

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MEASURES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between organizational effectiveness measures and donor contributions for National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I athletic departments. For this study, donor contributions were used as a proxy for donors' perception of organizational effectiveness for these athletic departments. Using a combination of the goals attainment model (Price, 1972) and the strategic constituencies model (Connolly, Conlon, & Deutsch, 1980) the effectiveness measures used were athletic performance, student athlete welfare, and student athlete academic success. The whole of Division I, as well as the three subdivisions, were examined for the five-year period from 2013 to 2017.

The results of hierarchical multiple linear regressions suggested that a significant proportion of the variance in donor contributions was predicted by a combination of athletic performance, student athlete welfare, and student athlete academic success. This was true for all of Division I, but varied by subdivision. Approximately 60% of variance was predicted by the combination of effectiveness measures for the Football Bowl Subdivision, 12% for the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS), and 20% for Division I without football. Student athlete academic success proved to only be a significant predictor on its own for the FCS.

Keywords: organizational effectiveness, intercollegiate athletics, donors, fundraising

1. INTRODUCTION

Donor contributions make up almost a quarter of the generated revenue for National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletic departments (Fulks, 2016). The necessity for these contributions will likely only increase as state funding and ticket revenues decrease (Mitchell, Palacios, & Leachman, 2014; Simmons, Popp, McEvoy, & Howell, 2018) and athletic departments look to find ways to maintain or grow their operations. The reliance on donor contributions makes donors one of the most important stakeholders for athletic

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departments. Despite the importance of donors as a stakeholder group, there has been little research into their perceptions on what makes for an effective athletic department.

There have been studies about donor motivation as it relates to intercollegiate athletics and higher education (Gladden, Mahony, & Apostolopoulou, 2005; Ko, Rhee, Walker, & Lee, 2014; Stinson & Howard, 2004, 2007). These studies have focused on how giving to athletics differs from other areas in higher education and, therefore, the motivating factors are unique (Park, Ko, Kim, Sagas, & Eddosary, 2016; Walker, 2013). Additionally, researchers have examined the relationship between football and men's basketball success and giving (Cohen, Whisenant, & Walsh, 2011; Covell, 2005; Walker, 2015).

Research has also been conducted on organizational effectiveness as it relates to intercollegiate athletics. In an effort to define effectiveness in intercollegiate athletic departments, most of this research uses winning as the measure of effectiveness (Cunningham, 2002; Morton, 2017; Rocha & Turner, 2008). Additional studies have used education of student athletes as a measure of effectiveness (Cooper & Weight, 2012; Cunningham & Rivera, 2001). Further studies have sought to define effectiveness through the perception of various athletic department stakeholder groups (Branch, 1990; Putler & Wolfe; 1999; Wolfe, Hoerber, & Babiak, 2002; Wolfe & Putler, 2002). However, to date, there has been a dearth of research related to the relationship between effectiveness and intercollegiate athletics donations.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between organizational effectiveness measures and donor contributions. Specifically, we wanted to find out how winning, student athlete welfare, and student athlete academic results related to donor contributions for NCAA Division I athletic departments. For the purposes of this study, donor contributions are serving as a proxy for donors' perceptions of organizational effectiveness for athletic departments. We also wanted to identify possible differences between the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS), and the Division I without football subdivision in terms of how much variance in donor contributions would be predicted by organizational effectiveness measures.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Donor Contributions

Athletic departments competing in Division I of the NCAA derive revenue from many sources. The NCAA, the conferences, and the individual institutions send millions of dollars to programs each year from media rights revenue (Cheslock & Knight, 2015; Fulks, 2016). Ticket sales also provide a significant amount of revenue (Fulks, 2016). Additionally, programs derive money from sponsorship, licensing, student fees, and direct institutional support (Fulks, 2016; Morton, 2017). Despite the many ways in which revenue is generated, it can be argued that the most critical source for athletic departments is donor contributions.

Comprising almost 25% of revenue brought in by NCAA Division I athletic departments (Fulks, 2016), donor contributions are the largest source of income for these programs. As such, this is a vital stakeholder group in intercollegiate athletics. The importance of this group will only increase as other sources of revenue, such as ticket sales and government support,

decrease (Mitchell, Palacios, & Leachman, 2014; NCAA, 2018; Simmons, Popp, McEvoy, & Howell, 2018).

Due to the importance of this group, donor motivation in intercollegiate athletics has been studied a great deal over the past 40 years. Research has shown that motivation for giving to an athletic department differs from other charitable organizations. One of the main differentiators is the availability of tangible benefits (Bass, Achen, & Gordon, 2015; Gladden et al., 2005; Ko et al., 2014; Park et al., 2016). These tangible benefits can include access to tickets, preferred parking, and traveling with teams. Another differentiator for intercollegiate athletic giving is vicarious achievement (Park et al., 2016; Tsiotsou, 2007). Donors have been found to donate to programs so they can associate themselves with the success garnered by the teams. This leads to the other most studied aspect of intercollegiate athletic donors—the impact of successful teams on giving to athletics.

Several studies have investigated how athletic success affects fundraising, both for athletics and academics. Most studies use the on-field performance of football and or the on-court performance of men's basketball as the measure for athletic success (Cohen et al., 2011; Covell, 2005; Stinson & Howard, 2004, 2007; Walker, 2015). In looking at how athletic success impacts giving to athletics and academics, Stinson and Howard (2007) used football record, football bowl wins, and football bowl appearances to measure success and found that team success influences athletic donors, but not academic donors. Sigleman and Carter (1979) used football and men's basketball records, as well as football bowl appearances as their measure of success and found no relationship between success and athletic annual fund contributions. Goff (2000) also looked at postseason play for football and men's basketball, as well as baseball, and found that these achievements increase donor contributions.

The aforementioned studies support the idea that, in general, donors associate themselves with winning programs as shown by increased contributions to athletics when football and men's basketball are successful. However, athletic competition is a zero-sum game in which not everyone can win on the football field or basketball court. Additionally, athletic department mission statements, besides referencing athletic performance, also include academic advancement of student athletes, achieving gender equity, and NCAA rules compliance (Ward, 2015). With that in mind, it is important to know if donations are related to organizational effectiveness measures other than football and men's basketball success. This will give us a better understanding of donor motivation and their perception of the organizational effectiveness in college athletics.

2.2. Organizational Effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness is an elusive concept to define and measure. This is largely because effectiveness means something different depending on what constituency's perception is being used to evaluate the organization (Chelladurai, 1987; Connolly, Conlon, & Deutsch, 1980; Steers, 1977). However, there have been numerous studies that have taken on the task of measuring organizational effectiveness (Branch, 1990; Cunningham, 2002; Cunningham & Rivera, 2001; Frisby, 1986; Price, 1972; Rocha & Turner, 2008; Sawhill & Williamson, 2001; Shilbury & Moore, 2006; Yuchtman & Seashore, 1967). The two most common approaches that have been utilized in regards to sport are the goal attainment model (Price, 1972) where effectiveness is measured by the ability to identify and achieve goals

(Cunningham, 2002; Rocha & Turner, 2008) and the strategic constituencies model (Connolly et al., 1980) where effectiveness is measured based on identifying key stakeholders (Morrow & Chelladurai, 1992; Wolfe, Hoerber, & Babiak, 2002).

Upon reviewing the literature, we took the approach of using a combination of the goals attainment model and the strategic constituencies model as suggested by Frisby (1986). The goals that we identified were athletic achievement and student athlete academic achievement. (Cunningham, 2002; Cunningham & Rivera, 2001; Rocha & Turner, 2008, Wolfe et al., 2002). We identified the key stakeholder as the student athlete (Polite, Waller, Trendafilova, and Spearman, 2011; Reimer & Chelladurai, 1998) and based effectiveness on student athlete welfare.

An often-used measure for effectiveness in studies about intercollegiate athletics has been athletic performance. This is due in large part to the easily quantifiable nature of wins and losses. Additionally, most athletic department mission statements have athletic performance as at least one objective of the mission (Ward, 2015). As stated earlier, donor motivation research tends to use the performance of football and or men's basketball as the measure of success, however organizational effectiveness research focuses more on the performance of the entire athletic department. To accomplish this, scholars use the National Association for Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) Directors' Cup point totals as the athletic success variable (Cunningham, 2009; Morton, 2017; Rocha & Turner, 2008). The NACDA Directors' Cup is awarded to institutions based on success achieved in up to 20 different sports (NACDA, n.d.).

Organizational effectiveness research, as it relates to intercollegiate athletics, has not solely focused on athletic performance as a measure of success. Other measures for success have been financial performance, student athlete academic performance, and rules compliance (Cooper & Weight, 2012, Cunningham, 2002, Cunningham & Rivera, 2001; Rocha & Turner, 2008). These measures are also common themes in athletic department mission statements (Ward, 2015).

As stated earlier, organizational effectiveness is a difficult concept to measure because the definition can change depending on which stakeholder group is doing the defining. A stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). Stakeholders in intercollegiate athletics include, but are not limited to, students, prospective students, student athletes, coaches, fans, donors, media, and faculty (Covell, 2005; Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Trail & Chelladurai, 2000).

Putler and Wolfe (1999) investigated the perceptions of effectiveness for various stakeholders of an intercollegiate athletic department. They obtained the perspectives of students, prospective students, student athletes, alumni, faculty, and athletic department staff. After surveying this group, they found that the factors that determine success in an athletic department include athletic achievement, academic achievement, and financial performance. Additionally, they found that different stakeholders found different measures to be most important. This study illustrates the need to not only identify the factors of effectiveness, but also those constituents whose perspectives will help determine those factors.

To date, there have been a dearth of studies on the perception of effectiveness by athletic department donors. One way to get their perspective is to examine donor contributions to athletic departments and their relation to organizational success measures. In this scenario we use the willingness of donors to contribute as their endorsement of a department's effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to find out if donor contributions could be

predicted by NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletic departments success measures. Specifically, we considered the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the organizational effectiveness measures of athletic performance, student athlete welfare, and student athlete academic performance and donor contributions for NCAA Division I athletic departments?

RQ2: Will there be differences in how organizational effectiveness measures relate to donor contributions for NCAA Division I athletic departments in terms of how much variance in donor contributions is predicted by organizational success measures?

RQ3: Will there be differences between the NCAA Division I subdivisions in terms of how much variance in donor contributions is predicted by organizational success measures?

3. METHODOLOGY

To determine the relationship between organizational effectiveness measures and donor contributions in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletic departments, it was necessary to use multiple data sets. For athletic performance we used data from NACDA. Information on student athlete academic performance was obtained from the NCAA. Student athlete welfare data was obtained from a database created by the United States Department of Education (DOE) with information provided by higher education institutions in compliance with the Equity in Athletic Disclosure Act (United States Department of Education, 2019). Finally, donor contributions data was gathered from a database compiled by the Knight Foundation's commission on intercollegiate athletics (Knight Commission, 2019).

To measure athletic performance, we used the NACDA Directors' Cup scores for the years 2013 through 2017. The NACDA Directors' Cup, which assigns point values to each school's final rankings in each of 20 sports is the best measurement of overall athletic success (Lawrence, Li, Regas, & Kander, 2012). For NCAA Division I programs, scores must be counted for baseball, men's basketball, women's basketball, and women's volleyball and then the next 16 highest scored sports regardless of gender (NACDA, n.d.). To gauge athletic departments' investment in student athlete welfare we used the amount of athletically related student aid given per student athlete. The data were gathered from the U.S. Department of Education (2019) website via the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act. To measure student athlete academic performance, we used the Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) for each athletic program in the study as reported by the NCAA for the five-year period from 2013 to 2017 (NCAA, 2019).

The dependent variable for this study was donor contributions for each institution in the sample for the years 2013-2017. This data was obtained from the College Athletics Financial Information Database that is compiled by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. Donor contributions are defined as funds contributed from individuals or organizations external to the athletic department above the face value for tickets (Knight Commission, 2019).

Hierarchical multiple linear regression models were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 to determine if donor contributions could be predicted from NACDA Directors' Cup

points, athletically related student aid given per student athlete, and FGR for all of Division I and subsequently for the FBS, the FCS, and Division I without football. This type of regression analysis allows the researcher to isolate how much variance is explained by each predictor variable (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Independent variables were added in the following order 1) NACDA Directors' Cup points, 2) student athlete aid, 3) FGR. The null hypotheses tested were that the multiple R^2 was equal to 0 and that the regression coefficients were equal to 0.

The data were screened for missingness and violation of assumptions prior to analysis. Cases with missing data were removed from the sample. With these removals, there were 1120 cases representing the three subdivisions of the NCAA Division I: FBS, Football Championship Subdivision (FCS), Division I without football (IAAA) for the five-year period beginning in 2013 and ending in 2017. Further examination of the residuals along with Q-Q plots, scatterplots, and histograms suggested the assumptions of linearity, normality, independence, and homoscedasticity were met. Inspection of tolerance, correlations, variance inflation factor and eigenvalues for the predictors revealed that multicollinearity was not an issue.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Division I

The results of the hierarchical multiple linear regression for all of Division I suggest that a significant proportion of the total variation in donor contributions was predicted by NACDA Directors' Cup points ($F(1, 1118) = 2439.912, p < .001$), the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup points and athletic aid per student athlete ($F(2, 1117) = 1279.976, p < .05$), and the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup points, athletic aid per student athlete, and FGR ($F(3, 1116) = 853.805, p < .001$). However, FGR was shown not to be a significant predictor in the third model ($p = .286$).

For NACDA Directors' Cup points, the standardized coefficient (.765) was statistically significantly different from 0 ($F = 1450.739, df = 1116, p < .001$), with every standard deviation change in NACDA Directors' Cup points resulting in an increase of .765 donor contributions when controlling for the other variables in the model. For aid per student athlete, the standardized coefficient (.127) was statistically significantly different from 0 ($F = 39.439, df = 1116, p < .001$), with every standard deviation change in aid per student athlete resulting in an increase of .127 donor contributions when controlling for the other variables in the model.

The semi-partial correlations for the statistically significant predictors were examined and squared to gauge the amount of unique variance accounted for by each variable when controlling for all the others. NACDA Directors' Cup points accounted for 39% of unique variance when controlling for all the other variables in the model. Aid per student athlete accounted for 1% of unique variance when controlling for all the other variables in the model.

Multiple R^2 indicates that approximately 70% of the variation in donor contributions was predicted by the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup Points, aid per student athlete, and FGR (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary statistics for the three models for Division I

Model Summary ^d									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.828 ^a	0.686	0.685	6759400.705	0.686	2439.912	1	1118	0.000
2	.834 ^b	0.696	0.696	6649083.349	0.010	38.406	1	1117	0.000
3	.835 ^c	0.697	0.696	6648666.225	0.000	1.140	1	1116	0.286
a. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points									
b. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points, Aid per Participant									
c. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points, Aid per Participant, FGR									
d. Dependent Variable: Contributions									

As seen in the first model, NACDA Directors' Cup points accounted for 68.5% of the variation. This change was significant $F(1, 1118) = 2439.912, p < .001$. In the second model, aid per student athlete accounted for 1% of the variation when controlling for NACDA Directors' Cup points. This change was significant $F(1, 1117) = 38.406, p < .001$. The third model indicates that FGR did not account for any change when controlling for the other two variables.

4.2. FBS

The results of the hierarchical multiple linear regression for the FBS suggest that a significant proportion of the total variation in donor contributions was predicted by NACDA Directors' Cup points ($F(1, 538) = 780.973, p < .001$), the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup points and athletic aid per student athlete ($F(2, 537) = 403.544, p < .05$), and the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup points, athletic aid per student athlete, and FGR ($F(3, 536) = 269.041, p < .001$). However, FGR was shown not to be a significant predictor in the third model ($p = .434$).

For NACDA Directors' Cup points, the standardized coefficient (.740) was statistically significantly different from 0 ($F = 594.604, df = 536, p < .001$); with every standard deviation change in NACDA Directors' Cup points resulting in an increase of .74 donor contributions when controlling for the other variables in the model. For aid per student athlete, the standardized coefficient (.101) was statistically significantly different from 0 ($F = 11.743, df = 536, p < .05$); with every standard deviation change in aid per student athlete resulting in an increase of .101 donor contributions when controlling for the other variables in the model.

The semi-partial correlations for the statistically significant predictors were examined and squared in order to gauge the amount of unique variance accounted for by each variable when controlling for all the others. NACDA Directors' Cup points accounted for 44% of unique variance when controlling for all the other variables in the model. Aid per student athlete accounted for just under 1% of unique variance when controlling for all the other variables in the model.

Multiple R^2 indicates that approximately 60% of the variation in donor contributions was predicted by the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup Points, aid per student athlete, and FGR (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary statistics for the three models for FBS

Model Summary ^{d,e}									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
	FBS				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.769 ^a	0.592	0.591	9303771.187	0.592	780.973	1	538	0.000
2	.775 ^b	0.600	0.599	9216440.424	0.008	11.244	1	537	0.001
3	.775 ^c	0.601	0.599	9219753.380	0.000	0.614	1	536	0.434
a. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points									
b. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points, Aid per Participant									
c. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points, Aid per Participant, FGR									
d. Unless noted otherwise, statistics are based only on cases for which SubDivision=1 (FILTER) = Selected.									
e. Dependent Variable: Contributions									

As seen in the first model, NACDA Directors' Cup points accounted for 59.1% of the variation. This change was significant $F(1, 538) = 780.973, p < .001$. In the second model, aid per student athlete accounted for .8% of the variation when controlling for NACDA Directors' Cup points. This change was significant $F(1, 537) = 11.244, p = .001$. The third model indicates that FGR did not account for any change when controlling for the other two variables.

4.3. FCS

The results of the hierarchical multiple linear regression for the FCS suggest that a significant proportion of the total variation in donor contributions was predicted by NACDA Directors' Cup points ($F(1, 363) = 12.855, p < .001$), the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup points and athletic aid per student athlete ($F(2, 362) = 13.281, p < .001$), and the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup points, athletic aid per student athlete, and FGR ($F(3, 361) = 18.095, p < .001$).

For aid per student athlete, the standardized coefficient (.110) was statistically significantly different from 0 ($F = 4.368, df = 362, p < .05$); with every standard deviation change in NACDA Directors' Cup points resulting in an increase of .11 donor contributions when controlling for the other variables in the model. For FGR, the standardized coefficient (.286) was statistically significantly different from 0 ($F = 25.898, df = 362, p < .001$), with every standard deviation change in aid per student athlete resulting in an increase of .286 donor contributions when controlling for the other variables in the model.

The semi-partial correlations for the statistically significant predictors were examined and squared to gauge the amount of unique variance accounted for by each variable when controlling for all the others. Aid per student athlete accounted for 1% of unique variance when controlling for all the other variables in the model. FGR accounted for 6% of unique variance when controlling for all the other variables in the model.

Multiple R^2 indicates that approximately 12% of the variation in donor contributions was predicted by the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup Points, aid per student athlete, and FGR (Table 3).

Table 3. Summary statistics for the three models for FCS

Model Summary ^{d,e}									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
	FCS				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.185 ^a	0.034	0.032	2170250.616	0.034	12.855	1	363	0.000
2	.261 ^b	0.068	0.063	2134471.406	0.034	13.272	1	362	0.000
3	.362 ^c	0.131	0.123	2064649.889	0.062	25.898	1	361	0.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points									
b. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points, Aid per Participant									
c. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points, Aid per Participant, FGR									
d. Unless noted otherwise, statistics are based only on cases for which SubDivision=2 (FILTER) = Selected.									
e. Dependent Variable: Contributions									

As seen in the first model, NACDA Directors' Cup points accounted for 3.2% of the variation. This change was significant $F(1, 363) = 12.855, p < .001$. In the second model, aid per student athlete accounted for 3.4% of the variation when controlling for NACDA Directors' Cup points. This change was significant $F(1, 362) = 13.272, p < .001$. The third model indicates that FGR accounted for 6.2% of the variation when controlling for NACDA Directors' Cup points and aid per student athlete. This change was significant $F(1, 361) = 25.898, p < .001$.

4.4. Division I without Football

The results of the hierarchical multiple linear regression for Division I without football suggest that a significant proportion of the total variation in donor contributions was predicted by NACDA Directors' Cup points ($F(1, 213) = 49.299, p < .001$), the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup points and athletic aid per student athlete ($F(2, 212) = 27.978, p < .001$), and the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup points, athletic aid per student athlete, and FGR ($F(3, 211) = 19.175, p < .001$). However, FGR was shown not to be a significant predictor in the third model ($p = .230$).

For NACDA Directors' Cup points, the standardized coefficient (.454) was statistically significantly different from 0 ($F = 53.229, df = 211, p < .001$), with every standard deviation change in NACDA Directors' Cup points resulting in an increase of .454 donor contributions when controlling for the other variables in the model. For aid per student athlete, the standardized coefficient (.156) was statistically significantly different from 0 ($F = 6.347, df = 536, p < .05$); with every standard deviation change in aid per student athlete resulting in an increase of .156 donor contributions when controlling for the other variables in the model.

The semi-partial correlations for the statistically significant predictors were examined and squared to gauge the amount of unique variance accounted for by each variable when controlling for all the others. NACDA Directors' Cup points accounted for 20% of unique variance when controlling for all the other variables in the model. Aid per student athlete accounted for 2% of unique variance when controlling for all the other variables in the model.

Table 4. Summary statistics for the three models for Division I without football

Model Summary ^{d,e}									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
	Division I without football				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.434 ^a	0.188	0.184	1374903.595	0.188	49.299	1	213	0.000
2	.457 ^b	0.209	0.201	1360315.551	0.021	5.593	1	212	0.019
3	.463 ^c	0.214	0.203	1358872.540	0.005	1.450	1	211	0.230
a. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points									
b. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points, Aid per Participant									
c. Predictors: (Constant), NACDA Points, Aid per Participant, FGR									
d. Unless noted otherwise, statistics are based only on cases for which SubDivision=3 (FILTER) = Selected.									
e. Dependent Variable: Contributions									

Multiple R^2 indicates that approximately 20% of the variation in donor contributions was predicted by the combination of NACDA Directors' Cup Points, aid per student athlete, and FGR (Table 4).

As seen in the first model, NACDA Directors' Cup points accounted for 18.8% of the variation. This change was significant $F(1, 213) = 49.299, p < .001$. In the second model, aid per student athlete accounted for 2.1% of the variation when controlling for NACDA Directors' Cup points. This change was significant $F(1, 212) = 5.593, p < .001$. The third model indicates that FGR did not account for any change when controlling for the other two variables.

In summary, we refer back to our research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the organizational effectiveness measures of athletic performance, student athlete welfare, and student athlete academic performance and donor contributions for NCAA Division I athletic departments?

The results indicate that approximately 70% of the variation in donor contributions for Division I programs is predicted by the combination of effectiveness measures of athletic performance, student athlete welfare, and student athlete academic performance.

RQ2: Will there be differences in how organizational effectiveness measures relate to donor contributions for NCAA Division I athletic departments?

There were differences in how the effectiveness measures related to donor contributions. Athletic performance, as measured by NACDA Directors' Cup points, accounted for the most variance in donor contributions. Student athlete welfare, as measured by athletic aid per student athlete, was a significant predictor of donor contributions, but accounted for much less variance than athletic performance. Student athlete academic performance, as measured by federal graduation rates, was only accounted for variance in donor contributions for one of the subdivisions.

RQ3: Will there be differences between the NCAA Division I subdivisions in terms of how much variance in donor contributions is predicted by organizational success measures?

There were differences between subdivisions in terms of how much variance in donor contributions was predicted by effectiveness measures. Approximately 60% of variance was predicted by the combination of effectiveness measures for the Football Bowl Subdivision, 12% for the Football Championship Subdivision, and 20% for Division I without football. Student athlete academic success proved to only be a significant predictor on its own for the Football Championship Subdivision.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to find out how organizational effectiveness measures relate to NCAA Division I athletic departments donor contributions—including differences between the three subdivisions. After conducting the statistical analysis, athletic performance, as measured by NACDA Director's Cup points, was the best predictor of donor contributions. This was true for the entire sample as well as two of the three subdivisions. It is not surprising that athletic performance is a good predictor of donor contributions, as this supports previous studies conducted on donor motivation (Cohen et al., 2011; Covell, 2005; Stinson & Howard, 2004, 2007; Walker, 2015). Additionally, athletic performance is the most visible form of effectiveness, especially for donors as they are often only involved with athletic programs through athletic contests.

Student athlete welfare, as measured by athletic aid per student athlete, proved to also be a significant predictor of donor contributions, although less so than athletic performance. However, this could be a chicken and the egg scenario in which donors find athletic departments that invest in student athlete welfare to be effective or athletic departments are able to be effective at student athlete welfare because of the money contributed by donors. In either case, student athlete welfare is a predictor of donor contributions for all of Division I, as well as each of the three subdivisions.

Student athlete academic performance, as measured by federal graduation rates, was only a significant predictor of donor contributions for the FCS subdivision. For all of Division I, as well as the other two subdivisions, student athlete academic performance failed to predict donor contributions. These results tell us that, for the most part, donors to athletic departments are not demonstrating, through the action of monetary contributions, that they view student athlete academic performance as a measure of effectiveness.

When examining the results of the analysis for the subdivisions, we found that two of the three effectiveness measures were similar in their prediction of donor contributions across all three subdivisions. Athletic performance was a significant predictor for all three subdivisions and the most significant predictor for FBS and Division I without football. Similarly, student athlete welfare was also a significant predictor for all three subdivisions. Interestingly, only for the FCS was student athlete academic performance a significant predictor of donor contributions. Not only was it a significant predictor, but it was most significant accounting for the most variation in donor contributions among the three effectiveness measures for FCS.

After examining athletic performance, student athlete welfare, and student athlete academic performance as effectiveness measures related to donor contributions, it is quite clear that winning has a significant relationship to athletic department donations. As stated earlier, this is a logical result as athletic performance is the most visible form of effectiveness and oftentimes the most easily interacted with by donors. Winning is also the mostly easily understood effectiveness measure, as each contest has a score and produces a winner and a loser.

In observing the 44% of variance explained by NACDA Directors' Cup points for FBS versus 12% and 20% for FCS and Division I without football respectively, it is worth noting that while other factors contribute to organizational effectiveness for FBS, it seems that winning plays a bigger part at the most visible level of Division I. It is also clear that although winning is also important for FCS and Division I without football, at these levels, development officers stand a better chance of telling a greater overall story about organizational effectiveness and the overall intercollegiate athletics program with less resistance due to wins and losses. This may be reflective of a more holistic long-term approach to athletics from FCS and non-football Division I athletic departments, FCS and non-football Division I donors, or both.

Another important conclusion drawn from these results is that winning is not the only effectiveness measure for intercollegiate athletics. Student athlete welfare also proved to be a significant predictor of donor contributions for all of Division I, as well as each individual subdivision. This supports previous research on organizational effectiveness in intercollegiate athletics that suggested a multidimensional approach (Cunningham & Rivera, 2001; Trail & Chelladurai, 2000; Wolfe & Pulter, 1999). This result also enforces that notion that athletic departments, in addition to trying to field winning teams, must also try and create the best student athlete experience possible.

Student athlete academic success was only a significant predictor of donor contributions for FCS. For all of Division I, student athlete academic success was observed to have a minimal relationship to donor contributions. This lack of relationship would contradict what the athletic departments themselves say about the importance of the academic well-being of student athletes. Most athletic department mission statements emphasize this element of the operation (Ward, 2015).

There are at least two possible explanations for the lack of relationship between student athlete academic success on donor contributions. The first, and simplest, is that donors do not feel like academic success for student athletes demonstrates the effectiveness of an athletic department and therefore contribute to departments that they feel demonstrate effectiveness in other ways. A second explanation is that donors are generally unaware of the academic performance of student-athletes. As stated earlier, athletic performance is the most visible of these effectiveness measures and can overshadow academic performance. The overshadowing can come from athletic departments failing to tell a compelling story about their academics and or the ease in which information is gained on athletic performance.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As with all research this study has its limitations. The data for this study only represent NCAA Division I programs for the five-year period from 2013 to 2017. It is possible that

if this period were extended or altered, different results would be obtained. Additionally, not every NCAA Division I program is used in this data. While we obtained data on almost 65% of Division I programs, the inclusion of the rest of the programs could change the results.

Another potential limitation of this study is in the use of the effectiveness measures. It is possible that using different variables to represent the athletic success, student athlete welfare, and student athlete academic success measures for effectiveness could adjust the results. It is also conceivable that using different measures for effectiveness, such as gender equity or financial performance, would modify the results. Finally, it is important to note that while NACDA Directors' Cup points represent the success of a whole athletic department, the majority of focus from fans and donors is on football and men's basketball (Cohen et al., 2011; Covell, 2005; Stinson & Howard, 2004). Therefore, the potential exists for modified results if the success of either or both of those teams was used as the measure for athletic performance.

Future directions for this line of research include addressing the limitations listed above. Additionally, types or levels of donors could be investigated to see if there are differences based on how much or how long donors have contributed. It would also be useful to explore how alumni donors differed from non-alumni donors in how their contributions are impacted by measures of effectiveness. Finally, scholars and practitioners alike could benefit from an expansion of the sample to include other divisions of the NCAA, as well as programs from the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics.

CONCLUSION

As revenue from government support (Mitchell, Palacios, & Leachman, 2014) and ticket sales decline (NCAA, 2018), fundraising in college athletics is only going to continue to grow in importance. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to get a better understanding of how donor contributions are related to athletic performance, student athlete welfare, and student athlete academic performance as measures of organizational effectiveness. Understanding how donors react to these measures will be beneficial to athletic departments as they craft strategies to engage with donors.

The results of this study suggest that winning is not the only measure of effectiveness that is related to donor contributions. This is good news for athletic departments because athletics is a zero-sum endeavor in which there are as many losers as there are winners. These results indicate that it is possible for athletic departments to engage donors even when the on-field results are not as favorable as hoped. Additionally, the results of this study point to further opportunities to connect with donors through student athlete academic performance.

Athletic departments generally list academic performance of its student athletes as one of the main tenets of its mission (Ward, 2015). However, academic success for student athletes did not have much of a relationship to donor contributions. Whether this is because donors do not care about academics or because athletic departments are not promoting academic success to their donors enough, it presents an opportunity for athletic departments to further demonstrate how donor involvement can lead to an effective athletic department.

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