice” (Jackson et al., 1996). Feminism is also the examination of issues that may advantage men and disadvantage women, even if not intendedly (Bensimmon & Marshall, 2003). Because women are advancing rapidly in leadership roles in government, business, and education, there is increasing importance on the issue of gender and leadership issues (Bligh & Kohles, 2008).

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The most important point in feminist scholarship is the understanding of women's truths (Brake, 2007). Women's experiences, however they are described, are crucial to the advancement of feminism (Chamallas, 2003). Since the early 1970s there has been an increased desire to study feminism and the feminist experience (Chamallas, 2003). Patricia Cain's (1991) description of the "feminist point of view" emphasizes women's experience because she believes this source of knowledge should inform feminist scholarship. "Feminism's focus on women's experiences can help ensure that pragmatism lives up to its commitment to the centrality of experience in producing knowledge by making sure that women's experiences are fully included and incorporated" (Brake, 2007, p. 518).

Feminist scholars usually begin with the idea that the law has been unfair to women, and a change should be sought (Chamallas, 2003). These scholars assume the worst and are generally suspicious. This can look different, but almost always works to women's disadvantage (Chamallas, 2003). These scholars seek to uncover hidden gender bias in antiquated policies and investigate the impact that bias has on all women (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003). The first focus area for feminist philosophers of law is to identify bias wherever it may occur in the legal system (Smith, 2009; Francis, 2017). Based on experience, feminist philosophers of law have substantiated that there is systemic bias in the law, which is so entrenched that it is often difficult to oppose (Smith, 2009; Francis, 2017). "However, we sometimes encounter the 'dilemma of difference' meaning neither ignoring nor highlighting gender will necessarily translate into progress for women" (Chamallas, 2003, p. 10).

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### **Feminist Legal Theory**

“Feminist legal theory stands out because of its unapologetic connection to a specific political movement and its clear focus on women” (Chamallas, 2003, p. 2). But, simply because the study of feminism is in theory does not mean feminism is viewed only in the abstract (Chamallas, 2003). “Feminist philosophy of law identifies the pervasive influence of patriarchy and masculinist norms on legal structures” (Smith, 2009; Francis, 2017, para. 1). This theory also creates adaptations to correct for gender discrimination and gender limitation (Francis, 2017).

Many people understand that gender inequality exists, but they do not necessarily believe it is due to discrimination (Chamallas, 2003). Yet, worldwide, men hold more leadership positions in governments and business and statistically make nearly double what women do (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2003). That number then increases astronomically when looking at leadership in sport (Stark-Mason, 2018). “In comparison with men, women are relatively powerless in sports” (Brake, 2007, p. 528). “The leadership structure of sports remains almost exclusively male and the dominant model of participation and competition was not selected for its fit with women’s lives” (Brake, 2007, p. 534). Feminists generally do not want to change the institution of sport, but instead ensure equality for women in similar positions (Brake, 2007). Those who study women in sport are inclined to transform institutions for the better, not just add female specific leadership roles (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003). Thus, in sport we see that “it appears the NCAA created the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation to provide women a seat at the table, but did not include any mechanisms to assist in their skill development while they were there” (Smith et al., 2020, p. 135).

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### **Foundational Knowledge for SWA**

The SWA at any institution must have some foundational knowledge (Figure 1) before she ascends to the designation of SWA (Smith et al., 2020). The most basic level of knowledge is about leadership, and building from that, the nuances of education and leadership and feminism and leadership (Smith et al., 2020). These topics form the basis of knowledge a woman would need to be successful in the role. Furthermore, the SWA must have knowledge of feminism and feminist ideals to ensure her success in the designation (Brake, 2007). It is important that this knowledge is strong, to help her in her role.

### **Collegiate Athletics**

#### **National Collegiate Athletic Association**

At the turn of the 20th century, President Theodore Roosevelt sought to engage collegiate athletic leaders in reforming their sports in order to appeal to a broader audience (NCAA, 2010). After a meeting at the White House, a group convened in New York City, and the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) was born (NCAA, 2010). Officially constituted in March of 1906, the IAAUS became the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1910 (NCAA, 2010). In its infancy, the NCAA was simply a rules-making body, and it was not until 1921 that the first NCAA national championships were held in Track and Field (Crowley, 2006). Because men's athletics were more appealing to audiences, the NCAA began as a group that strictly handled men's teams. It was not until the late 1970s that there was any interest in collegiate women's athletics (NCAA, 2010).

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### **Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women**

For much of the 20th century, women had the ability to play a variety of intramural sports on college campuses around the country, and national-scale competitions have taking place since as early as 1941 (Smith et al., 2020). But it was not until the inception of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) in 1972 that there was a centralized network of competition. From 1972 to its dissolution in 1983, the AIAW hosted as many as 41 annual national championships in 19 sports, exclusively for women (Smith et al., 2020). The organization grew out of a need for a centralized group to solve the challenges that faced coaches, athletes, and supporters of women’s collegiate athletics (Kasiak & Hensley, 1983; Smith et al., 2020). In 1981, the NCAA decided to offer Division I championships for women, and the AIAW decided to pursue legal action. The AIAW filed antitrust lawsuits on the basis that the NCAA was attempting to monopolize and control women’s sports (Kasiak & Hensley, 1983; Smith et al., 2020). After the final dissolution of the AIWA, the AIWA President was quoted as saying, “the NCAA used its financial monopoly in men’s sports to acquire women’s sports. And that [acquisition] wasn’t coming with any promises to women about fair representation and their role in the NCAA” (Kasiak & Hensley, 1983, p. 1). Unfortunately, President Lopiano’s words still appear to be true today in many conversations about female representation in intercollegiate athletics (McChesney, 2018).

### **Title IX**

In June of 1972, President Richard Nixon signed Title IX into law (Nixon Foundation, 2016) as a means of prohibiting sex discrimination in any educational program or activity receiving any type of federal funding. Over the course of its

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existence, Title IX has been extremely successful in encouraging creative ways to change traditional gender roles and norms, specifically in women's athletics, as well as create similar circumstances for women's sports as men's, but unfortunately female athletes still experience second-class status based on marketability of sport and audience appeal (Brake, 2007).

Through much of the 1970s and 1980s, the inclusion of sports in Title IX was debated at the federal level. The case *Grove City v. Bell* (1983) all but removed intercollegiate athletics from Title IX's purview. In 1988, however, the Civil Rights Restoration Act put collegiate athletics back within Title IX's sphere of influence (Carpenter & Acosta, 1992). There is a three-part test schools utilize to determine Title IX compliance: first, offering participation opportunities in numbers substantially proportionate to enrollment; second, demonstrating a continuing history of program expansion that is responsive to the developing interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex; and third, fully and effectively accommodating the interests and abilities of members of the underrepresented sex through existing sport offerings (Brake, 2007). Institutions can utilize this quick test to ensure their compliance with Title IX, knowing if they fail to be compliant, they risk loss of funding.

### **Senior Woman Administrator**

#### **History.**

The SWA designation was created by the NCAA in 1981 and was first called the Primary Woman Administrator (PWA) (Smith et al., 2020). When first created, this title was given to the individual, man or woman, in charge of overseeing women's athletics (Smith et al., 2020). It was renamed and modified to require the designee be a woman in



## SWA DESIGNATION

1989 to ensure women were more involved in the senior management and decision-making process of collegiate athletics (Smith et al., 2020). The idea is that each NCAA institution and each athletic conference, Divisions I-III, would have its own SWA (NCAA, 2018). The senior woman administrator (SWA) is now the highest-ranking female in each NCAA athletics department or conference office, and although schools and conferences are not required to have the designation, 99% of schools do (NCAA, 2018). The purpose of the designation is “to promote meaningful representation of women in the leadership and management of college sports” (NCAA, 2018). This designation does not create a leadership position within senior leadership of the department. Instead, it is simply a designation; a role, not a position (Smith et al., 2020; Hoffman, 2010b). The NCAA does not stipulate what specific responsibilities the woman with this designation should have (Stark-Mason, 2018). In a survey of SWAs, 84% of those surveyed believed some schools would have no women in leadership roles in the athletic department without the designation (Stark-Mason, 2018).

### **Designation.**

According to Diana Kling, associate commissioner and SWA of the Peach Belt Conference, the SWA role “isn’t about women’s issues; it’s about a woman’s perspective on all the issues” (Stark-Mason, 2018, para. 4). Unfortunately, there is still much confusion with this role.

Common misconceptions surrounding the SWA designation include (1) confusing Senior Woman Administrator with “Senior *Women’s* Administrator,” suggesting the purpose is to oversee women’s sports, (2) confusing the SWA as the longest serving woman in the department instead of the most senior woman, and (3)

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believing the SWA designation is required by the NCAA. (NCAA Inclusion, 2018, p. 1)

Women who have been designated as SWAs often see it as a delegitimization of their work, suggesting they aren't worthy of a senior leadership position without being noted as a minority (Smith et al., 2020). SWAs are disproportionately driven towards more feminine tasks, such as overseeing women's sports, academic advising, mentoring, teaching life skills, and generally being caretakers, as these jobs enhance the status and comfort of men (Brake, 2007). When asked, male athletic directors consistently state SWAs have significantly more power and control over masculine tasks (Keohane, 2020; Hoffman, 2010a; Smith et al., 2020; Taylor & Hardin, 2016; Hoffman 2010b) such as fundraising, budgeting, marketing, and major hiring decisions than SWAs believe they have. This suggests there is a disconnect between the perceived and actual job responsibilities (Smith et al., 2020). "92% of SWAs believed they should have an administrative title, such as Assistant AD or Associate AD as it would provide clarity on the daily tasks and responsibilities of these women" (NCAA Inclusion, 2018, p. 1).

Not only do women in this role feel delegitimized, but they also feel their job prospects are stagnant as many believe the SWA role is terminal, as opposed to an opportunity for career advancement (Hoffman, 2010a; Hoffman, 2010b). Studies have shown that women in the intercollegiate athletic realm, in any capacity, do not pursue new opportunities, whether those be lateral moves or moves to higher job status (Carpenter & Acosta, 1992). When looking at why women are *stuck* in the SWA role, it should be noted that college presidents and chancellors, or those doing the hiring, are overwhelmingly male (Higher Ed Direct, 2018). While the reasons these female

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professionals have for lack of mobility remain quiet, they may also be keeping the secrets of the decline of female representation in leadership secret (Carpenter & Acosta, 1992). People frequently wonder why there is a decline in women taking leadership roles in college athletics, and Carpenter and Acosta (1992, p. 4) tell us, “the truth seems to be that highly skilled, experienced women... have simply not been recruited significantly.” Unless institutions take note and offer more targeted recruitment and training of women, it is unlikely these numbers will not increase once women see what the male dominated profession entails (Chamallas, 2003).

Earlier studies of SWAs called into question if the designation is actually beneficial at all, with some even calling for its removal from the NCAA completely (Smith et al., 2020). Still others in the SWA role believe these women are not being given chances at career advancement, and the SWAs agree the designation should be eliminated. These same people believe the title encourages outdated practices and hinders SWAs’ ability to advance within intercollegiate athletics (Smith et al., 2020). A participant in the Smith et al. study (2020) noted how the SWA designation marginalized SWAs and limited their power and influence within the workplace. The women surveyed made it clear they were most often introduced as the senior woman administrator, emphasizing that their introductions didn’t indicate their actual job or duties. The SWA’s frustration continued as it was stated, “how many black men are introduced as this is our senior black administrator? Never. Or senior male administrator. Never” (2020, p. 131). This same participant went on to address that she was an executive, but that was never mentioned, just the title that included gender. The SWA concluded the interview by noting that men often tell SWAs not to worry because it is not delimiting to their role,

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and her response was, “well, you’re not being introduced that way, you’re being introduced as the athletic director, or the senior associate athletic director, or the deputy athletic director. You’re not being introduced as the senior male administrator” (2020, p. 131).

Women who participated in this study are now becoming vocal about the removal of the designation. They feel its direct tie to gender actually leads to more inequality and more perceptions of inferiority compared to male colleagues (Smith et al., 2020). Still, in pragmatic feminism, as Deborah Brake (2007, p. 522) reminds us, “there is no general solution; there are only piecemeal, temporary solutions.”

### **Summary**

Carol Hutchins understood the reality that if there were not female coaches, she could not have become one (Stark, 2017). But that was 50 years ago. In that time, we have seen the highest office in the land pass Title IX (Nixon Foundation, 2016), which opened the door for countless women. The creation of the SWA designation has offered a seat at the table for women, but it has not increased other leadership opportunities. Through the literature on leadership, feminism, and collegiate athletics, it seems as a society there may have been progress towards accepting strong women in leadership roles, but in the world of collegiate athletics, the world may not be as advanced as one might hope (Stark, 2017).

## **Section Four: Contribution To Practice**

### **Plan for Dissemination of Practitioner Contribution**

The NCAA has a standing Committee on Women's Athletics, which meets three times per year. The contribution to practice for this study will be presented in the form of a white paper to this committee in the summer of 2022 for discussion at their meeting in September of 2022. The white paper will include an executive summary, introduction, problem definition, research question, high-level answers, solution details, and next steps, and a conclusion.

### **Rationale for this Contribution Type**

This committee is charged with providing leadership and assistance to the association in its efforts to be equitable towards women in all aspects of intercollegiate athletics. This study will help to inform members of this committee about the current role of women who hold the designation of SWA. The committee is charged with expanding and promoting opportunities for female student-athletes, administrators, coaches, and officiating personnel. This committee also promotes governance, administration, and the success of intercollegiate athletics at the institutional, conference, and national levels that are inclusive, fair and accessible to women.

### **Type of Document**

White Paper (attached)

# Lift as you Rise

## An Examination of the Senior Woman Administrator Designation at NCAA Institutions in the State of Missouri White Paper



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Spring 2022

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of this policy analysis case study was to fill the gap in research, and better understand what people in Missouri who hold the SWA designation do day-in and day-out.

The problem this policy analysis case study sought to address is the lack of literature related to the SWA role. The SWA designation is given to the highest-ranking female in each National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletic department or conference office (NCAA, 2018). However, the NCAA does not stipulate what specific responsibilities the woman with this designation should have (Stark-Mason, 2018). There is a lack of clarity of the SWA designation's purpose, role, and obligations (Hoffman, 2010b). Studies have examined the history of the designation, the job trajectory associated with the designation, and what the designation means within athletic departments across the country, but they have not identified what the designation does (Hoffman, 2010b). The job tasks of the designation, and what it looks like on a daily basis, are unclear.

Much of the current research related to this topic is quantitative in nature because the NCAA collects and reports mainly descriptive or directory data (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). This policy analysis case study was qualitative in nature, to gather information and personal stories that cannot be quantified so those women's voices may be amplified. Women's experiences, however they are described, are crucial to the advancement of the feminist cause (Chamallas, 2003).

Between the fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022, a study was done on the Senior Woman Administrator designation at NCAA Institutions in the state of Missouri. An

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anonymous survey was sent to all women in the state that hold this designation, and it had a return rate of 35%. Interviews were solicited from the same group and 20% participated. Survey and interview information are included in appendices A and B respectively.

There is significant disagreement about this designation and how it should function within the overall structure of the athletic department (Smith et al., 2020).

Common misconceptions surrounding the SWA designation include (1) confusing Senior Woman Administrator with “Senior Women’s Administrator,” suggesting the purpose is to oversee women’s sports, (2) confusing the SWA as the longest serving woman in the department instead of the most senior woman, and (3) believing the SWA designation is required by the NCAA. (NCAA Inclusion, 2018)

Little to no further research has been done on the topic since 2018, but there is still much to learn about the professional women who hold this designation.

The administrative position that has inspired this study is that of the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA). NCAA institutions are encouraged to give the highest-ranking female involved in the management of the intercollegiate athletics program the designation of SWA. At the conference office level, this woman is the highest ranking involved with the conduct and policy processes of the office. From the 2011 NCAA Division I Manual, including Constitution, Operating Bylaws, and Administrative Bylaws, the NCAA’s guidelines on the position are as follows:

### 4.02.4 Senior Woman Administrator.

4.02.4.1 Institutional Senior Woman Administrator. [#] An institutional senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female involved in the



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management of an institution's intercollegiate athletics program. An institution with a female director of athletics may designate a different female involved with the management of the member's program as a fifth representative to the NCAA governance structure. (Adopted: 11/1/01 effective 8/1/02, Revised: 10/27/05)

4.02.4.2 Conference Senior Woman Administrator. A conference senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female involved with the conduct and policy processes of a member conference's office. A conference with a female commissioner may designate a different female involved with the management of the conference as a representative to the NCAA governance structure. (Adopted: 11/1/01 effective 8/1/02, Revised: 10/27/05)

This study only examined the role of SWA at the institutional level, although it is important to recognize NCAA Conferences also have women who hold this designation.

### **Introduction to Senior Woman Administrator Participants**

“Lift as you Rise.” The idea that women in leadership roles can elevate other women is not new, but it is how most women get to where they are in the world of collegiate athletics (PSWA12, personal communication, January 14, 2022).

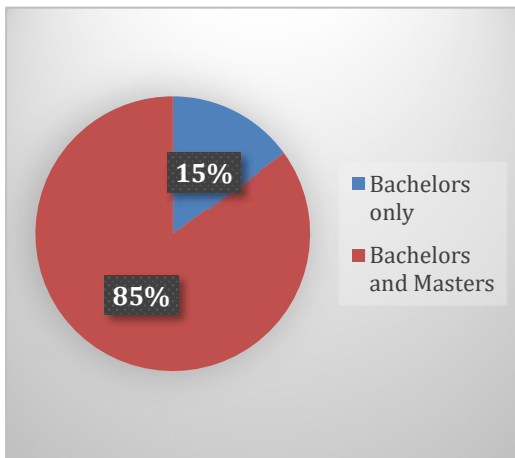
The setting of this study was at NCAA institutions throughout the state of Missouri. In the state of Missouri there are 38 four-year colleges and universities (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2021). After reviewing those institutions' websites, there are 37 that have athletic departments, which fall into two categories. 23 schools are part of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and the other 14 are part of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics



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The selection of participants in this study was purposeful, as the participants meet a specific and limited criterion (Mertens, 2020). However, the case boundaries are the state of Missouri, thus only allowing participants within those constraints. The participants were women who had been designated as their institution's SWA within the athletic department. 85% of those women hold at least a Master's degree, as represented in Figure 2. The sample size was 23 SWAs from the same number of institutions. A chart with pseudonyms for the 23 SWAs is included in Appendix C.

*Figure 2.* Senior Woman Administrator levels of education.



Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3, there is a wide range of experience levels of women who hold the SWA designation. The average years of experience for the women surveyed was 8.375 years in the role. When asked if they were related by blood or marriage to any current or former player or coach within the department they serve, 75% of SWAs said no, as displayed in Figure 4.

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Figure 3. Senior Woman Administrator years of experience.

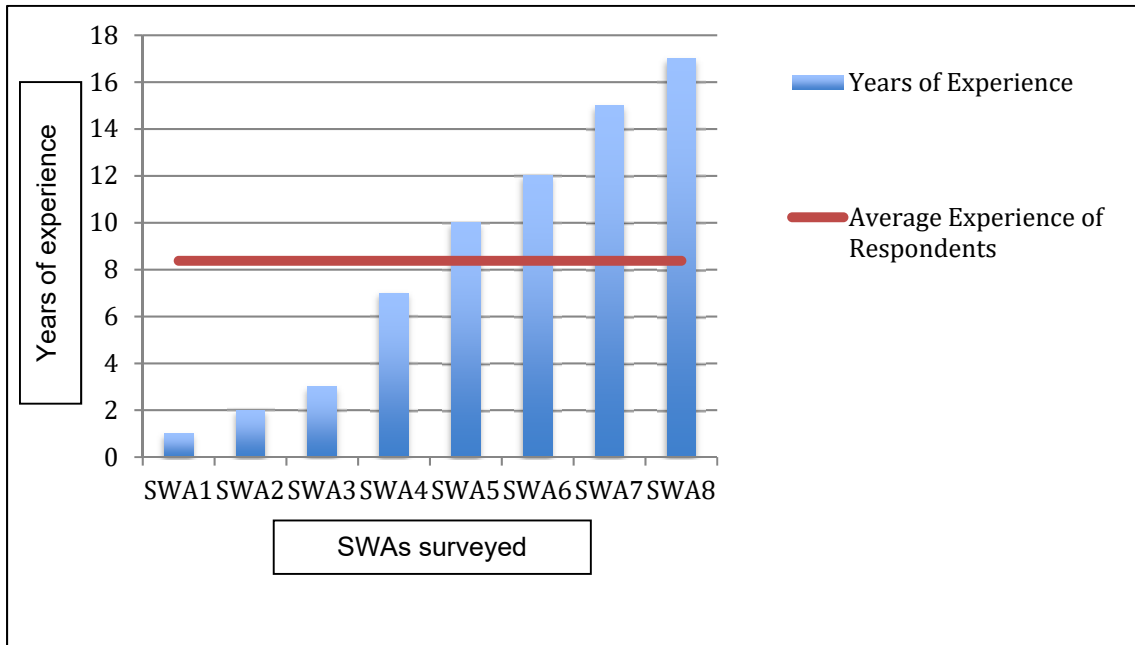
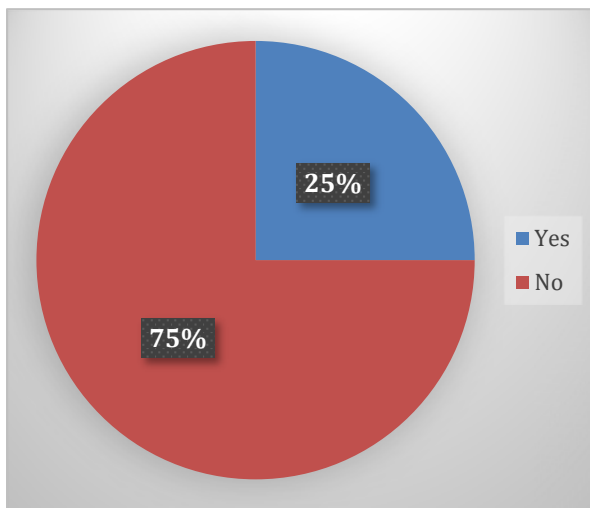


Figure 4. Percent of SWAs related to current or former player or coach in the department they serve.



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### **Defining the Problems Related to the SWA**

The problem this policy analysis case study sought to address is the lack of literature related to the duties of the SWA role. The SWA designation is given to the highest-ranking female in each National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletic department or conference office (NCAA, 2018). However, the NCAA does not stipulate what specific responsibilities the woman with this designation should have (Stark-Mason, 2018). There is a lack of clarity of the SWA designation's purpose, role, and obligations (Hoffman, 2010). Studies have examined the history of the designation, the job trajectory associated with the designation, and what the designation means within athletic departments across the country, but they have not identified what the designation *does* (Hoffman, 2010). The job tasks of the designation, and what it looks like on a daily basis, are unclear.

### **Research Question**

This qualitative research project sought to answer the following overarching question: What are the job tasks and basic daily functions of the SWA in today's collegiate athletics?

### **Methodology**

This policy analysis case study has investigated the role of the SWA in NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri. The goal was to find out what the women who hold the designation do on a daily basis as part of their SWA role. Data were collected in the forms of surveys, interviews, and documents to achieve triangulation (Kruger & Casey, 2015). The women selected for this study were those identified as the SWA by their institution. Due to the researcher being a female, and as a way to mitigate

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for any potential bias, a researcher who does not identify as a woman and who does not work in the field of college athletics was asked to check for potential insider-outsider bias that may have occurred as the researcher is a woman, working in higher education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher is considered an “insider” by Merriam & Tisdell (2016), and it is important the researcher did not intentionally or unintentionally find favor in any respondents’ answers. In order to further eliminate possible biases, interviews were audio recorded to ensure accurate responses from participants, as well as ensuring that the researcher did not offer any ideas or opinions.

### **Setting**

The setting of this policy analysis case study was at NCAA institutions throughout the state of Missouri. In the state of Missouri there are 38 four-year colleges and universities (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2021). After reviewing those institutions' websites, there are 37 that have athletic departments, which fall into two categories. 23 schools are part of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and the other 14 are part of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Only the NCAA has a recommendation for a Senior Woman Administrator designation (NCAA, 2010); therefore, only those colleges and universities were selected for this study. Of NCAA universities, there are 12 public, four-year schools and 11 private, four-year schools that have intercollegiate athletic departments.

### **Participants**

The selection of participants, or the person from whom data is collected (Mertens, 2020), in this study was purposeful, as the participants met a specific and limited

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criterion. However, the case boundaries are the state of Missouri, thus only allowing participants within those constraints. The participants were women who have been designated as their institution's SWA within the athletic department. The sample size is 23 SWAs from the same number of institutions. A chart with pseudonyms for the 23 SWAs is included in Appendix A.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Survey.**

As described in Krueger & Casey (2015) and Seidman (2019), the proposal and details of the study were submitted for review and approval from the Institutional Review Board prior to data collection. With the nature of this policy analysis case study, there was little to no risk to participants, and the integrity and confidentiality of all participants has been meticulously maintained. The survey responses were submitted through SurveyMonkey, with the researcher obtaining the data from that service. Surveys were anonymous, with any identifying information redacted. Prior to any research-based communication, an email was sent (Appendix C) to all potential participants explaining the policy analysis case study. According to Fink (2017), this type of communication can boost participatory rates for self-administered questionnaires. The study first consisted of a SurveyMonkey survey of no more than ten questions and one frequency table (Appendix B). This length of survey helps boost response rates, as it is not overly cumbersome to complete (Fink, 2017). Survey data was collected digitally, and data retrieved from the SurveyMonkey service, to protect participants' anonymity (Mertens, 2020). This survey was sent to all women listed on their institution's website as the SWA, and each participant was asked for informed consent prior to beginning their

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participation in the study (Appendix D). In case any identifiable information was collected, it was redacted. Survey questions were plain and simple (Fink, 2017). Data collected from the survey “describes the facts and characteristics” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 5) of the SWA.

At the conclusion of the survey, the SWA was asked if she could provide any documents via email related to her official job responsibilities. This helped ensure saturation and triangulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), both of which involve checking information that has been collected from different sources (Mertens, 2020). Data has been kept anonymous and confidential by redacting names, institutions, and other identifying information.

### **Interviews.**

After the survey time period concluded, requests for interviews were sent to all members of the sample set. Interviews offered the opportunity to get different information than a survey, in a more open-ended fashion (Seidman, 2019). The follow-up virtual interviews were no more than 45 minutes, as to prevent what Seidman (2019, p. 26) describes as “watching the clock.” The process was semi structured, as laid out in Merriam & Tisdell (2016), by using a list of questions as a guide (Appendix H). Semi structured interviews allowed for the slight changes in wording of questions and the order of the questions so as to adapt to the interview in real time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The guide Krueger & Casey (2015) lay out for good questions and questions to avoid was used. This guide is constructed for Focus Groups, but it was modified for one-on-one interviews. The interviews were done synchronously over Zoom (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and were audio recorded for transcription purposes.



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### **Documents.**

As previously stated, survey participants were asked for any documents related to their jobs. They were asked to submit these via email, at which time any identifying information was redacted. These documents, as well as the institutions' websites, were analyzed for relevant information (Mertens, 2020) and to confirm triangulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Data Analysis**

Survey responses were categorized by descriptive statistics, as laid out in Fink (2017). Qualitative data analysis (Fink, 2017) and text analysis (Fink, 2017) were completed to identify “certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters or sentences” (Fink, 2017, p. 152). Survey data was coded and re-coded a week later, as described in Fink (2017). The constant comparative method was utilized, as it “calls on the researcher to seek verification... that emerge[s] throughout the study” (Mertens, 2020, p. 257). Following the interview process, the transcription data was coded and categorized to develop themes (Newcomer et al., 2015).

Documents provided by the SWA were compiled and analyzed for further theme development. Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey (2015) impress the important difference between coding and categorizing (p. 564), and as such, these documents, the interview transcripts, and open-ended survey answers were coded and categorized in the manner laid out by Newcomer et al. (2015).

After the data was collected and analyzed and the themes identified (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), there was an opportunity to compare and contrast the information collected against pre-existing data and literature. Since thick, rich descriptions were

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present through direct participant quotes, the clarifying of major and minor themes could be done (Mertens, 2020).

### **Findings: High-Level Answer**

The information below has been identified as overarching themes found consistently in surveys, interviews, and document analysis. These themes answer the research question previously identified. This information gives a broad strokes solution to the research question.

#### **A Typical Day Doesn't Exist.**

“Does anyone in this role have a typical day?” Every woman interviewed made a comment in this vein. PSWA11 said, “I feel like I've been really fortunate in the two athletics directors I've served in this role because both have really seen this role as an empowering one.” ISWA3 went a step further to say, “I'm at the table. I have a seat at the table, whether that be department conversations, decision making, and whether that be university departments or university decisions and how it impacts athletics.”

Answering the question “What are the job tasks and basic daily functions of the SWA in today's collegiate athletics?” solicited a multitude of answers. Responses from surveys and interviews included: internal operations, athletic compliance, game operations, event and sport management, oversight of academics and training room, health care administration, Title IX, gender equity, counsel coaches and administrators, student athlete's campus life, human resources, staff development and retention, student-athlete development, and budget management. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that a typical day does not exist. Each day being different and offering a new challenge was part of the appeal of this role for many women of the women interviewed. A typical day

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means one where anything can happen, and as an SWA a woman needs to be prepared to leave a prepared to-do list for another day, and solve today's crisis.

### **Findings: Deep-Dive Answers**

The Deep-Dive Answers answer the research question as the responses were provided by SWAs in surveys, interviews, and document analysis, as well as what preexisting literature tells us about the trajectory of the designation.

### **Further Role Definition**

The first concept drawn from the study was that of further role definition. As this study attempted, and others have before, there is no specific job description for this designation, and the women interviewed described vastly different daily tasks. There is still much discrepancy in job responsibilities between the women who hold this designation, and further role definition is needed to improve the efficiency of the designation.

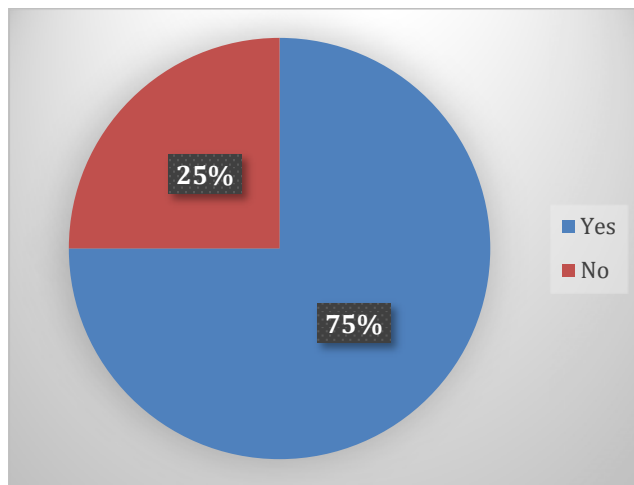
All those interviewed said part of what they loved about the job was that it was different each day. But those women also noted they are well respected and included at their institutions and they have friends and colleagues that aren't, and for them role definition may help improve their situations. Figure 5 indicates that 75% of women surveyed said they are responsible for Title IX issues within their athletic department.

When ISWA3 was talking about her role as it complements the Athletic Director she said, "so I am his right-hand woman. And so, when he's not there I really am the one that kind of step in and help to run the operations, the daily operations of our athletics program."

## SWA DESIGNATION

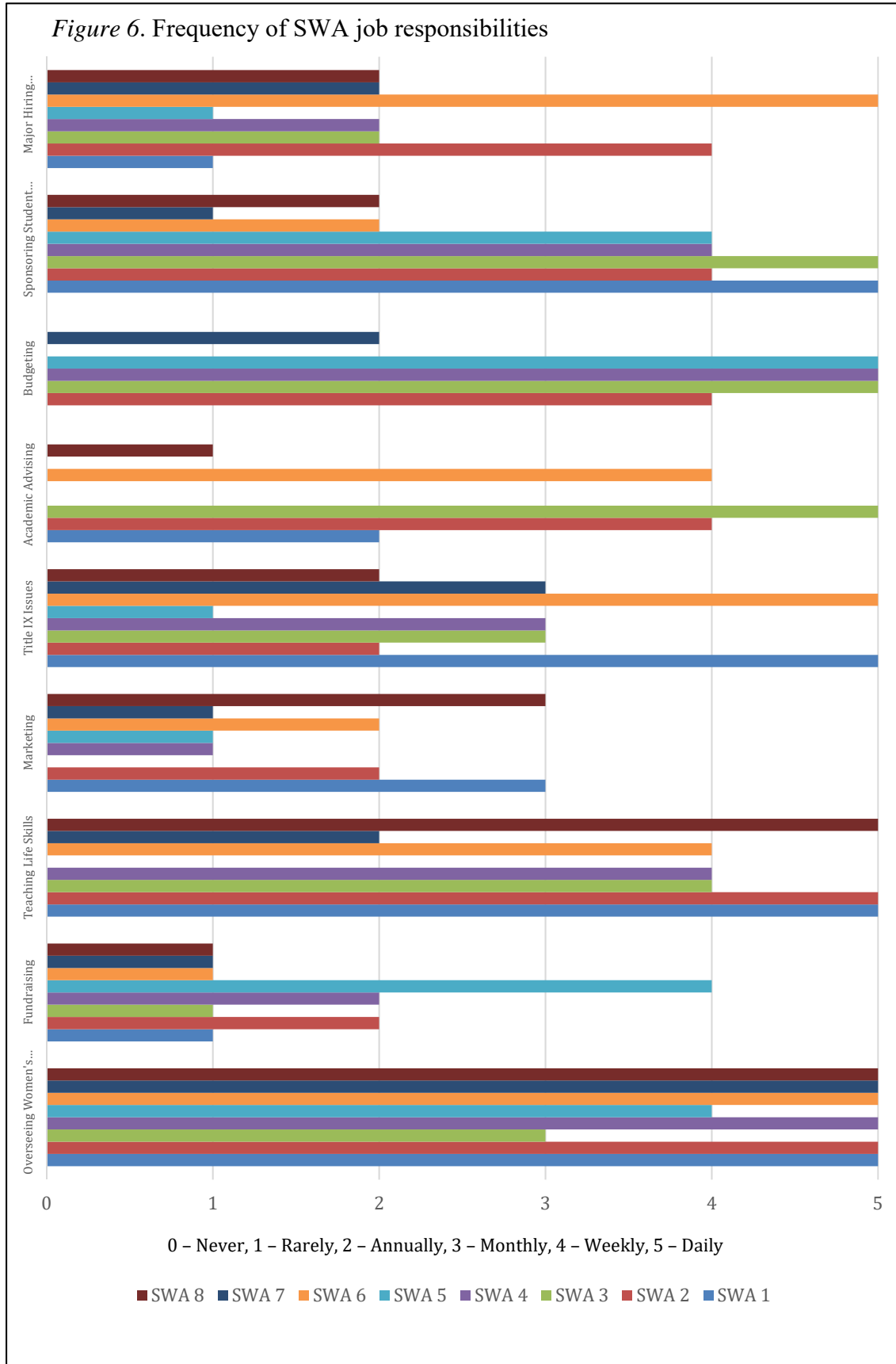
Some women who have been designated as SWAs often see it as a delegitimization of their work, suggesting they are not worthy of a senior leadership position without being noted as a minority (Smith et al., 2020). SWAs are disproportionately driven towards more feminine tasks, such as overseeing women's sports, academic advising, mentoring, teaching life skills, and generally being caretakers, as these jobs enhance the status and comfort of men (Brake, 2007). When asked, male athletic directors consistently state SWAs have significantly more power and control over masculine tasks (Keohane, 2020; Hoffman, 2010a; Smith et al., 2020; Taylor & Hardin, 2016; Hoffman 2010b) such as fundraising, budgeting, marketing, and major hiring decisions than SWAs believe they have.

*Figure 5.* SWA handling Title IX issues in athletic department.



In the survey, women were asked about the frequency with which they complete the masculine (Keohane, 2020; Hoffman, 2010a; Smith et al., 2020; Taylor & Hardin, 2016; Hoffman 2010b) and feminine (Brake, 2007) tasks associated with a job in athletics. Those frequencies are depicted in Figure 6.

SWA DESIGNATION



## SWA DESIGNATION

### **Role Trajectory**

The next theme that developed from the study related to the future trajectory of the role: the idea of eliminating the designation in its entirety. This concept addresses the idea that women can advance without the assistance of the designation.

When asked how women would be perceived if there were not an SWA designation PSWA11 said, “I would hope that they would be perceived as the strong individuals they are and that the equals they are to any man who is involved in collegiate athletics.”

PSWA12 talked about the discussion right now as to if the SWA role is even needed. She said “I think getting rid of it would be a really dangerous thing to do, because [having an involved SWA] is not the case everywhere. Our conference does a good job of keeping the SWA role involved. Do I feel confident that we've come far enough that women would automatically be included and there wouldn't be a negative impact? I don't. Are there more female administrators than there used to be? For sure. If I look at just our conference and who I deal with, that number has grown in this past year. But it also shrunk first. So, it's still not a given. It's still not, I don't think that there's equal opportunity there. So unfortunately, I don't think that it would stay if it wasn't mandated in some places.”

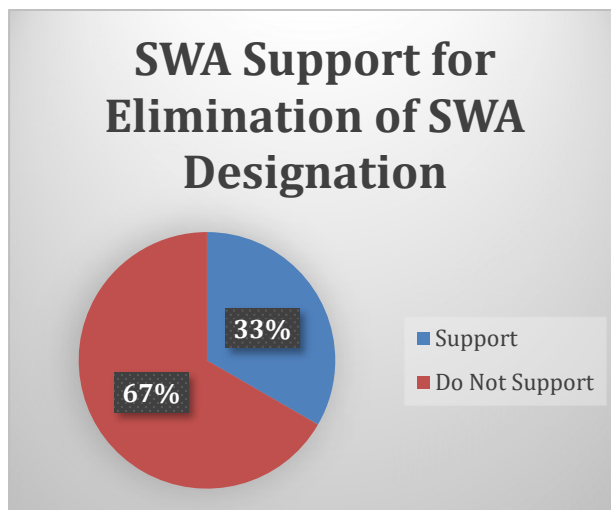
Studies of SWAs called into question if the designation is actually beneficial at all, with some even calling for its removal from the NCAA completely (Smith et al., 2020). Still others in the SWA role believe these women are not being given chances at career advancement, and the SWAs agree the designation should be eliminated. These

## SWA DESIGNATION

same people believe the title encourages outdated practices and hinders SWAs' ability to advance within intercollegiate athletics (Smith et al., 2020).

On the other hand, a participant in the Smith et al. study (2020) noted how the SWA designation marginalized SWAs and limited their power and influence within the workplace. The women surveyed made it clear they were most often introduced as the senior woman administrator, emphasizing that their introductions did not indicate their actual job or duties. The SWA's frustration continued as it was stated, "how many black men are introduced as this is our senior black administrator? Never. Or senior male administrator. Never" (2020, p. 131). This same participant went on to address that she was an executive, but that was never mentioned, just the title that included gender. The SWA concluded the interview by noting that men often tell SWAs not to worry because it is not delimiting to their role, and her response was, "well, you're not being introduced that way, you're being introduced as the athletic director, or the senior associate athletic director, or the deputy athletic director. You're not being introduced as the senior male administrator" (2020, p. 131).

*Figure 7.* SWA support for elimination of SWA designation



## SWA DESIGNATION

### **Recommendations: Next Steps**

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and into the 21<sup>st</sup>, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) and the NCAA have changed the trajectory of women in collegiate athletics, thus the Next Steps offer suggestions as to further research that could be done in order to continue this important work.

One woman brought up an interesting topic that was not previously mentioned in literature. The Russell Rule, named for NBA legend Bill Russell, warrants more research and study. The “Russell Rule” is less a rule and more of a commitment conferences and schools across the country are taking part in (WCC, 2020). The rule requires those who commit to it to include a member of a traditionally underrepresented community in the pool of final candidates for every athletic director, senior administrator, head coach, and full-time assistant coach within the department (WCC, 2020). If all conferences and schools across the country made this commitment, it may allow for women to accede to higher level roles in a way that does not require the SWA designation for their inclusion.

Based on the data derived in this policy analysis case study, and as a researcher, I believe the next steps in the advancement of women in collegiate athletics should include full examination of the Russell Rule by the NCAA and how it could be applied to SWA designation. An additional area of consideration for the NCAA Committee on Women’s Athletics and its understanding of the SWA designation, should include a larger study by Conference or Division. This would garner a larger understanding of the SWA designation and its contributions to athletic departments. As the current study was of the SWA designees in one state, the knowledge garnered may be transferable, but not generalizable to the larger body of SWAs.



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After collecting and analyzing data, the recommendation of this policy analysis case study would be to either eliminate the Senior Woman Administrator, or further define the designation. However, prior to consideration of this highly impactful decision, more research of SWAs in a larger scale study is warranted. A larger study by Conference or Division would allow for greater insight, and more similarities in like departments.

### **Conclusion**

One SWA interviewed said, “the NCAA has done so much work on really trying to better understand everyone's perceptions of this role and really try to outline what this role specifically does,” but yet there are still questions. Is the path moving forward clear? No. But are there options and ideas for how to move forward? Yes.

The NCAA’s Committee on Women’s Athletics has the opportunity and the charge to create equity and respect for women who hold this SWA designation. The hope is that this study does something to assist in these women’s inclusivity in intercollegiate athletics. While the findings were interesting and illuminating, none of the participants identified areas the Committee needs to address at this moment.

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## Appendix A

### Survey Questions

1. Official Job Title
2. Degrees earned
3. Years in collegiate athletics with title, including undergraduate athletic experience, if applicable
4. Are you related, by blood or marriage, to any current or former coach or player in the department in which you are the Senior Woman Administrator?
5. Years in current role
6. Do you handle Title IX issues in your department?
7. Should the Senior Woman Administrator designation be eliminated due to tokenism and marginalization?
8. Please explain your job (in your own words) in 50 words or less.

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How often do you do each of these tasks, as it relates to your expected job roles?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Annually	Rarely	Never
Overseeing women's sports						
Fundraising						
Teaching life skills						
Marketing						
Handling department Title IX issues						
Academic advising						
Budgeting						
Sponsoring student athlete organizations						
Major hiring decisions (football/men's basketball)						

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Script:**

Greetings! My name is Katy Schwartz Drowns and I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri – Columbia. I am studying the role of the Senior Woman Administrator at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and/or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. There are no risks of being involved with this study except the commitment of a 45-minute interview and completion of a survey, which you've already done. As a doctoral study, there are no benefits to you as a participant; however, the data and results collected from the study will provide the NCAA and its member institutions more clarity on the role of the SWA. Do you have any questions before we get started?

### **Interview Questions**

1. Describe your job/role as the Senior Woman Administrator at your institution.
2. Describe your typical workday as related to Senior Woman Administrator responsibilities.
3. What professional strengths and interests do you, as Senior Woman Administrator, possess, and how are those effectively used in the leadership of your athletic department?
4. Do you feel limited in your role as Senior Woman Administrator due to gender roles?
5. If there weren't a Senior Woman Administrator role, how do you feel women in collegiate athletics would be perceived?

## SWA DESIGNATION

6. Is there anything else you think I missed or want to tell me about being a Senior Woman Administrator or woman in collegiate athletics administration?
7. What are the most significant priorities for your athletic department, and what role do you, as the Senior Woman Administrator, play in achieving those goals?
8. In what ways do the athletic director and other senior leaders within your department and on campus provide you, as Senior Woman Administrator, with opportunities to lead departmental initiatives consistent with your interests and abilities and the institution's needs?
9. Do you feel any inherent obligations to female athletes/women's sports in your role as Senior Woman Administrator? Or are you expected to?

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Appendix C

Public four-year universities	Senior Woman Administrator
PU1	PSWA1
PU2	PSWA2
PU3	PSWA3
PU4	PSWA4
PU5	PSWA5
PU6	PSWA6
PU7	PSWA7
PU8	PSWA8
PU9	PSWA9
PU10	PSWA10
PU11	PSWA11
PU12	PSWA12
Independent four-year colleges and universities	Senior Woman Administrator
IU1	ISWA1
IU2	ISWA2
IU3	ISWA3
IU4	ISWA4
IU5	ISWA5
IU6	ISWA6
IU7	ISWA7
IU8	ISWA8
IU9	ISWA9
IC10	ISWA10
IC11	ISWA11



### **Section Five: Contribution To Scholarship**

The contribution to scholarship for this study will be a submission, in hopes of publication, on this website. The submission for consideration of publication will include an abstract of 150-200 words, along with complete references. The submission to the JIA will also follow all of their formatting guidelines. If approved, the article created from this study will be submitted for the double-blind peer-review process.

#### **Target Journal**

The target journal for publication is the *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics (JIA)*.

#### **Rational for this Target**

The Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics (JIA) is one of the leading publications in the field of college sports. Being published on their website gives credence to any research done in the field.

## Outline

- Title
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature Review
  - Leadership
  - Feminism
  - Collegiate Athletics
    - National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
    - Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW)
  - Senior Woman Administrator
    - History
    - Designation
- Summary
- Method
  - Setting
  - Participants
  - Data Collection
  - Data Analysis
  - Problem Definition
- Findings
  - Research Question
  - High-Level Answers

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- Deep-Dive Answers
  - Role Definition
  - Role Elimination
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References
- Appendix A
- Appendix B

### **Plan for Submission**

Who: The College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) at the University of South Carolina, for publication in The Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics.

When: June 2022

How: Microsoft Word files should be submitted electronically via JIIA ScholarOne Manuscript Central.

**Submission-Ready Article**

**Title**

Lift as you Rise. A policy analysis case study of the Senior Woman Administrator designation at NCAA institutions in Missouri.

**Abstract**

The purpose of this policy analysis case study was to fill the gap in research and better understand what people in Missouri who hold the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation do day-in and day-out.

Much of the current research related to this topic is quantitative in nature because the NCAA collects and reports mainly descriptive or directory data (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). This policy analysis case study was qualitative in nature, to gather information and personal stories that cannot be quantified so those women's voices may be amplified. Women's experiences, however they are described, are crucial to the advancement of the feminist cause (Chamallas, 2003).

Between the fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022, a study was done on the Senior Woman Administrator Designation at NCAA Institutions in the state of Missouri. An anonymous survey was sent to all women in the state who hold this designation, and it had a return rate of 35%. Interviews were solicited from the same group, and 20% participated. Survey and interview information are included in appendices A and B respectively.

The study found two potential ideas for changes to be made to the SWA designation: first, further role definition, and second, the elimination of the role in its

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entirety. The study also found reason to believe further research could be done on the Russell Rule and its implications on the SWA designation.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

“You can’t be something there isn’t.” Carol Hutchins had scores of male coaches as a female athlete and growing up in the 1970s (NCAA Champion Magazine, 2017). It was not until high school that she was able to learn from a coach of her own gender (NCAA Champion Magazine, 2017). Carol began coaching in 1981, and, at the time, 55% of NCAA women’s teams had female head coaches (NCAA Champion Magazine, 2017). In 2016, that number had declined to just over 40% (NCAA Champion Magazine, 2017). In a 2015 article on the National Federation of High Schools’ website, two female high school athletic directors were asked about the demanding hours and commitment involved with their positions and how these women balanced the seemingly endless role as Athletic Director with family (Hoch, 2015).

This literature review will provide an overview of two conceptual underpinnings and one theoretical framework guiding this policy analysis case study. The two conceptual underpinnings are: Leadership and Collegiate Athletics. Feminism is the theoretical framework.

#### **Leadership**

Over the course of the 20th century, the concept of leadership evolved greatly from control and power in the first three decades of the century, to the idea of leadership influencing people towards shared goals in the 1960s, and leadership being identified as a process as the 20th century came to a close (Northouse, 2019).

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When looking at leadership as a process, it is identified not as a characteristic one may possess, but as a transactional event occurring between the leader and followers (Northouse, 2019). This is important because this lens of looking at leadership makes it achievable by anyone, not just those born with the trait. Leadership also involves influence, and how leaders communicate with their followers (Northouse, 2019). Leadership focuses on spontaneity and the ability to hone in on others' feelings (Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010). Holmberg and Tyrstrup (2010) tell us that a lot of leadership is about finding the right answers to the right questions at the right times, and that in doing that leaders assure that work can continue.

Prior to research that began in the 1970s, women were seen as homemakers (Keohane, 2020) and in that scenario, women were not seen as leaders, they were seen as managers. They planned, organized, and problem solved, all key characteristics of managers, not leaders (Kotter, 2011; Keohane, 2020). Historically, women were seen as emotional, passive, nurturing, domestic, and subordinate followers (Smith, 2009; Francis, 2017). Many people have the notion that women are underrepresented in leadership because they exhibit different leadership styles and effectiveness (Northouse, 2019). A Princeton study suggested college aged women were more likely to work behind the scenes and/or hold a leadership position in a smaller organization, more closely aligned to their personal values, than a large-scale campus leadership role (Keohane, 2020). Similarly, studies have shown that women tend to place more importance on social values and promoting the welfare of those around them than their male colleagues (Northouse, 2019).

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The principle of similarity tells us that people hire people who look and believe similarly to them (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). The same holds true about mentoring (Keohane, 2020). Unfortunately, women often struggle to develop informal mentor relationships, which is a key developmental experience leading to career success (Northouse, 2019; Keohane, 2020). Women are less likely to voluntarily take on formal leadership roles and less likely to negotiate on their own behalf (Northouse, 2019; Keohane, 2020), which leads to more men in these roles, as they actively pursue advancement more than women (Northouse, 2019). Often, women find it difficult to ascend to positions of leadership due to antiquated workplace roles and norms (Northouse, 2019). One such norm is that women in leadership roles often face pressure to be tough, but not too manly, or as Keohane describes it, “you may be described as shrill or bitchy” (Northouse, 2019; Keohane, 2020, pg. 243).

### **Feminism**

“Feminist scholars have offered a broad definition of feminism that includes issues of equality, valuing what is female, political inclusion, and freedom of choice” (Jackson et al., 1996). The most important point in feminist scholarship is the understanding of women’s truths (Brake, 2007). Women’s experiences, however they are described, are crucial to the advancement of feminism (Chamallas, 2003). Feminist scholars usually begin with the idea that the law has been unfair to women and a change should be sought after (Chamallas, 2003). These scholars assume the worst and are generally suspicious. This can look different, but almost always works to women’s disadvantage (Chamallas, 2003). These scholars seek to uncover hidden gender bias in antiquated policies and investigate the impact that bias has on all women (Bensimon &

## SWA DESIGNATION

Marshall, 2003). “Feminist legal theory stands out because of its unapologetic connection to a specific political movement and its clear focus on women” (Chamallas, 2003, p. 2). This theory also creates adaptations to correct for gender discrimination and gender limitation (Chamallas, 2003).

Many people understand that gender inequality exists, but do not necessarily believe it is due to discrimination (Chamallas, 2003). Yet, worldwide, men overwhelmingly hold more leadership positions in governments and business and statistically make nearly double what women do (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003). That number then increases astronomically when looking at leadership in sport (Stark-Mason, 2018). “In comparison with men, women are relatively powerless in sports” (Brake, 2007, p. 528). “The leadership structure of sports remains almost exclusively male and the dominant model of participation and competition was not selected for its fit with women’s lives” (Brake, 2007, p. 534). Feminists generally do not want to change the institution of sport, but instead ensure equality for women in like positions (Brake, 2007). Those who study women in sport are inclined to transform institutions for the better, not just add female specific leadership roles (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003). Thus, in sport we see that “it appears the NCAA created the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation to provide women a seat at the table, but did not include any mechanisms to assist in their skill development while they were there” (Smith et al., 2020, p. 135).

### **Collegiate Athletics**

#### **National Collegiate Athletic Association.**

At the turn of the 20th century, President Theodore Roosevelt sought to engage collegiate athletic leaders in reforming their sports in order to appeal to a broader



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audience (NCAA, 2010). After a meeting at the White House, a group convened in New York City, and the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) was born (NCAA, 2010). Officially constituted in March of 1906, the IAAUS became the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1910 (NCAA, 2010). In its infancy, the NCAA was simply a rules-making body, and it was not until 1921 that the first NCAA national championships were held in Track and Field (Crowley, 2006). Because men's athletics were more appealing to audiences, the NCAA began as a group that strictly handled men's teams. It was not until the late 1970s that there was any interest in collegiate women's athletics (NCAA, 2010).

### **Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women.**

For much of the 20th century women had the ability to play a variety of intramural sports on college campuses around the country, and national-scale competitions have been occurring since as early as 1941 (Smith et al., 2020). But, it was not until the inception of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) in 1972 that there was a centralized network of competition. From 1972 to its dissolution in 1983 the AIAW hosted as many as 41 annual national championships in 19 sports, exclusively for women (Smith et al., 2020). The organization grew out of a need for a centralized group to solve the challenges that faced coaches, athletes, and supporters of women's collegiate athletics (Kasiak & Hensley, 1983; Smith et al., 2020). In 1981, the NCAA decided to offer Division I championships for women, and the AIAW decided to pursue legal action. The AIAW filed antitrust lawsuits on the basis the NCAA was attempting to monopolize and control women's sports (Kasiak & Hensley, 1983; Smith et al., 2020). After the final dissolution of the AIWA, the President was quoted as saying,

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“the NCAA used its financial monopoly in men’s sports to acquire women’s sports. And that [acquisition] wasn’t coming with any promises to women about fair representation and their role in the NCAA.” Unfortunately, President Lopiano’s words still appear to be true today in many conversations about female representation in intercollegiate athletics (McChesney, 2018).

### **Senior Woman Administrator**

#### **History.**

The Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation was created by the NCAA in 1981 and was first called the Primary Woman Administrator (PWA) (Smith et al., 2020). When first created, this title was given to the individual, man or woman, in charge of overseeing women’s athletics (Smith et al., 2020). It was renamed and modified to require the designee be a woman in 1989 to ensure women were more involved in the senior management and decision-making process of collegiate athletics (Smith et al., 2020). The idea is that each NCAA institution and each athletic conference, Divisions I-III, would have its own SWA (NCAA, 2018). The senior woman administrator (SWA) is now the highest-ranking female in each NCAA athletics department or conference office, and although schools and conferences are not required to have the designation, 99% of schools do (NCAA, 2018). The purpose of the designation is “to promote meaningful representation of women in the leadership and management of college sports” (NCAA, 2018). This designation does not create a leadership position within senior leadership of the department, instead, it is simply a designation; a role, not a position (Smith et al., 2020; Hoffman, 2010). The NCAA does not stipulate what specific responsibilities the woman with this designation should have (Stark-Mason, 2018). In a survey of SWAs,

## SWA DESIGNATION

84% of those surveyed believed some schools would have no women in leadership roles in the athletic department without the designation (Stark-Mason, 2018).

### **Designation.**

According to Diana Kling, associate commissioner and SWA of the Peach Belt Conference, the SWA role “isn’t about women’s issues; it’s about a woman’s perspective on all the issues” (Stark-Mason, 2018). Unfortunately, there is still much confusion with this role.

Common misconceptions surrounding the SWA designation include (1) confusing Senior Woman Administrator with “Senior Women’s Administrator,” suggesting the purpose is to oversee women’s sports, (2) confusing the SWA as the longest serving woman in the department instead of the most senior woman, and (3) believing the SWA designation is required by the NCAA. (NCAA Inclusion, 2018)

Women who have been designated as SWAs see it as a delegitimization of their work, suggesting they are not worthy of a senior leadership position without being noted as a minority (Smith et al., 2020). SWAs are disproportionately driven towards more feminine tasks, such as overseeing women’s sports, academic advising, mentoring, teaching life skills, and generally being caretakers, as these jobs enhance the status and comfort of men (Brake, 2007). When asked, male athletic directors consistently state SWAs have significantly more power and control over masculine tasks (Keohane, 2020; Hoffman, 2010; Smith et al., 2020; Taylor & Hardin, 2016; Hoffman 2010) such as fundraising, budgeting, marketing, and major hiring decisions than SWAs believe they

## SWA DESIGNATION

have. This suggests there is a disconnect between the perceived and actual job responsibilities (Smith et al., 2020).

Earlier studies of SWAs had called into question if the designation is actually beneficial at all, with some even calling for its removal from the NCAA completely (Smith et al., 2020). Still others in the SWA role believe these women are not being given chances at career advancement, and the SWAs agree the designation should be eliminated. The women surveyed made it clear they were most often introduced as the senior woman administrator. The SWA's frustration continued as it was stated, "how many black men are introduced as this is our senior black administrator? Never. Or senior male administrator. Never" (Smith et al., 2020, p. 131). This same participant went on to address that she was an executive, but that was never mentioned, just the title that included gender. The SWA concluded the interview by noting that men often tell them not to worry because it is not delimiting to their role, and her response was, "well, you're not being introduced that way, you're being introduced as the athletic director, or the senior associate athletic director, or the deputy athletic director. You're not being introduced as the senior male administrator" (Smith et al., 2020, p. 131).

### **Literature Review Summary**

Carol Hutchins understood the reality that if there were not female coaches, she could not become one (NCAA Champion Magazine, 2017). But that was 50 years ago. The creation of the Senior Woman Administrator designation has offered a seat at the table for women, but it has not increased other leadership opportunities. Through the literature on leadership, feminism, and collegiate athletics, it seems as a society there may have been progress towards accepting strong women in leadership roles, but in the world

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of collegiate athletics, the world may not be as advanced as one might hope (NCAA Champion Magazine, 2017).

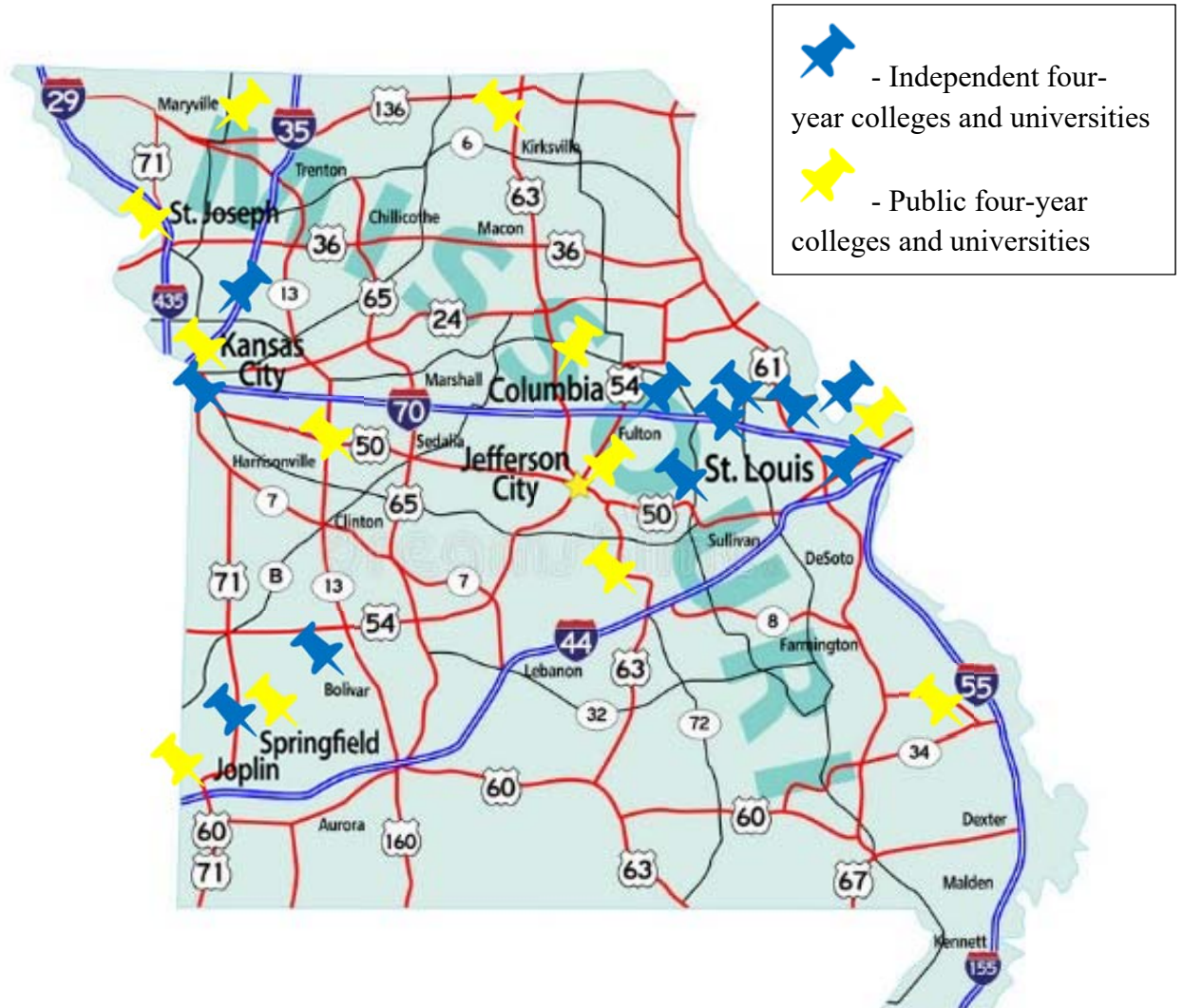
### **Method**

#### **Setting**

The setting of this study was at NCAA institutions throughout the state of Missouri. In the state of Missouri there are 38 four-year colleges and universities (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2021). After reviewing those institutions' websites there are 37 that have athletic departments, which fall into two categories. 23 schools are part of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and the other 14 are part of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Only the NCAA has a recommendation for a Senior Woman Administrator designation (NCAA, 2010); therefore, only those colleges and universities were selected for this study. Of NCAA universities, there are 12 public, four-year schools and 11 private, four-year schools that have intercollegiate athletic departments. Approximate locations of these institutions are indicated on Figure 1. Public institutions are indicated in yellow, and private institutions are noted in blue.

## SWA DESIGNATION

Figure 1. Locations of NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri.

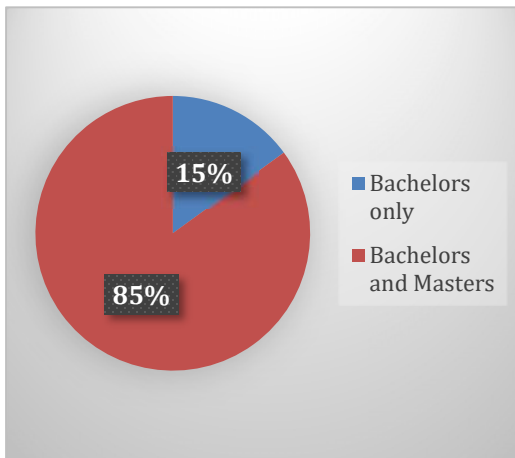


## Participants

The selection of participants in this study was purposeful, as the participants meet a specific and limited criterion. However, the case boundaries are the state of Missouri, thus only allowing participants within those constraints. The participants were women who had been designated as their institution's SWA within the athletic department. 85% of those women hold at least a Master's degree, as represented in Figure 2. The sample size was 23 SWAs from the same number of institutions.

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*Figure 2.* Senior Woman Administrator levels of education.



Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3, there is a wide range of experience levels of women who hold the SWA designation. The average years of experience for the women surveyed was 8.375 years in the role. When asked if they were related by blood or marriage to any current or former player or coach within the department they serve, 75% of SWAs said no, as displayed in Figure 4.

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Figure 3. Senior Woman Administrator years of experience.

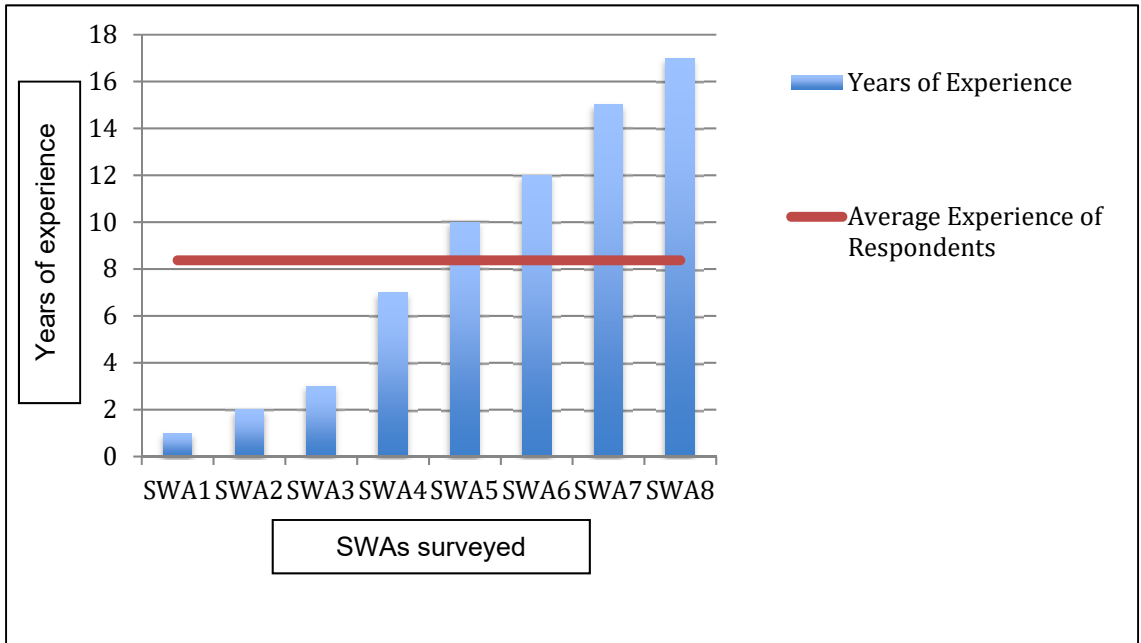
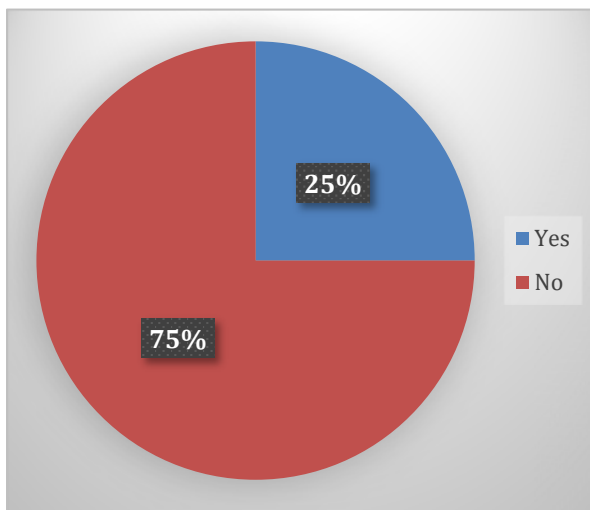


Figure 4. Percent of SWAs related to current or former player or coach in the department they serve.



### Problem Definition

The problem this policy analysis case study sought to address is the lack of literature related to the SWA role. The SWA designation is given to the highest-ranking



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female in each National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletic department or conference office (NCAA, 2018). However, the NCAA does not stipulate what specific responsibilities the woman with this designation should have (Stark-Mason, 2018). There is a lack of clarity of the SWA designation's purpose, role, and obligations (Hoffman, 2010). Studies have examined the history of the designation, the job trajectory associated with the designation, and what the designation means within athletic departments across the country, but they have not identified what the designation *does* (Hoffman, 2010). The job tasks of the designation, and what it looks like on a daily basis, are unclear.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Survey.**

As described in Krueger & Casey (2015) and Seidman (2019), the proposal and details of the study were submitted for review and approval from the Institutional Review Board prior to data collection. With the nature of this policy analysis case study, there was little to no risk to participants, and the integrity and confidentiality of all participants has been meticulously maintained. The survey responses were submitted through SurveyMonkey, with the researcher obtaining the data from that service. Surveys were anonymous, with any identifying information redacted. Prior to any research-based communication, an email was sent (Appendix C) to all potential participants explaining the policy analysis case study. The study first consisted of a SurveyMonkey survey of no more than ten questions and one frequency table (Appendix B). This length of survey will help boost response rates, as it is not overly cumbersome to complete (Fink, 2017). Survey data was collected digitally, and data retrieved from the SurveyMonkey service, to protect participants' anonymity (Mertens, 2020). This survey was sent to all women

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listed on their institution's website as the SWA, and each participant was asked for informed consent prior to beginning their participation in the study (Appendix D). In case any identifiable information was collected, it was redacted. Survey questions were plain and simple (Fink, 2017). Data collected from the survey "describes the facts and characteristics" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 5) of the SWA.

At the conclusion of the survey, the SWA was asked if she could provide any documents via email related to her official job responsibilities. This helped ensure saturation and triangulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), both of which involve checking information that has been collected from different sources (Mertens, 2020). Data has been kept anonymous and confidential by redacting names, institutions, and other identifying information.

### **Interviews.**

After the survey time period concluded, requests for interviews were sent to all members of the sample set. Interviews offered the opportunity to get different information than a survey, in a more open-ended fashion (Seidman, 2019). The follow-up virtual interviews were no more than 45 minutes, as to prevent what Seidman (2019, p. 26) describes as "watching the clock." The process was semi structured, as laid out in Merriam & Tisdell (2016), by using a list of questions as a guide (Appendix H). Semi structured interviews allowed for the slight changes in wording of questions and the order of the questions so as to adapt to the interview in real time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The guide Krueger & Casey (2015) lay out for good questions and questions to avoid was used. This guide is constructed for Focus Groups, but it was modified for one-on-one

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interviews. The interviews were done synchronously over Zoom (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and were audio recorded for transcription purposes.

### **Data Analysis**

Survey data was categorized by descriptive statistics, as laid out in Fink (2017). Qualitative data analysis (Fink, 2017) and content analysis (Fink, 2017) were completed to identify “certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters or sentences” (Fink, 2017, p. 152). Survey data was coded, and re-coded a week later, as described in Fink (2017). The Constant Comparative Method was utilized, as it “calls on the researcher to seek verification for hypotheses that emerge throughout the study” (Mertens, 2020, p. 257). The transcription data was also coded and categorized, in order to develop themes. NCAA governing documents were analyzed for further theme development. Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey (2015) impress the important difference between coding and categorizing (p. 564), and as such, these documents will be coded and categorized in the manner laid out by Newcomer et al. (2015).

After the data had been collected and analyzed and the themes identified through the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), there was an opportunity to compare and contrast the information collected against pre-existing data and literature.

### **Findings**

#### **Research Question**

The data collected and analyzed for this study answered the question: what are the job tasks and basic daily functions of the SWA in today’s collegiate athletics? In order to answer the question two levels of answers are provided. The high-level answer provides a

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broad, overall solution, whereas the deep-dive answers provide greater insight into that solution.

### **High-Level Answer**

The information below has been identified as overarching themes found consistently in surveys, interviews, and document analysis. These themes answer the research question previously identified. This information gives a broad strokes solution to the research question.

#### **A Typical Day Doesn't Exist.**

“Does anyone in this role have a typical day?” Every woman interviewed made a comment in this vein.

PSWA11 said, “I feel like I've been really fortunate in the two athletics directors I've served in this role because both have really seen this role as an empowering one.” ISWA3 went a step further to say, “I'm at the table. I have a seat at the table, whether that be department conversations, decision making, and whether that be university departments or university decisions and how it impacts athletics.”

Answering the question “What are the job tasks and basic daily functions of the SWA in today's collegiate athletics?” solicited a multitude of answers. Responses from surveys and interviews included: internal operations, athletic compliance, game operations, event and sport management, oversight of academics and training room, health care administration, Title IX, gender equity, counsel coaches and administrators, student athlete's campus life, human resources, staff development and retention, student-athlete development, and budget management. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that a typical day does not exist. Each day being different and offering a new challenge was part

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of the appeal of this role for many women of the women interviewed. A typical day means one where anything can happen, and as an SWA a woman needs to be prepared to leave a prepared to-do list for another day, and solve today's crisis.

### **Deep-Dive Answers**

The Deep-Dive Answers get more in depth into solutions laid out by SWAs in surveys, interviews, and document analysis, as well as what preexisting literature tells us about the trajectory of the designation.

#### **Role Definition.**

The first concept drawn from the study was that of further role definition. As this study attempted, and others have before, there is no specific job description for this designation, and the women interviewed described vastly different daily tasks. There is still much discrepancy in job responsibilities between the women who hold this designation, and further role definition is needed to improve the efficiency of the designation.

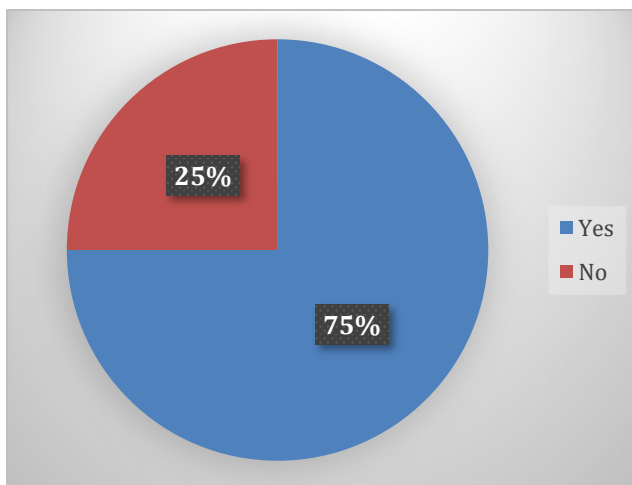
All those interviewed said part of what they loved about the job was that it was different each day. But those women also noted they are well respected and included at their institutions, and they have friends and colleagues that are not, and for them role definition may help improve their situations. Figure 5 indicates that 75% of women surveyed said they are responsible for Title IX issues within their athletic department.

When ISWA3 was talking about her role as it complements the Athletic Director she said, "so I am his right-hand woman. And so, when he's not there I really am the one that kind of step in and help to run the operations, the daily operations of our athletics program."

## SWA DESIGNATION

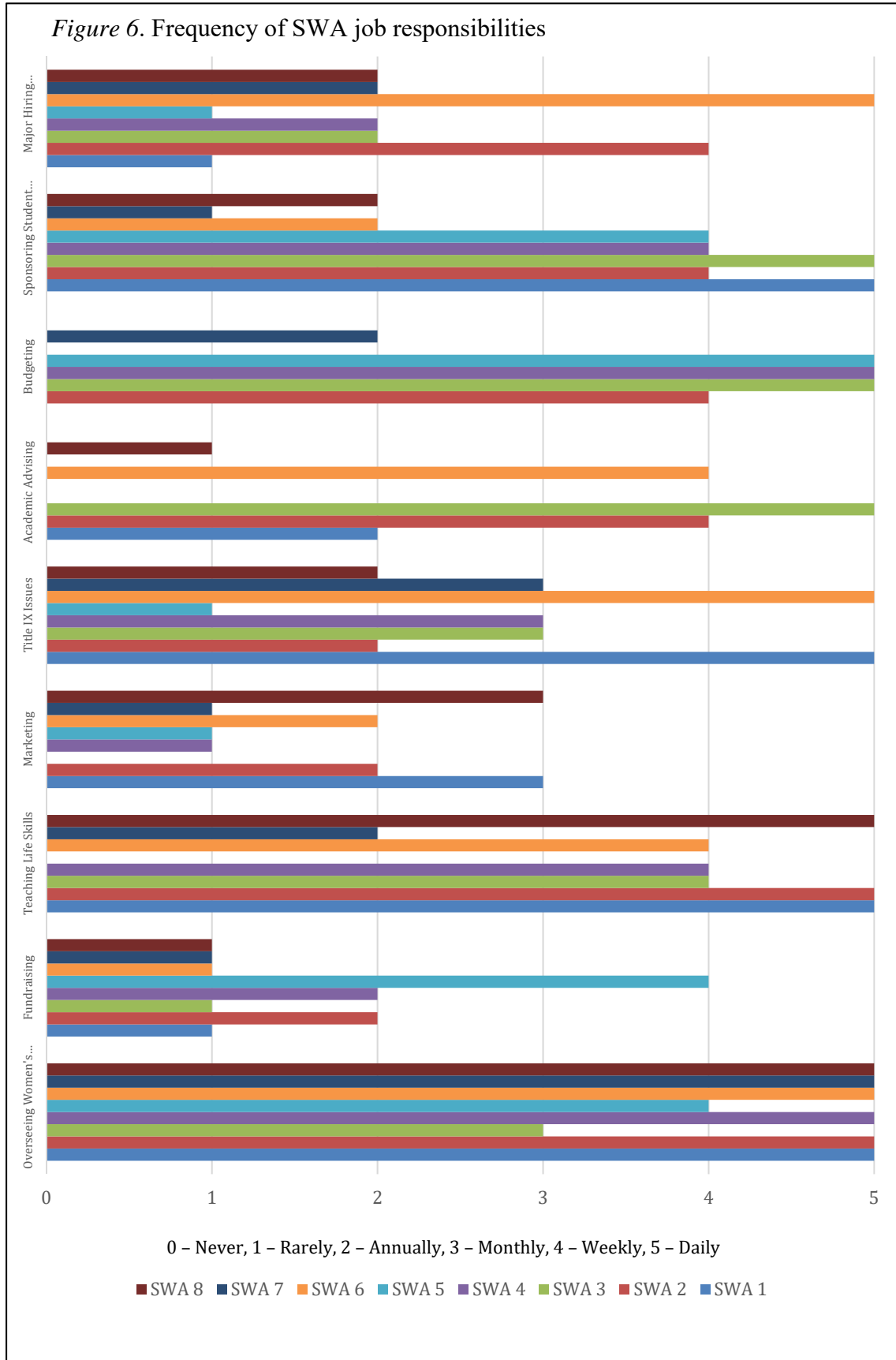
Some women who have been designated as SWAs often see it as a delegitimization of their work, suggesting they are not worthy of a senior leadership position without being noted as a minority (Smith et al., 2020). SWAs are disproportionately driven towards more feminine tasks, such as overseeing women's sports, academic advising, mentoring, teaching life skills, and generally being caretakers, as these jobs enhance the status and comfort of men (Brake, 2007). When asked, male athletic directors consistently state that SWAs have significantly more power and control over masculine tasks (Keohane, 2020; Hoffman, 2010a; Smith et al., 2020; Taylor & Hardin, 2016; Hoffman 2010b) such as fundraising, budgeting, marketing, and major hiring decisions than SWAs believe they have.

*Figure 5.* SWA handling Title IX issues in athletic department.



In the survey, women were asked about the frequency with which they complete the masculine (Keohane, 2020; Hoffman, 2010a; Smith et al., 2020; Taylor & Hardin, 2016; Hoffman 2010b) and feminine (Brake, 2007) tasks associated with a job in athletics. Those frequencies are depicted in Figure 6.

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### **Role Trajectory.**

The next theme that developed from the study related to the future trajectory of the role: the idea of eliminating the designation in its entirety. This concept addresses the idea that women can advance without the assistance of the designation.

When asked how women would be perceived if there were not an SWA designation PSWA11 said, “I would hope that they would be perceived as the strong individuals they are and that the equals they are to any man who is involved in collegiate athletics.”

PSWA12 talked about the discussion right now as to if the SWA role is even needed. She said “I think getting rid of it would be a really dangerous thing to do, because [having an involved SWA] is not the case everywhere. Our conference does a good job of keeping the SWA role involved. Do I feel confident that we've come far enough that women would automatically be included and there wouldn't be a negative impact? I don't. Are there more female administrators than there used to be? For sure. If I look at just our conference and who I deal with, that number has grown in this past year. But it also shrunk first. So, it's still not a given. It's still not, I don't think that there's equal opportunity there. So unfortunately, I don't think that it would stay if it wasn't mandated in some places.”

Studies of SWAs called into question if the designation is actually beneficial at all, with some even calling for its removal from the NCAA completely (Smith et al., 2020). Still others in the SWA role believe these women are not being given chances at career advancement, and the SWAs agree the designation should be eliminated. These

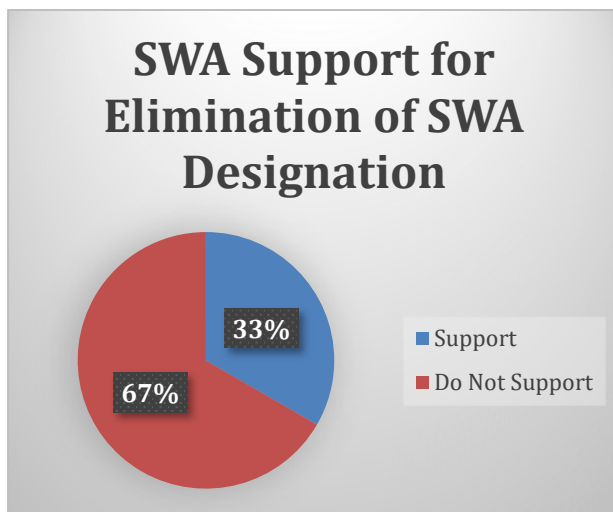


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same people believe the title encourages outdated practices and hinders SWAs' ability to advance within intercollegiate athletics (Smith et al., 2020).

On the other hand, a participant in the Smith et al. study (2020) noted how the SWA designation marginalized SWAs and limited their power and influence within the workplace. The women surveyed made it clear they were most often introduced as the senior woman administrator, emphasizing that their introductions didn't indicate their actual job or duties. The SWA's frustration continued as it was stated, "how many black men are introduced as this is our senior black administrator? Never. Or senior male administrator. Never" (2020, p. 131). This same participant went on to address that she was an executive, but that was never mentioned, just the title that included gender. The SWA concluded the interview by noting that men often tell SWAs not to worry because it is not delimiting to their role, and her response was, "well, you're not being introduced that way, you're being introduced as the athletic director, or the senior associate athletic director, or the deputy athletic director. You're not being introduced as the senior male administrator" (2020, p. 131).

*Figure 7.* SWA support for elimination of SWA designation



### **Discussion**

PSWA12 brought up an interesting topic that was not previously mentioned in literature. The Russell Rule, named for NBA legend Bill Russell, warrants more research and study. She said, “our conference is actually talking about the Russell Rule right now. And how can we make a pledge of sorts to, and our university, we already do that through our HR. They certify that we have a diverse pool and all those sorts of things.” The “Russell Rule” is less a rule and more of a commitment conferences and schools across the country are taking part in (WCC, 2020). The rule requires those who commit to it to include a member of a traditionally underrepresented community in the pool of final candidates for every athletic director, senior administrator, head coach, and full-time assistant coach within the department (WCC, 2020). If all conferences and schools across the country made this commitment, it may allow for women to accede to higher level roles in a way that doesn’t require the SWA designation for their inclusion. The next steps in this field of study should include examination of the Russell Rule and how it could be applied to the SWA designation. As PSWA12 indicated in her interview, her conference is currently in the beginning phases of implementation of the Russell Rule within their Conference. A larger scale research study should be done after full implementation to decipher the impacts of the Rule on the Conference as a whole. The information disaggregated from this study could inform other Conferences and the NCAA as a whole, on the future trajectory of the designation.

### **Conclusion**

One SWA interviewed said, “the NCAA has done so much work on really trying to better understand everyone's perceptions of this role and really try to outline what this

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role specifically does,” but yet there are still questions. Is the path moving forward clear? No. While the findings were interesting and illuminating, none of the participants identified areas that need to be addressed at this moment. But are there options and ideas for how to move forward? Yes. The hope being this study does something to assist in these women’s inclusivity in intercollegiate athletics.

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## Appendix A

### Survey Questions

1. Official Job Title
2. Degrees earned
3. Years in collegiate athletics with title, including undergraduate athletic experience, if applicable
4. Are you related, by blood or marriage, to any current or former coach or player in the department in which you are the Senior Woman Administrator?
5. Years in current role
6. Do you handle Title IX issues in your department?
7. Should the Senior Woman Administrator designation be eliminated due to tokenism and marginalization?
8. Please explain your job (in your own words) in 50 words or less.



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How often do you do each of these tasks, as it relates to your expected job roles?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Annually	Rarely	Never
Overseeing women's sports						
Fundraising						
Teaching life skills						
Marketing						
Handling department Title IX issues						
Academic advising						
Budgeting						
Sponsoring student athlete organizations						
Major hiring decisions (football/men's basketball)						

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Script:**

Greetings! My name is Katy Schwartz Drowns and I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri – Columbia. I am studying the role of the Senior Woman Administrator at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and/or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. There are no risks of being involved with this study except the commitment of a 45-minute interview and completion of a survey, which you've already done. As a doctoral study, there are no benefits to you as a participant; however, the data and results collected from the study will provide the NCAA and its member institutions more clarity on the role of the SWA. Do you have any questions before we get started?

### **Interview Questions**

1. Describe your job/role as the Senior Woman Administrator at your institution.
2. Describe your typical workday as related to Senior Woman Administrator responsibilities.
3. What professional strengths and interests do you, as Senior Woman Administrator, possess, and how are those effectively used in the leadership of your athletic department?
4. Do you feel limited in your role as Senior Woman Administrator due to gender roles?
5. If there weren't a Senior Woman Administrator role, how do you feel women in collegiate athletics would be perceived?

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6. Is there anything else you think I missed or want to tell me about being a Senior Woman Administrator or woman in collegiate athletics administration?
7. What are the most significant priorities for your athletic department, and what role do you, as the Senior Woman Administrator, play in achieving those goals?
8. In what ways do the athletic director and other senior leaders within your department and on campus provide you, as Senior Woman Administrator, with opportunities to lead departmental initiatives consistent with your interests and abilities and the institution's needs?
9. Do you feel any inherent obligations to female athletes/women's sports in your role as Senior Woman Administrator? Or are you expected to?

## Appendix C

Public four-year universities	Senior Woman Administrator
PU1	PSWA1
PU2	PSWA2
PU3	PSWA3
PU4	PSWA4
PU5	PSWA5
PU6	PSWA6
PU7	PSWA7
PU8	PSWA8
PU9	PSWA9
PU10	PSWA10
PU11	PSWA11
PU12	PSWA12
Independent four-year colleges and universities	Senior Woman Administrator
IU1	ISWA1
IU2	ISWA2
IU3	ISWA3
IU4	ISWA4
IU5	ISWA5
IU6	ISWA6
IU7	ISWA7
IU8	ISWA8
IU9	ISWA9
IC10	ISWA10
IC11	ISWA11

## **Section Six: Scholarly Practitioner Reflection**

### **The Influence of the Dissertation Process on my Practice as an Educational Leader**

I missed my interview for this program. While everyone else was in Columbia doing a formal interview for the Education Leadership and Policy Analysis (ELPA) program at the University of Missouri, I was sitting in a hospital bed in St. Joseph, MO. I had pneumonia, and I knew I'd gotten it from one of my students.

It was the beginning of March, and I was starting the post-season of Speech and Debate. I was spending 12-14 hours a day at school, working with students who wanted to qualify to state and nationals, and it was wholly unfulfilling. I was experiencing zero intellectual stimulation (Northouse, 2020). I had been teaching high school speech and debate for just over a decade and I wasn't going anywhere. Part of me thought maybe that's why I applied for this program; I needed a new adventure, and I wasn't getting that in my professional life. I'd been coaching the same students, leading the same department, and I wasn't able to be creative or innovative any longer (Northouse, 2018). I was in my classroom, again working with students, when I got the email that I'd been accepted to the program, and I had a feeling ELPA would change everything, and I was right.

In the spring of 2020, in addition to being a teacher, coach, doctoral student, mom, and wife, the world entered a global pandemic. I began teaching remotely, and all speech and debate tournaments for the foreseeable future were canceled. It left me with a lot of time on my hands, so I started job hunting. Honestly, I didn't believe I had the courage to leave the classroom. I only knew how to be a teacher. I went to school for 17 years, and turned around and went back to high school. I stumbled upon a job posting in

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higher education that I thought might be a fit. I applied and didn't hear a thing. Which is when I learned that the higher education hiring process moves at the speed of cold molasses.

I knew I was comfortable in the job I was in. I was confident in my abilities to lead my team, my department, and I knew what the expectations were. Then I got the call. Of course, as everything was shut down in the spring of 2020, it wasn't ideal to have in-person interviews, so my first interview for my potential new career was virtual. In my undergrad we did mock interviews frequently. I knew how to teach a lesson for an interview panel, as well as give a presentation. We never once prepared for a virtual interview, but I was in a new world and it included virtual interviews.

After two interviews and calls to my references, I was offered a position with Northwest Missouri State University. I was thrilled, nervous, and anxious all rolled into one. I called my principal and officially resigned, turned in my keys and laptop, and paid \$2,000 in cash to get out of my contract. Again, I wondered if I had the guts to actually do this, but with what I had learned in the ELPA program I knew I could. I knew this was my chance to put myself out there and sink or swim; and I was determined to swim.

I was moving into a different type of educational leader role. I was going to be the connection between 40+ schools and the university, and I'd be planning programs for high school students to get college credit while they were still in high school. This authentic leadership style, of creating connections with others (Northouse, 2018) was a skill I had gained in the ELPA, leadership adult learning, and program planning semesters. Then it clicked, and I knew I'd been in the ELPA program for a moment just like that.

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Fast forward to the spring of 2022 when the time to write my dissertation arrived. I've developed a new love and passion for my work, I've been stretched in ways I never thought possible, and I know I am making early college opportunities better for students all over northwest Missouri. My leadership skills continue to grow and develop, and I have ELPA to thank for that.

### **The Influence of the Dissertation Process on me as a Scholar**

I am a lifelong learner. When I was in high school, that was painted on the wall in our cafeteria, encouraging all students to be lifelong learners. I took them seriously! I've been in college for 11 years! The three years as part of the ELPA program have changed me more than any others. This program has refined my skills as a learner and helped me to become a better researcher and a much better writer. I have loved the dissertation process, and I think that's mostly because I chose a topic I was genuinely interested in, even though it would help me absolutely none in my career path.

Recently, as part of my new job at Northwest, I visited one of my fellow cohort member's schools. She introduced me to the new secretary and said, "this is Katy, she's a lame-o-saurus too!" She explained to me that the secretary thought we were lame because we always had class on Wednesday nights and weren't available to hang out. But I love school! I don't know what I'll do with my free time, especially Wednesdays, once this program is over.

My mom had a rule when I was a kid, that no matter where we went on vacation, we had to learn something. My family took Merriam & Bierema (2014) seriously when they talked about non-formal learning happening in museums, art galleries, parks, and other public places. Now, looking back, we were a very privileged family. I didn't know

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until much later in my life how lucky I had been to experience such wonderful non-formal learning as a child, and that's something I've taken with me into adulthood. I still love exploring museums in new cities, and seeing traveling exhibits when they come to town.

### **Conclusion**

The painting on the wall at my school worked. I am, and will always be, a lifelong learner. I've been very fortunate to have been able to learn all my life. The ELPA program and the dissertation process has opened my eyes to the places and spaces where learning happens and given a name to the processes I've been experiencing for much of my life. I love to learn and will continue to do so as long as I can.

This program has gotten me out of my comfort zone in ways I didn't know were possible. It also gave me the courage to leave a job that was no longer making me happy, and explore the "real world." The knowledge, skills, and connections I've made in this program will stay with me long after I've sold my textbooks at a garage sale. I'm forever grateful for ELPA. MIZ! B-E-A-R!



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SWA DESIGNATION

**Appendix A**

Public four-year universities	Senior Woman Administrator
PU1	PSWA1
PU2	PSWA2
PU3	PSWA3
PU4	PSWA4
PU5	PSWA5
PU6	PSWA6
PU7	PSWA7
PU8	PSWA8
PU9	PSWA9
PU10	PSWA10
PU11	PSWA11
PU12	PSWA12
Independent four-year colleges and universities	Senior Woman Administrator
IU1	ISWA1
IU2	ISWA2
IU3	ISWA3
IU4	ISWA4
IU5	ISWA5
IU6	ISWA6
IU7	ISWA7
IU8	ISWA8
IU9	ISWA9
IC10	ISWA10
IC11	ISWA11

**Appendix B**



**Institutional Review Board**  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
FWA Number: 00002876  
IRB Registration Numbers: 00000731, 00009014

310 Jesse Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211  
573-882-3181  
irb@missouri.edu

November 23, 2021

Principal Investigator: Katy Schwartz Drowns (MU-Student)  
Department: Educational Leadership-EDD

Your IRB Application to project entitled AN EXAMINATION OF THE SENIOR WOMAN ADMINISTRATOR DESIGNATION AT NCAA INSTITUTIONS IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2077162
IRB Review Number	349333
Initial Application Approval Date	November 23, 2021
IRB Expiration Date	November 23, 2022
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Exempt
Exempt Categories (Revised Common Rule)	45 CFR 46.104d(2)(i) 45 CFR 46.104d(2)(ii)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
HIPAA Category	No HIPAA
Approved Documents	updated version - survey recruitment email survey_questions.docx interview_script.docx interview_recruitment_email_for_swias.docx exempt_project-consent.docx

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

- No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
- All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment Form.
- Major noncompliance deviations must be reported to the MU IRB on the Event Report within 5 business days of the research team becoming aware of the deviation. Major deviations result when research activities may affected the research subject's rights, safety, and/or welfare, or may have had the potential to impact even if no actual harm occurred. Please refer to the MU IRB Noncompliance policy for additional details.
- The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date to keep the study active or to close it.
- Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.

**Appendix C**

**Survey recruitment email for SWAs**

Greetings,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Katy Schwartz Drowns, and I am a Doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program through the University of Missouri-Columbia. I am conducting a qualitative research study on the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri.

As your institution's SWA you have been selected to participate in the following research study. I would greatly appreciate your support in completing the attached survey at your earliest convenience. Your participation is voluntary, but important to the success of this research study. Attached you will find an informed consent form. By taking the survey you are giving your consent.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this survey, your efforts are appreciated.

Survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DGQFKHX>

With great thanks and kind regards,

Katy Schwartz Drowns

University of Missouri, Columbia: Doctoral Student

Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

**APPENDIX D**

**Survey Informed Consent**

AN EXAMINATION OF THE SENIOR WOMAN ADMINISTRATOR  
DESIGNATION

AT NCAA INSTITUTIONS IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to understand the role of the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri. Through participation in this research study you are allowed the right to be informed about the study procedures and participation consent. This informed consent provides you specific information about the research study. If you feel you need further clarification regarding the research study please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Your participation in the research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and/or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice.

The purpose of the research study is to understand the role of the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri.

Participants will include SWAs from NCAA institutions across the state of Missouri. Participants will be asked to complete a survey through Survey Monkey.

The research study will take approximately two months to complete. Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

There are no risks of being involved with the study except the commitment of a 45-minute interview and completion of a survey.

## SWA DESIGNATION

As a doctoral study, there are no benefits to you as a participant; however, the data and results collected from the study will provide the NCAA and its member institutions more clarity on the role of the SWA. The study will help fill a gap in literature relating to the role of the SWA.

There will be no way of identifying who took the survey and therefore no information from the survey can be cross-referenced. Information will be locked in a secure location, with the researcher only having access to the information.

Participants may contact the following at any time with questions or concerns related to the research study.

Please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions about your rights as a research participant. The IRB can be reached at [irb@missouri.edu](mailto:irb@missouri.edu) or 573-882-3181.

Researcher Katherine “Katy” Schwartz Drowns: 816.682.4409 or [katyschwartzdrowns@yahoo.com](mailto:katyschwartzdrowns@yahoo.com)

University of Missouri Ed.D Advisor contact information: Dr. Nissa Ingraham 660.562.1239 or [NissaI@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:NissaI@nwmissouri.edu)

## AUTHORIZATION

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Signature

---

Date

I have read and understand the purpose of the research study and the contents of the consent form and I voluntarily choose to participate in the research study. I understand

## SWA DESIGNATION

that I will receive a copy of the informed consent and is intended for my participation in the research study and does not take away any of my legal rights.

## Appendix E

### Survey Questions

1. Official Job Title
2. Degrees earned
3. Years in collegiate athletics with title, including undergraduate athletic experience, if applicable
4. Are you related, by blood or marriage, to any current or former coach or player in the department in which you are the Senior Woman Administrator?
5. Years in current role
6. Do you handle Title IX issues in your department?
7. Should the Senior Woman Administrator designation be eliminated due to tokenism and marginalization?
8. Please explain your job (in your own words) in 50 words or less.

SWA DESIGNATION

How often do you do each of these tasks, as it relates to your expected job roles?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Annually	Rarely	Never
Overseeing women's sports						
Fundraising						
Teaching life skills						
Marketing						
Handling department Title IX issues						
Academic advising						
Budgeting						
Sponsoring student athlete organizations						
Major hiring decisions (football/men's basketball)						



**Appendix F**

**Interview recruitment email for SWAs**

Greetings,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Katy Schwartz Drowns, and I am a Doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program through the University of Missouri-Columbia. I am conducting a qualitative research study on the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri.

As your institution's SWA you have been selected to participate in the following research study. I would appreciate your notification of interest to participate in a 45-minute interview at your earliest convenience. Upon your notification of interest, I will be in contact with you to set up a date and time for the interview. All interviews will be virtual and recorded for transcription purposes. Your participation is voluntary, but important to the success of this research study. Attached you will find an informed consent form. By agreeing to the interview, you are giving your consent.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the interview process, your efforts are appreciated.

With great thanks and kind regards,

Katy Schwartz Drowns

University of Missouri, Columbia: Doctoral Student

Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

## **Appendix G**

### **Interview Informed Consent**

#### AN EXAMINATION OF THE SENIOR WOMAN ADMINISTRATOR DESIGNATION

#### AT NCAA INSTITUTIONS IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to understand the role of the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri. Through participation in this research study you are allowed the right to be informed about the study procedures and participation consent. This informed consent provides you specific information about the research study. If you feel you need further clarification regarding the research study please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Your participation in the research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and/or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice.

The purpose of the research study is to understand the role of the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri.

Participants will include SWAs from NCAA institutions across the state of Missouri. Participants will be randomly selected to participate in an interview lasting no longer than 45-minutes. All interviews will be virtual and recorded for transcription purposes. There are no risks of being involved with the study except the commitment of a 45-minute interview.

The research study will take approximately two months to complete. Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

## SWA DESIGNATION

There are no risks of being involved with the study except the commitment of a 45-minute interview and completion of a survey.

As a doctoral study, there are no benefits to you as a participant; however, the data and results collected from the study will provide the NCAA and its member institutions more clarity on the role of the SWA. The study will help fill a gap in literature relating to the role of the SWA.

There will be no way of identifying who took the survey and therefore no information from the survey can be cross-referenced. Information will be locked in a secure location, with the researcher only having access to the information.

Participants may contact the following at any time with questions or concerns related to the research study.

Participants may contact the following at any time with questions or concerns related to the research study.

Please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions about your rights as a research participant. The IRB can be reached at [irb@missouri.edu](mailto:irb@missouri.edu) or 573-882-3181.

Researcher Katherine “Katy” Schwartz Drowns: 816.682.4409 or [katyschwartzdrowns@yahoo.com](mailto:katyschwartzdrowns@yahoo.com)

University of Missouri Ed.D Advisor contact information: Dr. Nissa Ingraham 660.562.1239 or [NissaI@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:NissaI@nwmissouri.edu)

## AUTHORIZATION

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Signature

---

Date

## SWA DESIGNATION

I have read and understand the purpose of the research study and the contents of the consent form and I voluntarily choose to participate in the research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of the informed consent and is intended for my participation in the research study and does not take away any of my legal rights.

## Appendix H

### Interview Script:

Greetings! My name is Katy Schwartz Drowns and I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri – Columbia. I am studying the role of the Senior Woman Administrator at NCAA institutions in the state of Missouri. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and/or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. There are no risks of being involved with this study except the commitment of a 45-minute interview and completion of a survey, which you've already done. As a doctoral study, there are no benefits to you as a participant; however, the data and results collected from the study will provide the NCAA and its member institutions more clarity on the role of the SWA. Do you have any questions before we get started?

### Interview Questions

1. Describe your job/role as the Senior Woman Administrator at your institution.
2. Describe your typical workday as related to Senior Woman Administrator responsibilities.
3. What professional strengths and interests do you, as Senior Woman Administrator, possess, and how are those effectively used in the leadership of your athletic department?
4. Do you feel limited in your role as Senior Woman Administrator due to gender roles?
5. If there weren't a Senior Woman Administrator role, how do you feel women in collegiate athletics would be perceived?

## SWA DESIGNATION

6. Is there anything else you think I missed or want to tell me about being a Senior Woman Administrator or woman in collegiate athletics administration?
7. What are the most significant priorities for your athletic department, and what role do you, as the Senior Woman Administrator, play in achieving those goals?
8. In what ways do the athletic director and other senior leaders within your department and on campus provide you, as Senior Woman Administrator, with opportunities to lead departmental initiatives consistent with your interests and abilities and the institution's needs?
9. Do you feel any inherent obligations to female athletes/women's sports in your role as Senior Woman Administrator? Or are you expected to?

## SWA DESIGNATION

### **Vita**

Katy Schwartz Drowns is the only child of Bill and Dayla Schwartz from Independence, MO.

After graduating college, Katy spent 12 years as a high school speech and debate teacher and coach. She received the National Speech and Debate Association's First Diamond award in 2014 and Second Diamond award in 2019. Katy's students competed at the Missouri State High School Activities Association State Tournament, the National Individual Event Tournament of Champions, the National Catholic Forensic League Grand National Tournament, the Congressional Debate Tournament of Champions, and the Lincoln Financial Group and National Forensic League National Tournament.

Katy now works in higher education, connecting high school students to dual credit and dual enrollment opportunities. Katy has a Master's degree and an Education Specialist degree in Leadership and Administration.

In addition, Katy volunteers as a member of the senior leadership team of the American Legion Auxiliary's Missouri Girls State program. This program, which began in 1941, offers rising high school senior girls the opportunity to be immersed in a civics learning experience. The experience is a fast-paced, high-energy educational program designed to test young people's leadership, citizenship, and scholastic abilities. Katy also volunteers as a sexual assault prevention and healthy relationships speaker to collegiate women. She works with these young women to take care of those within their sisterhood, and combat bystander behaviors.

Katy's married to Trey, and they have a son, Cooper; together they live in Savannah, MO.