

Good Intercollegiate Athlete Representation: “All Hands On Deck”

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The current landscapes of intercollegiate sports and higher education are experiencing shifts toward more democratic representation. In college sport, student-athlete representatives are more engaged in policy decisions, hold voting rights, and are included on boards and committees. Despite this shift, little is known about what good intercollegiate athlete representation entails and how multi-level, democratic governance systems may support or impede good representation in the context of college sport. This paper explores qualities of good college athlete representation (CARep) and factors contributing to and/or detracting from the process of good CARep in the context of a democratic multi-level intercollegiate sport governance system. Findings showed individual attributes of good CARep, including interpersonal skills and leadership, were based on democratic representation virtues (i.e., fairmindedness, trust building, good gatekeeping) and helped foster democratic values of civic equality, self-governance, and inclusion. The intercollegiate sport governance system supports the work of athlete representatives primarily through its educative function. More specifically, administrators were key to identifying experiential learning opportunities for athlete representatives, which contributed to the process of good representation through responsiveness, inclusiveness, and egalitarianism. Lack of administrative support and education for all relevant interest groups characterized governance system inconsistencies impeding good CARep, primarily at institutional levels where the purpose of student-athlete committees varied and/or athlete representative roles were less understood. Implications for practice and directions for future research on good athlete representation are presented.

Key words: athlete representation, democratic representation virtues, intercollegiate sport governance, multi-level governance



Good democratic governance requires good representation (Dovi, 2007). Globally, higher education has redefined student representation, emphasizing the importance of student voice in models of democratic governance (Klemenčič, 2014; Matthews & Dollinger, 2022). Students are critical actors in higher education governance, who have authentic and valuable voices and “should be considered as active agents engaged in institutional and system-level” decision-making (Naylor et al., 2021, p. 5). While student voice is a contested concept in higher education (Matthews & Dollinger, 2022), it is commonly characterized as hearing what students say to make improvements to their experiences. Student-athlete representation is typically conceived from the democratic concept of the principal-agent relationship (Kihl & Schull, 2020) where representatives perform the roles and activities required to advance constituent policy preferences. For example, in the context of intercollegiate sport, college athlete representatives have successfully advanced legislation on their behalf such as time commitments (Hosick, 2017), one-time unrestrictive transfers (Hosick, 2021), and extension of medical care requirements for athletically related injuries (Hosick, 2018). Dovi (2007) argued however that good representation entails more than deliberating and advancing policy preferences on behalf of constituents. Rather, good representation involves fostering the values and norms (i.e., civic equality, self-governance, and inclusion) of well-functioning democratic institutions (Dovi, 2007), which in the context of intercollegiate sport occurs in multi-level systems of governance (i.e., local, conference, and national). Athlete representatives may be effective in gaining positive legislative outcomes but fail to do so in a democratic fashion which can undermine multi-level intercollegiate sport governance (e.g., encouraging athletes to participate in policy discussions).

Despite legislative successes of college athlete representatives, we do not have any clear understanding of the extent that they foster the values and norms of democratic sport governance. Additionally, scarcity of understanding exists around the *process* of college athlete representation (CARep)—for example, how athletes’ voices are infused into intercollegiate sport governance systems, as well as what institutional structures facilitate or impede good representation. Dovi (2007) argued “there are substantive and distinctively democratic standards for distinguishing good representatives from bad ones” (p. 1). Understanding the democratic standards and processes of good CARep can offer conceptual clarity that can assist in improving the democratic functioning of the multi-level intercollegiate sport governance systems in practice. Another theoretical contribution of this research is identifying how a multi-level system of sport governance affects the quality of CARep beyond advocating for athlete policy preferences.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine what comprises good CARep within a multi-level intercollegiate sport governance system, including governance system supports and challenges affecting good CARep. Our research questions were two-fold:

- 1) What does good CARep entail within a democratic intercollegiate sport governance system?

2) What governance system features support and/or impede good CAREp?

To address our research questions, we first explain the research context (i.e., restructured NCAA Division I governance system), and highlight the importance of the study. Second, we develop the conceptual framework before presenting our results and discussion. We conclude with implications and recommendations for future research.

Literature Review

Research Context: NCAA Governance Restructuring

The NCAA is a complex, multi-layered governance system serving as the most prominent governing body for college sports in the United States (Nite et al., 2019). Division I is considered the elite division and is the context of our inquiry. The Division I governance structure features three levels including institutional, conference, and national levels (Osborne, & Weight, 2019). Athlete representatives are involved at all levels of governance; however, their roles vary somewhat within the different levels (Broome, 2018; Krapf, 2015).

In 2015, NCAA's Division I structure was revised to reflect a more democratic governance system (Shannon, 2017). A key aspect of the new design was the Association's goal to increase awareness and responsiveness to its membership, particularly, athletes as the previous structure did not fully engage nor represent their interests (NCAA, 2014). CAREp was enhanced in this new democratic model. First, athlete representatives were given voting rights at the national level (Broome, 2018; Kihl & Schull, 2020). However, at conference and institutional levels (except for one conference) athlete representatives are still not afforded voting rights. Second, athlete representatives serve on national subcommittees and where applicable have a vote (Broome, 2018). Additionally, Student Athlete Advisory Committees (SAACs) provide representation to athlete constituents. In accordance with the multi-leveled democratic system, SAACs are organized at institutional, conference, and national levels (NCAA, n.d.). Their primary objective is to enhance the student-athlete experience through notions of inclusion and self-governance. Within the reorganized governance structure and corresponding shift to emphasize self-governance, SAAC missions at all levels were revised to include increased focus and scrutiny on democratic representation practices including legislative proposals, student-athlete issues, and other governance roles and responsibilities (Broome, 2018).

Relative to our study, the roles and responsibilities of college athlete representatives at conference and national levels require more stringent selection criteria (Kihl & Schull, 2020). Appointment criteria is based on the NCAA's notion of "quality representation" (e.g., good management and organization skills, leadership, verbal and written communication skills, interpersonal relationships, commitment to community support, and understanding the legislation process; NCAA, 2021); however, these skills do not necessarily reflect good democratic representative qualities articulated in the literature (e.g., Dovi, 2007). Therefore, our focus is to examine what

good CAREP entails within this multi-layered, semi-democratic intercollegiate sport governance model redesigned to give voice to athletes. Additionally, the democratic nature of NCAA's governance system is suitable for examining how specific system features may enhance or detract from CAREP within intercollegiate sport governance systems.

Conceptual Framework

Our conceptual framework focuses on individual attributes and skills of good representatives, the process of representation, and relevant features within multi-level, democratic governance systems. Our review primarily draws on the wider body of political representation and democratic governance systems literature, which we position in relation to student representation in higher education and athlete representation.

Representation and Standards of Evaluation

Representation is widely conceptualized using a formalistic approach which results in electoral accounts of representation and a subsequently narrow focus on elected representatives including mechanisms of authorization and accountability (Pitkin, 1967). However, representation also occurs in nonelectoral contexts (Saward, 2008), and a variety of representatives—including nonelectoral, appointed or self-appointed representatives—may act and speak for (i.e., represent) constituents whom they are not formally authorized or accountable to. Thus Kuyper (2016) argues it is “theoretically necessary to decouple representation from electoral democracy to understand how nonelectoral representation should be understood and evaluated” (p. 310). Kuyper’s point is particularly relevant in democratic governance systems that do not model formalistic views (e.g., intercollegiate sport governance).

Evaluating representatives in democratic systems is pluralistic due to various groups, interests, and subjectivity among constituents. That is, “criteria for identifying good representatives are contingent, varying with the particular opinions, interests, and perspectives of different democratic citizens” (Dovi, 2007, p. 2). In advocating for broader understandings of representation, Dovi defines a political representative as any actor who advances policies and acts on behalf of another person or group of people. In this view, representatives also include nonelectoral, appointed, and self-appointed representatives (Kuyper 2016). A broader understanding of representation importantly shifts the focus from mechanisms of authorization and accountability to relevant activity of representatives and can provide more insight into the work of good representatives.

Scholars studying representation have suggested a good representative is one who advances the policy preferences of their constituents. However, Dovi (2007) maintains that good representation is more than advancing policy preferences and fundamental democratic values and norms must inform the advocacy work of representatives. More specifically, good representation means “representatives excel at representing in a democratic fashion” where they work to “foster the norms and values distinctive” of institutional governance, meaning they possess the ability to

settle political conflicts fairly and justly by fulfilling three virtues: 1) fair-mindedness; 2) trust-building; and 3) good gatekeeping (p. 2). These virtues, while inherently individual, contribute to the realization of democratic values including civic equality, self-governance, and inclusion, which collectively further advance democratic advocacy and provide substance for what is considered good representation (Dovi, 2007). Kuyper's (2016) framework of systemic representation also provides normative standards for evaluating nonelectoral representatives and can be applied to a broad range of actors including individuals appointed to representational roles in membership-based organizations such as the NCAA and other higher education settings. Kuyper (2016) contends nonelectoral representatives should be assessed by their position in a wider democratic system made up of empowered space, public space, and the transmission space between the two. Empowered space refers to legislative work where collective decision-making takes place. The public space has little restrictions on who can participate, and thus a variety of contributions, discourses, and viewpoints emerge and interact. The space between the empowered and public spaces is referred to as bidirectional-transmission belts. Here, deliberations in public spaces have the potential to impact decision making in empowered spaces, and likewise, deliberations in empowered space may influence and inform constituents' interests (Kuyper, 2016).

Kuyper (2016) further contends the application of deliberative democracy is best suited to evaluate nonelectoral representatives. More specifically, a representative's deliberative capacity, characterized by inclusive, authentic, and consequential deliberations across comprehensive governance systems and/or interconnected spaces, should serve as the standard of evaluation (Dryzek, 2009). Democratic analysis within a systemic framework is relevant in evaluating nonelectoral representatives because representatives are nonetheless "implicated in shaping, defining, organizing, and mobilizing [constituents] interests" (Kuyper, 2016, p. 314), and evaluations are not limited to representative-constituent relationships.

Representation: Process and System Approaches

Processes and features of governance systems where representation takes place should also be considered when examining representation (Dovi, 2007). Childs and Celis (2018) outline a three criteria framework to evaluate representation processes including: responsiveness, inclusion, and egalitarianism. Responsiveness refers to the extent to which representatives make claims that are congruent with their constituents (Severs, 2010) and is indicative of relationships between representatives and the represented (Childs & Celis, 2018). Inclusion evaluates the representational process from a holistic perspective to evaluate the extent to which all relevant voices are represented. The egalitarian criterion evaluates the extent to which all voices are considered equally to create action driven by their respective interests (Childs & Celis, 2018).

Rey's (2020) system of representation approach provides an analytical framework to examine dynamics of representation and "help reveal crucial attributes of representation that are not visible just by looking at individual representatives" (p.

2). Four general functions of governance systems can be helpful in diagnoses or evaluations including the extent to which systems are democratic, inclusive, deliberative, and educative (Rey, 2020). Importantly, these functions are regulative (i.e., provide prescriptive norms to strive for) and systemic (i.e., performed collectively) (Rey, 2020). For example, the democratic function regulates that governance systems should enable holistic self-governance where each person can influence the direction of the system through their representatives. Key to the democratic function is the system's responsiveness (Severs, 2010).

The inclusive function ensures systems are representative and reflective of its citizens' characteristics and interests, which points to descriptive representation (Dovi, 2007; Parkinson, 2006). In other words, representatives should look like and/or at the very least, share similar experiences and interests with those they represent. The extent representatives achieve descriptive representation can also serve as a means for evaluation (Dovi, 2007). The deliberative function ensures citizens' interests are constructed through deliberative processes that includes a variety of actors, wherein each actors' arguments are discussed, scrutinized, and evaluated (Rey, 2020). If descriptive representation is met, many perspectives will be deliberated. Finally, the educative function is somewhat self-explanatory—for systems to work well, all participants involved should understand them.

It is also important to note that multi-level democratic governance systems face more challenges associated with the added complexity of multiple layers, the variety of constituents, and interdependent decisions and interests crossing levels of governance (Daubler et al, 2018; Vukasovic, 2018). U.S. higher education systems are multi-leveled, beginning with the base academic department, to the unit it is housed in, the institutional level, and finally within a larger university system of affiliated institutions (e.g., state systems). The NCAA is a separate governance system operating within the higher education context, which is also multilevel, consisting of institutional, conference, and national levels.

Student Representation and Shared Governance Systems

In higher education, student representation is part of the broader student engagement literature typically associated with governance. Higher education also experienced shifts away from formalistic representation accounts towards recognizing representation as a participatory process to enact student voice and advance democratic practices in educational settings (Matthews & Dollinger, 2022). The benefits of student representation are well documented including developing student citizenship (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009), developing student representatives' capabilities and skills (Flint et al., 2017), and enhancing student voice in university governance (Douglas et al., 2008).

Context, culture, and meanings underpin the role of student representation, engagement, and student voice, and thus it is important to examine a variety of settings where good student representation occurs. Much can be gleaned from the representational work of athletes in a multi-level and complex intercollegiate sport governance system including broader understandings of student civic participation in similar higher education governance systems. Thus, investigating intercollegiate sport gov-

ernance systems will contribute to the student representation literature in higher education. Furthermore, a theoretical gap exists demarcating democratic standards and system features for successfully infusing the intercollegiate athlete voice into higher education governance systems to ensure representatives can effectively impact legislation and decision-making related to their sport experiences.

Institutional athletic committees are part of shared governance systems (Boland, 2005; Heaney, 2010). While there are various manifestations of shared governance unique to each institution, a common definition is governance models that engage all interested parties (e.g., faculty, staff, alumni, students) in decision-making processes (Heaney, 2010). Intercollegiate athletic departments are part of the broader institution, and while they have autonomy in day-to-day athletic operations and decision-making, many institutions have athletic committees where policies and other major decisions related to athletic departments are deliberated. Thus, NCAA athlete representatives operate in a unique space of intersecting governance systems that requires representatives to not only navigate, but also be knowledgeable and effective in separate systems. Furthermore, Boland (2005) contends students should be positioned as partners (rather than clients) within shared governance systems and calls for the infusion of democratic practices at all levels of decision-making, “from the boardroom to the classroom” (p. 201). Participation in decision-making requires informed representation at the planning table, and to that end, higher education shares a responsibility in the democratic socialization process of students in preparation for democratic citizenship (Boland, 2005), including intercollegiate athletes.

Sport governance systems—including intercollegiate governance systems—are becoming increasingly more democratic with the inclusion of a broader base of participants, specifically athletes (Kihl, Kikulis, & Thibault, 2007; Kihl & Schull, 2020). Thus, the conceptual framework outlined provides a means to analyze and understand what good CAREp entails across a multi-level intercollegiate sport governance system as well as how the democratic system, features, and processes may facilitate or impede good CAREp. “The effectiveness of widespread participation in decision-making ... demands ongoing and timely strategies for adults to reflect on and learn from their experiences and the experiences of others” (Heaney, 2010, p. 70). Our understanding of good CAREp in the context of intercollegiate sport governance is an understudied phenomenon and is therefore important to enhance our conceptual knowledge of good CAREp as well as how governance systems shape it.

Methods

Sampling and Gaining Access

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to identify individuals with first-hand experience with SAAC, either as athlete representatives or in administrative advisory roles. SAAC advisors were included in the sampling criteria because they held positions offering insights and perceptions about the attributes related to performing athlete representative roles and system supports facilitating or impeding good CAREp. Sampling was based on a blend of meeting sampling criteria, will-

ingness to participate, and reaching redundancy of information (Lincoln, 1985). Individuals were contacted via email and invited to participate in the study via an interview conducted at a date and time convenient to them.

Twenty individuals agreed to participate in the study including ten athletes ($n=10$), five institutional personnel (e.g., administrators/faculty) ($n=5$), and five national and/or conference administrators ($n=5$). Participants were engaged with institutional, conference, and/or national level athlete representatives and/or committees. In accordance with institutional ethical approval granted for this study, limited participant details are disclosed to protect participants' identities and their respective organizations.

Data Collection

During an 18-month period (October 2016–March 2018), multiple data sources were collected. The primary data source was in-depth phone interviews which assisted in focusing on “captur[ing] deep meaning of experiences in the participants' own words” (Marshall & Rossman, 2014, p. 93). Interview guides facilitated a systematic inquiry about topics addressing the research questions while permitting flexibility for interviewers to build conversations around topics and to word questions spontaneously (Patton, 2002). Each interview began with general demographic questions (i.e., role/responsibilities and how/why they got involved with SAAC). Then we asked questions about good CAREp, individual attributes, and system features that were instrumental or detrimental to good CAREp. Interviews were digitally recorded and ranged in length from 30–60 minutes. Interview data were first transcribed verbatim, and participants were given the opportunity to verify transcripts for accuracy. Secondary data were collected in the form of relevant documents from institutional, conference, and national SAAC bylaws meeting minutes, reports (i.e., strategic plans), and social media (e.g., Twitter) that offered information about what it means to be a good representative.

Data Analysis

Analysis involved a systematic process of data management, category and thematic development via open, axial, and thematic coding and representing data for discussion (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). All data were prepared and downloaded into the qualitative software ATLAS.ti (Scientific Software Development, 2016). Data were reviewed repeatedly providing familiarity with the material. Next, data were open coded (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) to assist with categorization addressing the two research questions. Code creation was conducted both inductively (i.e., in-vivo codes) and deductively (i.e., representation literature). Axial coding helped identify relationships between concepts/categories and to further develop categories and themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Thematic analysis served to identify common patterns (Maxwell, 2012; Merriam, 2009) associated with good CAREp. Data were constantly compared during analysis procedures to demarcate differences between system features that facilitate or impede good CAREp. Reflective memos were used to document how data were categorized and patterns

identified (Patton, 2002). Memos also documented pattern and category connections to the literature, our notes of what it meant to be a good representative, and explanations of patterns and categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Trustworthiness

Standards of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability were followed to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings and research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Credibility was established by conducting member checks and peer debriefing techniques (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Lincoln, 1985). During data collection, member checking techniques included probing and follow-up questions to ensure participants' perceptions were well represented and paraphrasing participants' responses to ensure accuracy of their statements (Lincoln, 1985). Participants were also given the opportunity to member check their transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the interview. We held bi-monthly peer debriefing meetings to discuss various methodological issues, emerging themes, and categories related to the representation literature. Meetings were also held to discuss access strategies and potential biases we may have while completing data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Results are presented and organized around the research questions. First, we discuss what comprises good CAREp within this multi-level intercollegiate sport governance system focusing on individual attributes (Dovi, 2007) and deliberative capacity (Kuyper, 2016) of good representatives. Next, we shift to procedural (Childs & Celis, 2008) and system features (Daubler et al., 2018; Rey, 2020) within intercollegiate governance systems that facilitate and/or obstruct good CAREp.

Individual Attributes/Qualities

Regarding our first research question, two broad categories emerged: a) interpersonal skills and b) leadership and service. In the following section, we contextualize attributes of good athlete representatives within a democratic intercollegiate sport governance system highlighting relevant category dimensions to understand how and why such skills and attributes contribute to good CAREp.

Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills fostered good CAREp and were further characterized by four emerging dimensions: relationship building, communication, the ability to facilitate constructive conversations, and the capacity to understand and represent a wide range of perspectives. Dimensions also help contextualize the relevance at different governance system levels and thus are presented to reflect the subtlety among levels.

Institutional Level. Good representatives communicated constructively, developed relationships, and were available to all athlete constituents at the institutional level. For example:

The athletes we have on leadership do a really good job of facilitating con-

structive conversations that see all sides ... we make ourselves available outside meeting and practice times ... establishing that level of trust by communicating effectively (SAAC #6).

One of the functions of democratic representatives is actively soliciting input from constituents and encouraging their participation in the governance processes (Dovi, 2007). Good representatives were able to challenge peers to critically think about issues, build engagement, and essentially lobby for constituent support at their institutions:

Be more willing to ask harder questions, ask how they're really feeling, dig deeper than surface level ... ask people to get involved ... persuade to gain support ... [my] communication has had to improve in more ways than I knew would. (SAAC #8)

Encouraging athlete constituents to engage in governance generated trust because they felt confident in and valued constituent participation. Athlete representatives recognized the importance of constituent participation in terms of realizing self-governance which a value of good representatives (Dovi, 2007).

Finally, good CAREp included the ability and confidence to articulate interests of constituents within policy deliberations. Administrator #7 stated good representatives "weren't afraid of sharing their opinions or opinions of fellow athletes regarding any issue" and served as "[administrators] eyes and ears for their teammates."

Athlete representatives are introduced to democratic governance systems at institutional levels. It is also noteworthy that athlete representatives typically do not have voting rights at this base level of governance, and democratic participation of athletes therefore relies on deliberations and mobilization between representatives and constituents. In this context, good CAREp pertains to interpersonal skills and communication as expressions of Dovi's (2007) three virtues of good representatives (i.e., critical trust-building, fairmindedness, and good gatekeeping). Democratic representatives exhibited critical trust-building and advocacy methods to improve constituents' abilities to deliberate with their representatives (i.e., self-governance). Good CAREp is not simply increasing civic participation of constituents, but "rather, whether they increased the critical trust of democratic citizens" (Dovi, 2007 p. 126). Traditionally, college athletes were not involved in governance conversations to voice concerns to administration; however, recent shifts signal greater athlete participation (Hoffman et al., 2015). In this research, college athlete engagement begins at institutional levels and is facilitated through the work and interpersonal skills of CAREps extending Dovi's argument that good representatives are key prerequisites for well-functioning democratic systems to the context of intercollegiate sport governance.

Fair-mindedness wherein ideal representatives afford equal consideration to divergent interests (Dovi, 2007; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004) and deliberative capacities (Kuyper, 2016) was implicated in the ability to "facilitate constructive conversations seeing all sides" (SAAC #6). Representatives also provided good gatekeeping by cultivating constituent relationships, further enhancing constituents' understandings of their own civic participation in institutional governance. Through

these interactions, representatives learned appropriate levels of responsiveness (Severs, 2010) depending on the interests at stake (e.g., non-scholarship/scholarship athlete, Olympic sport/revenue sport) and the political nature of perspectives (e.g., gender equity, social justice). Developing college athlete civic capabilities through all three of Dovi's virtues—critical trust-building, fairmindedness, and good gatekeeping—fosters the quality of representation at institutional governance levels, and once established, representatives become further embedded in processes (Childs & Celis, 2018) of democratic representation at conference and national levels (i.e., across the system; Kuyper, 2016). The application of Dovi's three-part framework contributes to our understandings of not only the attributes of good CAREp in an intercollegiate sport governance system, but also, the ways in which democratic virtues serve in the development of athlete.

Conference and National Levels. Good CAREp entailed relationship building with an expanded variety of system actors at conference and national levels. For example:

Understand[ing] more than their sport and more than athletes ... it's athletic directors, commissioners, university presidents, [faculty athletic representatives] ... a good SAAC rep knows those people on their campus, communicates with them regularly, and understands the lens they may be looking through. That's usually someone who can communicate well and think about other perspectives. (Administrator #2)

Understanding the myriad of intercollegiate athlete perspectives (e.g., team/individual sport, high profile/low profile sports, gender, scholarship/non-scholarship) required open-mindedness to listen and understand various viewpoints. Representatives also engaged in meeting preparation, critical analysis, and foreseeing policy responses and consequences of legislation by “play[ing] devil's advocate for both sides so we could see where all athletes were coming from on main issues ... preparing for that thought process” (SAAC #7).

Understanding and appreciating various perspectives points to Dovi's (2007) fairmindedness, good gatekeeping, and the realization of the democratic value of inclusion. The representational process also becomes clearer in establishing inclusiveness (i.e., ensuring all relevant voices contribute to representational claims) and responsiveness (i.e., having one's interests represented in a focused manner; Childs & Celis, 2018). SAAC #7's insightful perspective highlights how athlete representatives infuse inclusiveness and responsiveness into the multi-level intercollegiate sport governance system.

Persuasion was another dimension of the communication skill set facilitating good CAREp at conference and national levels and was meaningful to impact legislative issues. Administrator #4 stated:

Student-athletes get a chance to stand up and voice why they feel a certain way about issues. I've seen administrators' votes change because of how [athletes] present [issues/perspectives].

Finally, communication was instrumental in coordinating the entire intercollegiate sport governance system, serving as a conduit to “be able to manage ... information

we're working on from a conference level, what they're working on at institutional levels and vice versa" (Administrator #3). The communicative space between governance levels—particularly between conference and institutional levels—demonstrate the power of the athlete voice to athletes at institutional levels who are perhaps most distant and/or unfamiliar with the process: "They've heard stories about how athletes at conference levels have changed or swayed votes ... or have voted contrary to their campuses" (Administrator #6).

While interpersonal skills at conference and national levels originate from individual traits, processual aspects of good CAREp continue to emerge within multi-level systems. Administrator #6 referenced back-and-forth deliberations at conference levels between formal legislative groups and a variety of interest groups which implicates democratic participation through system processes (Kihl & Schull, 2020). Furthermore, attention to deliberations between governance levels established egalitarianism within the representation process—in other words, all athletes' voices and interests are considered equally. Egalitarianism is vital within the representation process in amplifying the virtue of critical trust-building (Childs & Celis, 2018).

Rey's (2020) system representation approach embodies communication among pluralistic representatives across multi-level systems. While representation traditionally signifies bottom-up channels of communication giving voice to constituents by making their interests present in the public policy debate (Pitkin, 1967), participant excerpts above demonstrate two-way deliberative channels highlighting both the interaction of plural forms of representation and dynamics of policy-making which helps describe how "representative and non-representative actors share their individual work to build a new representation at the level of the system" (Rey, 2020, p. 2). In the context of NCAA's Division I governance system, this is important because prior to restructuring, the system did not engage or empower the college athlete voice within various levels to the extent it does in the redesigned structure. Communicative power (Kuyper, 2016) is also highlighted by establishing links between forms of representation—in this case, the deliberations between athlete constituents at institutional levels, and elected/appointed representatives at conference and national levels, as well as how institutionalized deliberations influenced legislation (Kihl et al., 2007). Communicative power also serves to judge the quality of representatives within the wider governance system including the empowered space (i.e., legislative), the public space (i.e., constituent deliberations), and the interpretive bidirectional spaces in between (Kuyper, 2016).

Leadership and Service

Factors related to leadership experience and service were also characteristics of good CAREp in this intercollegiate sport governance system. The institutional level again serves as an entry point and provides initial conception of the category, while results and analysis at conference and national levels provide more nuance through the development of dimensions.

Institutional Level. Athletic leadership was a bonus for representatives, yet not a requirement at institutional levels. Rather, it was more relevant for representatives

to demonstrate leadership potential. That is, “those who don’t necessarily have to be captains on their teams, but just people who are involved” (Administrator #7) were recruited for service on institutional SAACs. Here, good CAREp was more malleable compared to upper levels and importantly, could vary from one institution to another. However, relevant characteristics cited were more reflective of emergent leadership teamed with the desire to serve one’s peers, and we see both as antecedents to good CAREp in conference and national levels of the governance system. Put another way, while emergent leadership and service do not truly define good CAREp at institutional levels, they implicate developmental stages for good representatives, and support arguments that good representatives are prerequisites to both well-functioning democratic systems (Dovi, 2007) and representation processes (Childs & Celis, 2018).

Conference and National Levels. Leadership emerged as proven sport leadership experience at institutional levels and served as both a qualification for and a pipeline to representation work at conference and national levels. Conference administrator #3 stated:

It’s important for our conference members to be in leadership roles on their campus, generally, that’s kind of the rule ... at least one [conference] representative is going to be Chair or Vice Chair [of SAAC] on their campus. We want them to have leadership qualities and be in leadership roles on their team.

The clear delineation in governance system levels—that is, leadership associated with good CAREp at institutional levels was more flexible and developmental, while at conference levels, leadership was demonstrative of sport experiences—played out as “general rules” or qualifications for good representational work.

When athletes fulfilled leadership roles on their team, institutional level leadership experience provided credibility with peer constituents at conference and national levels, which in turn facilitated good communication as their peers were more likely to both listen and speak to athletes already in leadership roles:

They’re leaders on the field and court ... their teammates will listen to them when it comes to legislation ... if you see your big-time player on your team involved, it can be contagious and [they] listen, care, and are more attentive ... and realize they have a voice in this process. (Administrator #4)

“Big-time players” were perhaps more influential in empowering fellow athletes to be more involved, or at least increased awareness of legislative processes and the power of athletes’ voices within it demonstrating the effectiveness of so called “big-time players” to mobilize constituent support in a collaborative egalitarian manner. It also underscores the view that while individual representatives should embody characteristics such as fair-mindedness, critical trust-building, and good gatekeeping (Dovi, 2007), the resulting civic equality and similar democratic values “may be more realizable collectively than individually” (Childs & Celis, 2018, p. 4), which points to broader representational processes in intercollegiate sport governance.

Furthermore, “big-time players” are more visible within conference and national levels and their leadership and messages perhaps resonate more with the broad athlete constituency across all levels of the democratic intercollegiate sport gov-

ernance system. Here again we see how an individual qualification (i.e., “big-time player”) enables collective action and engagement in democratic governance. The idea that “big-time players” were sought out for representational roles at conference and national levels also exemplifies symbolic representation (Parkinson, 2006; Pitkin, 1967). More specifically, athlete representatives are assessed by the extent to which they invoke positive responses and garner acceptance among constituents, and athletes who are perceivably more likely to fulfill symbolic representational roles are high-profile athletes on both conference and national stages.

College athlete leaders on the court/field were also ideally suited for representational roles within the governance system based on their first-hand athlete experiences and important perspectives gleaned from those experiences. Conference Administrator #4 stated:

We wanted leading scorers ...athletes who are part of their own leadership councils within their team ... the ones who are playing every game ... who are highly recruited and can give feedback on the recruiting process or various issues that directly affect them.

Descriptive representation is the extent to which a representative resembles, or at the very least, shares similar interests and experiences with constituents (Parkinson, 2006). In this research, high-profile athletes (i.e., “leading scorers”) were sought to fulfill descriptive representational roles based in part on the assumption that their own lived experiences (e.g., recruiting process) inform their ability to represent interests of other athletes and contribute important dialogue with other political actors (i.e., coaches/administrators).

At conference and national levels, descriptive representation (Parkinson, 2006;) was substantive as it relates to both inclusive and deliberative functions of democratic systems (Rey, 2020). First, democratic systems are inclusive based on the extent to which salient features and experiences of the represented are reflected within and across the system (Rey, 2020). Second, achieving descriptive representation contributes to deliberative functioning of governance systems by ensuring all interests, perspectives, and opinions of citizens are created, debated, and justified in deliberative processes (Rey, 2020). However, it is important to caution against a singular focus in descriptive representation related to intercollegiate sport governance systems. While conference and national levels are keenly focused on achieving descriptive representation by including “big-time” athletes in representational roles, there is vast diversity among college athletes within the system. For example, not all Division I athletes are recruited, and including the myriad of college athlete experiences and interests will not only further improve inclusiveness and legitimacy, but also add broader perspectives to the deliberative process ensuring all interests are considered.

Good Representation and System Features: Supports and Constraints

Contextual features of governance systems also play a role in enhancing or inhibiting good CARep. Administrative support was the primary category related to promoting good CARep while governance system inconsistencies emerged to characterize challenges to achieving good CARep. Results are discussed in relation to

good representation (Dovi, 2007; Kuyper, 2016) and representational processes and systems (Childs & Celis, 2018; Rey, 2020).

Institutional Level

Administrative Support. Administrators played an essential role in teaching athlete representatives fair-mindedness and critical trust-building which were critical to engage in democratic advocacy for their constituents. Developing fair-mindedness and ultimately fostering civic equality (Dovi, 2007) included sensitivity to understand and determine which legislation to support and which to oppose. Athlete representatives were able to develop these skills at institutional levels when administrators included them in department meetings: “My athletic director allowed me to be involved in [coaches] meetings and asked for opinions of student-athletes on various occasions” (SAAC #1). Administrators also facilitated critical trust by translating and interpreting complex NCAA legislation to athlete representatives:

Athletes at many institutions are not involved in the minutiae of what happens at their institutional athletic departments. The role administrators often play is one of translation ... when we have legislation that quite frankly can be hard to understand, administrators often translate that into a language [athletes] can understand (Administrator #2).

Inconsistencies. Lack of administrative support at institutional levels also surfaced as a detriment to good CAREp and clearly highlighted inconsistencies across the governance system. One dimension of the support deficit stemmed from institutional administrators antiquated approach:

We have a quote-unquote “old-school” advisor who isn’t as involved with conversations on national issues ... which makes it difficult ... I’ve sat down with our compliance person to go through the language. That was on me, not our advisor (SAAC #5).

Outdated administrative approaches also impeded SAAC evolution:

You have institutions whose SAAC are still growing ... a lot of institutions aren’t looking at legislation ... we recognized in order to use this voting privilege to its potential, we had to have all hands on deck (Administrator #2).

CAREp is also constrained when institutional administrators lack full understanding of the SAAC purpose and the important role athlete representatives play: “Your average Joe athlete ... maybe is involved with SAAC, [but] doesn’t understand what SAAC even is. He’s put there because he’s seen as a leader and [the] SAAC advisor has gone to each coach for some good kids to be on SAAC” (SAAC #11). CAREp is inhibited when selection criteria do not match the committee’s purpose, which subsequently results in failure to engage in governance and representation work. Finally, CAREp suffered when institutional administrators did not value representatives’ roles in amplifying the broader athlete voice:

If administration doesn’t tell us our voices are relevant, then me telling my fellow athletes their voices are important isn’t going to mean anything if I don’t have [administration] backing me up. It comes from all levels, and

when there's a lack of connection or communication, that's detrimental ... there must be support from administration for it to work (SAAC #6).

Administrators play a role in supporting or impeding good CARep at the institutional level. More specifically, administrators must understand the governance system to identify meaningful learning opportunities, which fosters athlete representatives' abilities to build deliberative capacities (Kuyper, 2016) and work toward self-governance through critical trust (Dovi, 2007). CARep is impeded when institutional administrators do not understand the system, the purpose of SAAC, and/or athlete representatives' roles within the system. Furthermore, SAAC #6's quote importantly demonstrates how lack of support impedes athlete representatives work towards self-governance (Dovi, 2007), their ability to demonstrate responsiveness (Childs & Celis, 2018), and the trickle-down effect it has on their constituents. When administrators do not value the athlete voice, there is potential for the athlete voice to remain 'actively passive' (Austen, 2020) within the system, which impedes good CARep. Klemenčič (2014) argued that to infuse student voice into a governance system, it first must be valued by administrators as the relational structures impact internal legitimacy. Our findings related to the importance of administrative support in legitimizing representational roles of athletes extend Klemenčič's work to the context of intercollegiate sport governance. Furthermore, in drawing on student voice work in higher education (e.g., Austen, 2020; Klemenčič, 2014) our findings around the relevance of administrative support as both a support and in some cases, a detriment, contributes to our understandings of good CARep in the context of intercollegiate sport governance.

Conference and National Level

Administrative Support. While administrators continue to provide experiential opportunities at conference and national levels, notable differences from institutional levels included the scope of meetings athlete representatives were exposed to, and in many cases, participated in, which provided insights on legislative topics and policy options, and experience articulating constituent preferences:

I've been able to sit on Board, Athletic Director's, and FAR [faculty athletic representatives] meetings ... we get time to speak and then hear what different administrators have to say. We're not only gathering feedback from athletes, but I get to hear from such a wide range of people (SAAC #11).

Administrators' roles at conference and national levels also shifted subtly from education to information dissemination:

Our [conference administrator] is in contact with us at least once a week sending updates on policy, voting, current events and really does a great job of keeping us informed (SAAC #6).

National SAAC liaisons [(i.e., administrators)] make sure all members of the committee are educated to the best of their ability on 'hot topics' relating to the NCAA (SAAC #1).

Once informed of policy updates or current issues and armed with appropriate narratives to enhance athlete understandings of complex legislative issues, represen-

tatives could effectively carry out their responsibilities: "...understanding more to bring back to athletes ... we were given resources by our conference to understand what was going on" (SAAC #7).

Multi-level governance increases both the number of participation opportunities for representatives and the variety of actors involved in policy discussions (Daubler et al., 2018). NCAA's Division I Board of Directors is its highest governing body and is responsible for the overall management of the division including strategy, policy, and legislation (NCAA, n.d). SAAC #11 highlighted administrative support within meetings in the form of civic equality—that is, value placed on athletes' opinions and voices on legislative matters (Dovi, 2007). Administrators also helped athlete representatives achieve good gatekeeping (Dovi, 2007) to interpret and translate legislation to peers thereby fostering inclusion of constituents in governance.

Decision-making experiences and legislative issue deliberations within the broader multi-level system also provided important opportunities to cultivate critical trust-building (Dovi, 2007). Meeting participation provided experiential learning (i.e., how to effectively listen and understand different constituent viewpoints, share feedback, and take policy stances) to cultivate deliberative competencies and improved representatives' understandings of constituents' interests, which is important garner widespread participation and expression of interests. Athlete representatives' roles were further legitimized when administrators asked their opinions on legislation and armed them with relevant information, giving representatives more confidence in decision-making.

Good representation entails effective deliberation to build support, justify perspectives, respect opposing perspectives, and reach mutual decisions with board members (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). Administrators fill vital roles arming athlete representatives with exposure and experience in decision-making and governance processes beginning at institutional levels to provide representatives an entry point to governance processes. Once introduced to governance processes, conference and national administrators provided progressively enriching experience to athlete representatives. Good CAREp in this democratic intercollegiate sport governance context thus denoted the importance of administrative guidance and mentoring across levels of governance to advanced Dovi's (2007) virtues of democratic representation.

Defining functions within a governance system can provide normative criteria and diagnostics to determine what it does well and where improvements are needed. One of the functions of a system of representation is education, and Rey (2020) suggests the nature of the governance system should dictate how the educative function is fulfilled through what it promotes, cultivates, or how it inculcates participants. In this case, the system begins its educative function by exposing participants to the legislative processes and provides them with experience to develop relevant individual skills they can build upon as they move from institutional levels to conference and national levels. The progression of the educative function here is important because in the context of NCAA's governance system, CAREp are young adults (i.e., 18-23 years old), likely with little experience in any governance system and rep-

resentation. Individual skills gained through educative functioning at institutional levels then transfer to conference and national levels and connect to process-based criteria (Childs & Celis, 2018). For example, athlete representatives learn how to make representational claims reflecting their constituents (i.e., responsiveness), seek to understand the myriad of athletes' interests including those who may be excluded (i.e., inclusiveness), and consider the differing interests equally (i.e., egalitarianism; Childs & Celis, 2018).

Inconsistencies. Some interest groups (e.g., athletes, administrators, and university presidents) at conference and national levels also lacked education and understanding of SAACs purpose within the system, which impeded good CAREp. Athlete (#11) shared a perspective worth highlighting in its entirety:

There hasn't been a great job of educating people how everything works. How SAAC works. Not just [institutional] level, but from the top down—from the NCAA all the way down. And it's not just athletes, it's administrators, athletic directors, presidents ... [For example] at our Board of Directors meeting, [university] President on my left barely knew what SAAC stood for. And it wasn't that he didn't care, he was unbelievably interested in everything I had to say, but ... he couldn't tell me who their conference representative was. He didn't even know what I did, what my job was. He barely knew why I was there ... lack of education for everybody in terms of what SAAC is, how it works, what they can do, what they can't do, and the level of voice that athletes actually have (SAAC #11).

One of the goals of the 2014-15 restructuring was to ensure all athletes were represented and sanctioned to influence policy decisions (Shannon, 2017), and deficient education of a variety of interest groups teamed with lack of administrative support clearly impedes the work of athletes charged in representing the athlete voice. The lack of education and administrative support both effectively serve to strip CAREps of their legitimacy, at least in a symbolic sense. Put another way, while the governance structure affords athlete representatives voting rights (i.e., legitimacy), when administrators or university presidents do not know or do not recognize the legitimacy of athlete voices, athlete constituents may perceive that SAAC does not matter. Much like a democratic political system, if one does not feel their voice matters in the system, they can become disengaged or disenfranchised, which goes against the basic function of political representation—that is, to provide substantive representation for the whole citizenry (Rey, 2020). Furthermore, highlighting the relevance of individual virtues of a good representative—more specifically “a fair-minded representative reaches out to those who hitherto have been marginalized by political processes” (Childs & Celis, 2018, para. 7).

Education of all relevant actors is vital in the realization of the NCAA's restructuring goal. Dovi (2007) contends “when citizens lack proper capacities, democratic institutions cannot always function properly” (p. 5). While athlete representatives are charged with giving voice to their athlete peers, system breakdowns—in this case, lack of comprehensive education of all actors—draws attention to how even well-functioning democratic governance systems can have point(s) of failure (Rey, 2020). Good democratic representation is a process of advocacy and deliberations

occurring within democratic systems of governance (Childs & Celis, 2018), and strengthening the educative function has important implications for remaining systems functions (i.e., democratic, inclusion, and deliberative; Rey, 2020). In higher education settings, Bols (2017) argues that efforts to enhance student engagement often focus heavily on training and effectiveness of student representatives; however, equal weight should also be placed on staff training, engagement, and effective committee structures. Our findings confirm the need for more staff and administrative training to improve CAREp within the college sport context.

In pursuing the study's purpose, we sought out to understand what good CAREp entails within a college sport governance system and what factors within the governance system support or hinder representation. Related to our first research question, we found that good CAREp consisted of individual attributes and qualities of college athlete representatives. More specifically, college athlete representatives demonstrated a range of interpersonal skills (e.g., relationship building, communication, and understanding the myriad of athlete perspectives) and leadership experience and service. In answering our second research question, we found that administrative support was the primary factor within the governance system that could either lend support to or impede good CAREp. Importantly, the level of governance (i.e., institutional, conference, and national) provided further refinement and nuance within our findings for both research questions. In the concluding section, we further summarize, explain, and connect these findings to theoretical and practical implications and provide recommendations.

Implications and Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study was to examine good CAREp in a democratic multi-level intercollegiate sport governance system and to understand how contextual governance features support or impede the quality of representation. In terms of the study's theoretical contributions, we applied existing theoretical frameworks (i.e., Childs & Celis, 2018; Dovi, 2007; Kuyper, 2016; Rey 2020) to the novel context of NCAA sport governance, and in so doing extended the sport management literature (Doherty, 2013) as well as the broader student representation in higher education literature. More specifically, our study makes a theoretical contribution by applying representation and democratic theory to the intercollegiate sport context enhancing our understanding of what quality representation looks like for athletes serving in representational roles, as well as how democratic system features of intercollegiate sport governance systems facilitate or diminish good representation extending previous work in sport governance and athlete representation (Kihl & Schull, 2020; Ciomaga et al., 2017).

Athlete representatives' main roles in the NCAA governance system involved serving as democratic advocates to their constituents by pursuing fair deliberations to inform solutions to NCAA legislation. Findings showed NCAA athlete representatives excelled in vital individual skills including the ability to cultivate relationships and attend to various interest groups' perspectives, engage in constructive deliber-

ations, and comprehend the importance of civic participation within the system. At conference and national levels, athlete representatives engaged in deliberations with a variety of governance system actors which required the adoption of a broad perspective. At the institutional level, individual attributes were also important; however, CARep was very much developmental highlighting the practical implication for individual schools to consider their role in providing a learning environment that can augment the development of good civic participants within their athlete population.

There are two areas where athlete representatives could improve. First, while autonomy representatives shared and seemed to understand the need to apply broad perspectives at the national level, they nonetheless were more focused on sports and issues within autonomy (i.e., Power Five) conferences rather than on a more comprehensive views found within and across non-autonomy conferences. To enhance fairmindedness, autonomy SAAC representatives could sit on the Division I SAAC (Broome, 2018). Future research could also focus on nuanced differences of doing representation in autonomy conferences compared to non-autonomy conferences, as well as if and how power relations may be embedded within college athletes' representational roles.

Second, limiting athlete representatives voting rights to mostly the national executive council creates a challenge around how representatives can embrace the norm of civic equality without possessing voting rights throughout the system. Broome (2018) argued "it is important we ensure [athlete representatives] contributions to NCAA governance are maximized ... we should consider whether the voice and vote could be further increased" (p. 114). The lack of voting rights at two levels of governance system (i.e., institutional and conference), emphasizes the importance of individual skills—especially related to building trust and deliberative capacity of representatives. Representational theory could be further extended through future research focused on the ways in which non-voting representatives address a democratic deficit within democratic governance system and/or enact democratic virtues to enhance civic equality in a system characterized by a democratic deficit.

System features and support mechanisms are also important considering good CARep does not simply occur with good individuals serving in representational roles. NCAA Division I governance system supports the work of athlete representatives primarily through its educative function (Rey, 2020). Athletic administrators and advisors working with SAACs were key to identifying and providing experiential learning opportunities, coaching athlete representatives on the NCAA legislation and processes, and disseminating relevant information. Administrators provided rich immersive and experiential learning opportunities ensuring athlete representatives not only understood and exercised their individual representative skills, but also engaged in representational work that contributed to representation processes through responsiveness, inclusiveness, and egalitarianism (Childs & Celis, 2018). Therefore, good administrators with knowledge and experience within the system and who embrace and act on their mentorship and teaching roles with athlete representatives play a vital role in fostering good CARep as well as related practices.

We also found once athlete representatives reached conference and national

levels, support features were more consistent or institutionalized in the governance system. Put another way, inconsistencies constraining good CAREp in governance system more often occurred at institutional levels. Training or educational resources for athletic administrators and advisers working directly with the institutional SAACs is recommended to address system inconsistencies. While the NCAA provide resources such as “*Best Practices*” for conference and institutional level SAACs (NCAA, 2015), it is unclear what, if any, resources are provided to administrators serving as mentors and/or advisers to athlete representatives on institutional SAACs. Rey (2020) contends the educative function ensures “a system can continue to produce the best kind of agents to fill its many representative roles” (p. 18). The NCAA and other sport governing bodies would be well-served to invest in education around athlete representation, including administrators, to ensure consistency at institutional levels and help groom athletes for meaningful representational roles.

Inconsistencies impeding good CAREp also stemmed from lack of continuity of SAAC missions across governance levels. Further institutionalizing practices and training for administrators as well as establishing common values and mission statements for SAAC committees would create a more cohesive and aligned multi-level system to facilitate good CAREp. Bols (2017) suggests a set of behaviors could be a useful tool to enhance the professionalization of student representation, and we further extend his argument to include a keen focus on the behaviors of staff and administrators to enhance the professionalization of CAREp—particularly at instructional levels. Establishing clear guidelines and responsibilities for institutional, conference, and national administrators and liaisons charged with advisory roles with SAACs and mentorship of athlete representatives would go some way to align the multi-level governance system and ensure all athlete representatives are given the necessary supports to fulfill their representative roles.

This study may be unique to the sample of 20 participants who play a role in NCAA Division I governance through their involvement in institutional, conference, and/or national SAAC. The study is thus limited in its ability to generalize to other sport contexts as it is reflective of the perceptions and experiences of the 20 participants. Another limitation is our conceptualization of power is framed from a democratic representation perspective and does not take into consideration traditional notions of power infused in organizations including hierarchical status and positional power. Future research could therefore focus on traditional conceptualizations of organizational power, and if and how power and politics are infused into the governance systems.

A fruitful area to apply an organizational power and politics framing would be the implementation of a new NCAA constitution which was approved by members in all three divisions in 2022. While voting for the new constitution received wide support, critics believe that “too much money and power are concentrated in the hands of Division I colleges, to the detriment of others” (Moody, 2022, p.1) including Division II and III institutions and Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Future research could also interrogate the political processes (both internal and external) that led to the new constitution, as this represents another area

of critique. The new constitution also decentralizes the governing body of college sport and provides more autonomy to each division to develop their own policies, and thus future research could examine how the reorganization impacts legislative and representational processes within each division. Finally, the new constitution includes more language and priorities centered around the student-athlete experience and well-being. Thus, future research should focus on the extent to which the student-athlete experience is (or is not) prioritized within the new constitution, as well as which athlete groups benefit more within the reorganized structure.

The findings around what it means to be a good athlete representative and the governance system supports and impediments within college sport are also timely in broader sport governance given the numerous calls to action to increase athletes' voices within decision-making and legislative processes across national and international governing bodies (e.g., Grigaliunaite & Eimontas, 2018). Athlete groups have called for structural changes to engage more athletes as voting members (e.g., globalathlete), and to give more weight to athletes' voices in the governance process given decisions are most impactful to athletes' experiences. For example, athlete commissions are often positioned as ancillary to governance structures, and as such, they become more consultative, are not fully engaged in legislative processes, and do not fulfill notions of democracy (Ciomaga et al., 2017). Chatzigianni (2018) calls for modernizing traditional sport governing bodies in a "rapidly changing multi-actor global environment" (p. 1455) which requires adaptability. Importantly, to make such changes effective, broader understandings of athlete representation within multi-level, democratic sport governance systems, such as the NCAA is needed. The individual qualities that contribute to good CAREp as well as the ways in which the NCAA governance structure enables or constrains good CAREp could help inform improvements and responsiveness to athlete representation within national and international sport governance systems shifting toward more democratic structures and features.

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