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Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths

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Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Recreation and Sport Management

by

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ABSTRACT

There is increased information about the profile of current collegiate athletic directors as it relates to education, age, race, and gender. However, there is a gap in the knowledge of the career paths of the modern day Division I collegiate athletic director position compared to the athletic directors studied over 20 years ago. There is also a gap in the knowledge of the skills necessary to be an effective athletic director from the perspective of Division I athletic directors. The purpose of this study was to use the *Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths* (PADCP) scale to determine their career paths. The goal was to not only understand the career paths of today's athletic directors but to compare the experiences with those from the 1994 foundational study conducted by Fitzgerald et al. (1994). This research is beneficial to aspiring and entry-level collegiate athletics administrators because the landscape of college athletics has changed significantly over the past 20 years. It is important for them to know the common experiences and required skill sets in order to navigate their path to the top.

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This doctoral journey was unlike anything I've ever participated in throughout my 40 years on this earth. As a former student-athlete, I found myself using the lessons learned throughout that season of life. Those lessons included critical thinking, self-awareness, and focusing on the three things I have control over in life; attitude, effort and time management.

I would like to thank Dr. Harold Cheatham, former Dean of the College of Education at Clemson University, who told me that I was "doctoral material" as he shook my hand on stage while I was receiving my master's degree in 2000. I would also like to thank Dr. Steve Dittmore, my committee chair, advisor, colleague and friend, who encouraged me and pushed me to finish what I started as I whined about how busy life was with a full-time job and three children. Thank you Dr. Merry Moiseichik and Dr. Steve Langsner for your constant support in your classes and throughout my journey. Words cannot express how appreciative I am to my classmates Dr. David Rolfe, Dr. Bo (Norman) Li, Dr. John Malmo, Dr. Greg Stine, Dr. Simeon Hinsey and Dr. Colin Cork in the Recreation and Sports Management program. They were always a step ahead of me in the journey but they always reached back to "lift me as they climbed." Thank you Dr. Sarah Stokowski for serving on my committee and for your assistance with my research. I am grateful to Dr. Charles Robinson and Dr. Michael Miller for your input and encouragement as committee members as well. To one of my favorite faculty members of all time, Dr. Mary Ramey. God bless your heart to serve and empower people to be their best. I can only hope the student-athletes I encounter in my career will feel as empowered as I did every time I left your class. Thank you to the Division I athletic directors who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in my study. I was blown away by the number of you who made time to assist a colleague in my attempt to contribute new knowledge to our field. Most

importantly, I would like to acknowledge my wife, Celia Wood, who not only served as my prayer warrior but also as my encourager-in-chief and my editor-in-chief. Thank you Celia-I love you!

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my wife Celia and my children Eliana, Nia, Alyssa and Elijah. While there were many things I used as motivation to complete this journey, nothing compared to my desire to finish as a “thank you” for sacrificing husband and daddy time while I chased a personal and professional goal of mine. Wood Family-I love you with everything in me and I pray that each of you will find God’s will for YOUR life and pursue it relentlessly for His glory!

Mom, thank you for being an amazing parent. As I begin my 18th year in education, it has become very clear to me that the likelihood of children being successful in life increases when they have at least one loving parent at home. Everything you did for me in life prepared me for this moment. You held me accountable for my actions, you challenged me to be a man, you challenged me to be the best, you challenged me to be different, you challenged me as I picked my friends, you kept me active in sports, you provided for all of my needs, you disciplined me, you taught me to respect my elders, you taught me to serve, you taught me to thank God for what we did have and you loved me unconditionally! Everyone needs a difference maker in their lives and you were that person for me. I love you!

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Organization of the Chapter

Chapter one is an introduction to the athletic director position including the background of the role within the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA), a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and the significance of the study for intercollegiate athletics. Then you will find the theoretical framework used to examine career paths in the study. The chapter will also include the conceptual design to understand the process for conducting the study, followed by the professional and personal experiences that allow the researcher to provide meaning to the results.

Introduction

The focus of this study was to understand the perceptions of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletic director (ADs) career paths. Division I ADs hold the highest position of authority in intercollegiate athletic departments at the highest level of competition in the NCAA (Swift, 2011). There is a growing celebrity of the athletic director position and it has become much more visible than it used to be (Dosh, 2013). However, the challenge is in the number of these positions available. According to TeamWork.com, an online software company that links candidates with sports jobs, applications for positions in sports have increased 12% in 2015 (Personal Communication, 2016). There were 770,000 people chasing 15,000 opportunities, which means people interested in working in the sports industry only had about a 1.9% chance of landing a job (Personal Communication, 2016). Within college athletics, there are only about 1,100 NCAA athletic director positions in all three divisions, with 350 of them within Division I (ncaa.org, 2016). That leaves interested individuals with about a 3%

chance of securing one of these highly coveted positions since only a few of them are available at any given moment. There were 167 Division I athletic director hires over a five-year span between 2009-2014 (Wong, 2014).

The chief executive officer (president/chancellor) hires the athletic director position. What once was seen as a job for retired coaches, has now transformed into a role that attracts some of the top executives both in and outside the sports industry (Belzer, 2015). The expectation, therefore, is that these AD positions be filled with individuals who have exhibited the ability to provide leadership for an auxiliary group that for the most part fail to be self-supporting and drain valuable resources from general academic budgets (Corlett, 2013). In other words, someone who can put the athletic department in a financial position that would reduce the need to tap into already strained university budgets.

Categorized by the explosive rise in popularity of college sports and the seemingly exponential growth of spending by universities to bolster their athletic programs, there has never been a greater need for professionals who bring both a dynamic and robust set of skills to manage these complex, multifaceted business operations (Belzer, 2015, p. 1).

Athletic directors are responsible for the hiring of coaches and administrative support staff. They are also responsible for managing the athletics enterprise that includes external relations like ticket sales, marketing, broadcast services, fundraising, media relations, licensing, and sponsorships as well as the internal operations like academics, compliance, business operations, event management, facilities, instructional technology and student-athlete development (life skills). This study explored the perceptions of the skills and experiences necessary to become a NCAA Division I athletic director.

Background

The NCAA is a membership driven organization comprised of schools which participate in one of three divisions, with Division I subdivided based on football sponsorship (ncaa.org,

2015). Schools that participate in bowl games belong to the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) and represent 128 institutions (65 in FBS Autonomy/63 in FBS), while schools that participate in the NCAA football championship belong to the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) and represent 125 institutions (ncaa.org, 2015), and schools that do not sponsor football belong to I-AAA and represent 197 institutions. Division I FBS schools are considered the highest level of athletic competition since they generally have the largest student bodies, the largest athletics budgets and offer the most generous number of scholarships (ncaa.org, 2015).

Each of the 350 schools that currently make up Division I have a full-time athletic director responsible for the oversight of the organization within a higher education setting. “Collegiate athletic directors are the chief executive officers within the athletic department and universities they serve” (Hardin, Cooper & Huffman, 2013, p. 55). Over the past 30 years the competitive landscape of colleges and universities, and more specifically athletic departments within them, have changed dramatically due to governmental legislation and a number of economic factors that have increased the exposure and visibility of NCAA Division I schools (Frank, 2010). These factors include everything from compliance violations, Title IX legislation, freshman athletic eligibility (Proposition 48), drug testing, network television revenues, and anti-trust legislation (Hatfield, Wrenn & Bretting, 1987), to the recent attempt at unionization by student-athletes, NCAA image and likeness legislation, multiyear athletic scholarships, proposals for pay-for-play, the formation of the new College Football Playoff system and the impact of full cost of attendance on scholarships.

In the past, most athletic directors were former celebrated head football coaches, appointed to the athletic directors’ position as a gesture of respect for years of service and commitment to their respective colleges/universities (Duderstadt, 2003). Prior to George

O'Leary, who recently resigned his athletic director role after an 0-5 start to his 2015 season at the University of Central Florida, the last time a head football coach at an FBS university simultaneously held the position of athletic director was in 2008 when Derek Dooley was hired by Louisiana Tech University, right before replacing Lane Kiffin as head football coach at Tennessee in 2009 (latechsports.com, 2008). After retiring from coaching football in 2005, Barry Alvarez coached two bowl games in 2012 and 2014 to fill in for departed head coaches Bret Bielema and Gary Anderson while serving as the AD at Wisconsin (cbssports.com, 2014). Though the complexity of the athletic director's position varies depending on the size and type of institution, the effectiveness of the department is largely determined by the skills and talents of the director, and the previous experiences that have prepared him or her for the responsibilities of a directorship (Fitzgerald, Sagaria & Nelson, 1994).

Fitzgerald et al. (1994) reported the average number of athletic directors at the NCAA Division I level in 1992 increased over 47% since 1988 with average annual budgets of close to \$10 million. As of December 2015, the NCAA reported membership in Division I athletics at 350 institutions. The average salary for a Division I athletic director was \$350,000 with average annual budgets of \$40 million (EADA Public Report, 2015). So, while many administrators get into the collegiate athletics industry to work with young people and coaches in a higher education environment, the reality of salaries and annual operating budgets clearly suggests the world of Division I college athletics is a business. The aforementioned growth in the number of athletic director positions, salaries and departmental budgets may challenge what we know about the role of the athletic directors and the path to becoming one.

Statement of the Problem

Fitzgerald et al. (1994) examined career paths derived from the sequentially ordered, common positions that began with a fixed entry level position and culminated in the athletic director position. The five-step normative pattern studied included high school athlete, high school coach, college coach, assistant/associate athletic director and athletic director. Fitzgerald et al. (1994) found that the most common experience most athletic directors shared was that the majority of them were former student-athletes (80%). Of the sitting ADs in 1994, 65% were involved in collegiate coaching immediately before securing the top spot. Though most of the incumbent athletic directors did not hold all five positions in the proposed sequence, an examination of the chronological order of positions illustrated that 189 of 200 (94.5%) of the respondents experienced the linear time sequence of the normative career patterns. There is increased information about the profile of current collegiate athletic directors as it relates to education, age, race, and gender. However, there is a gap in the knowledge of the career paths of the modern day Division I collegiate athletic director position compared to the athletic directors studied over 20 years ago. There is also a gap in the knowledge of the skills necessary to be an effective athletic director from the perspective of Division I athletic directors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to use the *Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths* (PADCP) scale to determine their career paths. The goal was to not only understand the career paths of today's athletic directors but to compare the experiences with those from the 1994 foundational study conducted by Fitzgerald et al. (1994). This research is beneficial to aspiring and entry-level collegiate athletics administrators because the landscape of

college athletics has changed significantly over the past 20 years. It is important for them to know the common experiences and required skill sets in order to navigate their path to the top.

Research Questions

RQ1-What are the professional and educational trends most common among contemporary NCAA Division I ADs?

RQ2-What skills and experiences do NCAA Division I ADs perceive to be the most important to be effective in their jobs?

RQ3-How do NCAA ADs perceive the acquisition of necessary effectiveness skills, based on prior administrative or executive experience?

Significance of the Study

The information obtained from this study can be helpful to aspiring NCAA Division I athletic directors in several ways. First, it can suggest a normative career path that will assist in their attempt to enter and navigate the hierarchy that exists in NCAA Division I athletic departments. Second, the study can provide insight on the real issues that athletic directors face versus the perceived responsibilities of the job. Third, it may provide information on the most valuable skill sets necessary to perform the job from the athletic director's perspective. Finally, the study will contribute to the literature on the career paths of athletic directors.

Theoretical Framework

Seymour Spilerman's (1977) sociological career trajectory model was the theoretical framework used to examine the career patterns of athletic directors. By using the term "career trajectory", Spilerman meant a work history that is common to a portion of the labor force. In some cases, a career line consists of a sequence of positions within a single firm through which a worker must progress in a rigid manner: entry occurs at the bottom of the ladder, and promotion

is specified through well-specified grades like police and fire departments. The author defines an entry position, or portal, as a job in the career line held by a significant proportion of persons without prior employment in another position in the trajectory. This notion of a career line is associated with the view that the job sequences exist and the trajectory a young worker enters would depend on their personal qualifications (education), predisposition for a particular kind of work (molded by parents/peers), and the resources available in competing for the entry level position.

Conceptual Design

The conceptual design is intended to provide the reader with an understanding of the process for conducting this quantitative study.

Step 1 included creating the perception of Division I athletic director career paths (PADCP) survey instrument. To ensure content validity, five NCAA senior associate level athletic directors, representing NCAA Division I member institutions, reviewed the survey to edit and ensure items reflected the content domain. This was done because if the experts read into something unintended, subjects completing the survey may also read into something unintended.

Step II included using SPSS 22 to run descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations to analyze responses related to work history. The researcher ran an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to analyze the group means of the perceived importance of 19 skills/experiences between FBS-autonomy, FBS, FCS and DI-AAA ADs. A factor analysis was also completed to investigate the relationships between the variables in the PADCP survey.

Step III included identifying themes based on the responses to the open-ended questions on the Perception of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths (PADCP) survey.

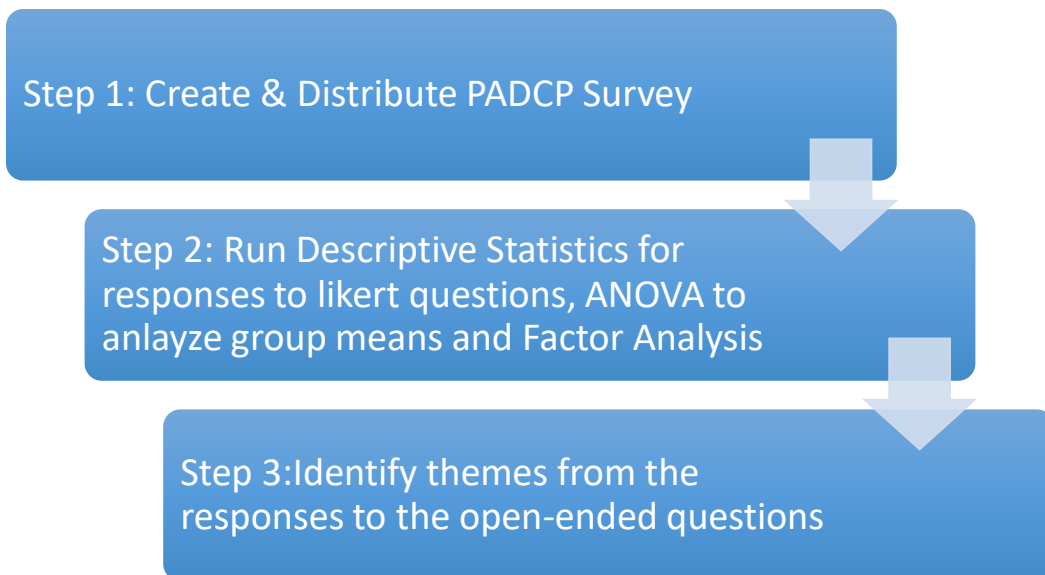


Figure 1

Theoretical Sensitivity

Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to what they call the researcher's "theoretical sensitivity", which refers to a personal quality of the researcher that indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data. They believe that theoretical sensitivity comes from a number of sources, including professional experiences, personal experiences and knowledge of literature. It refers to the attribute of having insight to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42).

Professional Experience. The career path of Division I ADs is an important topic to me because I've spent the last 21 years training to assume the position one day. My portal of entry to college athletics was as a psychology major and football student-athlete at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut from 1994-1998. I spent the next two years, 1998-2000, as a graduate assistant with the career center and cooperative education offices at Clemson University, while completing a practicum in athletic academic services. The hope was that a position would open up in the Clemson University Athletic Department while pursuing my master's degree in Counseling and Student Affairs. In 2000, I secured a graduate assistantship in the athletics compliance office of the Clemson University Athletics Department, so I decided to pursue a doctorate in Educational Leadership in order to maximize this opportunity to break into the field of college athletics. I had all intentions of completing the degree the first time around, but I was selected for the prestigious NCAA internship program in 2002, which really served as the catalyst for my career in collegiate athletics administration. I spent the next 13 years working in college athletics as the assistant athletic director at the University of New Haven, assistant director of athletics compliance at Wake Forest University, director of student-athlete programs and compliance at The Atlantic Coast Conference Office, assistant athletic director for student-athlete development at The University of Arkansas and currently as the associate athletic director for student-athlete services. That's 16 years of experience in Division I and five years of experience in Division II.

Personal Experience. As I drew closer to realizing the dream of becoming a Division I athletic director, it became apparent to me that not all tracks within college athletics lead to the top position. I began watching press conferences and researching recent athletic director hires to see if there was something in common among them. In 2009 I arrived at

a crossroads in my professional career where I worked in a conference office, which was a corporate setting, and I missed the excitement and personal interaction with student-athletes on campus. When the opportunity to return to campus was afforded to me at the University of Arkansas as the assistant athletic director for student-athlete development (Life skills), I reached out to a few colleagues and mentors for advice on pursuing it. I was dismayed to learn that each of them felt like it was going to be career suicide in my attempt to secure an athletic director position. While I felt like having an assistant athletic director title and working in an area that directly impacts student-athletes was most valuable, I was intrigued by the notion that there may be career patterns that increase the likelihood of securing the top spot.

So, in deciding on a dissertation topic, I realized that I had an opportunity to contribute knowledge to a relatively young field that I was passionate about and currently experiencing. Specifically, using my 21 years of collegiate athletics experience to examine the career paths of Division I athletic directors and the skills /experiences necessary to do the job effectively.

Knowledge of the Literature. Duderstadt (2003) suggested that most athletic directors were former celebrated head football coaches appointed as a gesture of respect but now university presidents are seeking to hire athletic director candidates with a range of skills to manage these self-supporting entertainment businesses while maintaining academic values. Hatfield et al. (1987) found that 87% of the athletic directors said being a former student-athlete positively impacted their job performance. Quarterman (1992) studied athletic directors at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and found that

89% of them had coaching experience. Fitzgerald et al. (1994) found that the most common experience among the athletic directors researched was being former student-athletes (80%) and college coaches (65%). Schneider and Stier (2001) learned that presidents of universities stressed the importance of formal education of athletic directors but they also needed to be competent in fundraising and promotions. Smith (2011) suggested athletic directors needed to be creative enough to find new revenue streams to pump into facilities, salaries and discretionary funds. Spenard (2011) studied the weekly involvement of athletic directors and learned that most of their time was spent on financial oversight, internal policymaking, fundraising, community relations and external policymaking. Dosh (2013) found that 85% of athletic directors held assistant or associate athletic director positions prior to assuming the top spot. Hardin et al. (2013) cited that while 80% of athletic directors say that student-athlete development is most rewarding, their top priorities include budgeting, marketing and fundraising.

Taking a quantitative methods approach to my research allowed me to survey athletic directors about the career paths of positions using descriptive statistics, but also to understand the essential skills/experiences necessary to do the job effectively from the athletic directors perspective. Descriptive statistics are used to describe and summarize a sample, rather than to learn about a population that sample is thought to represent. The theoretical approach to analyzing the data is influenced by Seymour Spilerman's (1977) sociological career paths model and will be discussed in depth in chapter three.

Parameters of the Study

This was a quantitative study conducted during summer 2016 intended to examine the career paths of the 350 Division I athletic directors nationally. The researcher created and

administered a 16-question Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths (PADCP) instrument to survey the population, which included four open-ended questions. The data was collected, analyzed and presented September 2016.

Definition of Terms

Athletic Director

The Chief Executive Officer in the athletic department.

Division I FBS

Schools that participate in bowl games belong to the Football Bowl Subdivision.

Division I FCS

Schools that participate in the NCAA football championship belong to the Football Championship

External Positions

Administrative roles in marketing, development (fundraising), corporate sponsorships, and media relations.

Human Resources

Managing organizational processes and personnel issues to attract, retain and motivate a workforce.

Internal Positions

Administrative roles in compliance, business operations, academics, life skills, and facilities management.

Power Five (Autonomy) Conferences

Schools that have membership in The Southeastern Conference, The Big 12, The Big 10, Pacific 12 and The Atlantic Coast Conference.

University President

The Chief Executive Officer of the university.

Limitations

For the 2015-16 academic year, the NCAA membership included 1,066 institutions (ncaa.org, 2015). In my study, I elected to focus only on the athletic directors from the 350 Division I institutions.

Summary

In the past, athletic director positions were reserved for former celebrated head football coaches as a sign of respect. The research suggests that experiences as a coach and/or a student-athlete are beneficial to the athletic director position. The landscape of college athletics has changed over the last 30 years, however, and the career path one takes can impact the chances of securing one of these coveted positions. There is increased information about the profile of current collegiate athletic directors as it relates to education, age, race, and gender. However, there is a gap in the knowledge of the career paths of the modern day Division I NCAA athletic director position compared to the athletic directors studied over 20 years ago. One's functional expertise (fundraising, marketing, sales, compliance etc.) can not only impact the path to the athletic director position but also the level of effectiveness as the AD.

This was a quantitative study conducted during summer 2016 intended to examine the perceptions of Division I athletic director career paths nationally. The researcher created and administered a 16-question *Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths* (PADCP) instrument to survey the population, which included four open-ended questions. The goal was to not only understand the career paths of today's athletic directors but to compare the skills/experiences with those from the 1994 foundational study conducted by Fitzgerald et al.

The information can suggest a normative career path to aspiring Division I athletic directors, it may provide insight on the real issues faced by athletic directors versus perceived responsibilities of the job, from the athletic directors perspective, and finally, the information can contribute to the literature on the career paths of athletic directors.

Organization of the Dissertation

The literature review can be found in chapter two and provides an overview of research on college athletic directors. Specifically, the literature describes the education, skills and experiences of those who have historically held the position. Chapter three describes the theoretical framework, methodology (including participants), instrumentation, and procedures. Chapter four includes the data analyses of the returned surveys, with a discussion of the results in chapter five.

CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Organization of the Chapter

The literature review can be found in chapter two and provides an overview of research on college athletic directors. Specifically, the literature describes the education, skills and experiences of those who have historically held the position. Chapter three describes the theoretical framework, methodology (including participants), instrumentation, and procedures. Chapter four includes the data analyses of the returned surveys, with a discussion of the results in chapter five.

Approach to the Literature Review

The modern day college athletics director job has now transformed into a role that attracts some of the top executives both in and outside the sports industry (Belzer, 2015). Though the complexity of the athletic director's position varies depending on the size and type of institution, the effectiveness of the department is largely determined by the skills and talents of the director, and the previous experiences that have prepared him or her for the responsibilities of a directorship (Fitzgerald, Sagaria & Nelson, 1994). There is increased information about the profile of current collegiate athletic directors as it relates to education, age, race, and gender. However, there is a gap in the knowledge of the career paths of the modern day Division I collegiate athletic director position compared to the athletic directors studied over 20 years ago.

The purpose of this study is to use a quantitative approach to understand the perceptions of Division I athletic director career paths. The goal is to not only understand the skills of today's athletic directors but to compare the experiences with those from the 1994 foundational

study conducted by Fitzgerald et al. The literature review focuses on personal characteristics as well as the changing nature of the athletic director role and the impact on career paths.

Profile of Athletic Directors

A summary of the demographic data in another foundational study by Hatfield, Wrenn and Bretting (1987) included academic majors emphasized by athletic directors and general managers of professional sports organizations. The most popular undergraduate major for athletic directors was physical education as compared to business for general managers. Of the athletic directors that responded, 71.9% obtained a graduate degree with physical education as the most popular major as compared to 20.6% of the general managers who pursued educational administration. Hatfield et al (1987) suggested the educational backgrounds of the two populations reflect their professional environments.

Based on background experiences, the athletic directors designated the following courses as most important for career preparation: athletic administration, speech communication, public relations, marketing, and business management. The courses most highly emphasized by the general managers were business and sport law, public relations, speech communication, labor relations, and marketing (Hatfield et al, 1987).

The subjects were also asked to respond to two items regarding the effect of their previous sport involvement upon their present job performance. The first item was, “do you feel that participation in collegiate or professional athletics is a significant contributing influence to your present job performance effectiveness?” (Hatfield et al, pg. 134). The athletic directors responded positively (87.7%), while general managers were somewhat divided at 55% replying affirmatively. The second item was “Do you feel that coaching is a significant contributing factor to your present effectiveness?” (Hatfield et al, pg. 134). Approximately 80% of the

athletic directors believed coaching was beneficial, while only 40% of the general managers responded affirmatively. The authors suggest that perhaps previous coaching experience increased their sensitivity to those demands placed upon the coaches and athletes within their programs. Additionally, the athletic directors responded that the five most frequent jobs held at one time or another were those of head coach (70.7%), assistant athletic director (48.3%), professor (36.8%), associate athletic director (29.3%) and business manager (13.1%). As expected, 100% of the athletic directors that responded obtained their bachelor's degree as compared to 91.9% of the general managers.

In a similar study identifying age, gender, educational background, athletic playing experience, teaching experience, coaching experience, and administrative experience of athletic directors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Quarterman (1992) compared the data collected with data collected on athletic directors of Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). The author found that the average age of responding athletic directors was 46.1 years of age, with an age range from 28-70. When initially appointed as athletic directors, they averaged 36.1 years of age, with an age range from 22-61. Additionally, they averaged nearly a decade (9.5 years) as athletic administrators in the athletic director role with a range from 6 months to 46 years. Most (62.2%) held a master's degree as their highest degree, 29.3% held a doctorate. Undergraduate degrees in health and/or physical education were held by 69% of the athletic directors and half (50.4%) held graduate degrees in health and/or physical education. As in the previous study, all subjects held bachelor's degrees and over half (64.6%) of all degrees earned were in undergraduate and graduate programs of physical education or the combined area of health, physical education, and recreation. Almost all (94.5%) held master's degrees, and over one third (36.3%) of the responding athletic directors held doctorates. The

majority (84.4%) of the respondents had teaching experience and nearly all (89%) had coaching experience. In fact, over one third (36.3%) of the respondents were assigned coaching responsibilities when the survey was conducted, 71% coaching basketball.

Fitzgerald et al (1994) found the average age of all responding athletic directors was 48.7 years. Men (average age 50.6 years) tended to be slightly older than women (average age 43.8 years). Virtually all (96%) of the respondents earned a bachelor's degree, 85% earned a master's degree, and 21.5% completed a doctorate. The most common experience on the five rungs (college athlete, high school coach, college coach, assistant or associate athletic director, and athletic director) was having been a collegiate athlete (80%), collegiate coach (65%), assistant or associate athletic director (39.5%), and high school coach (30%) prior to taking over the athletic director position. Though most of the respondents did not hold all five positions, an examination of the chronological order of positions held illuminated that 94.5% had experience that followed the linear time sequence of the positions in the normative career pattern. The authors found that while career patterns of athletic directors do suggest a portal of entry as a collegiate athlete, collegiate coaching was the most common antecedent professional position for the athletic director position.

Schneider and Stier (2005), sought to understand how formal and informal education is related to the success of the athletic director at the college/university level from the perspective of university presidents. They found that 81.4% of the Division I presidents believed a bachelor's degree was most essential and 94.1% saw a master's degree as being at least important. Doctoral degrees and certificates beyond a master's degree were viewed as not very important or irrelevant. Schneider and Stier (2005) go on to stress the importance of formal education through specific courses such as athletic administration, legal liability, facilities and

equipment, and communications but that there is also a need for prospective athletic directors to be competent in the areas of fundraising and promotions.

Table 2.1

Profile of Athletic Directors

Author(s)	Key Findings	Population	Purpose
Hatfield et al. (1987)	87% of ADs say being former student-athlete impacts job performance & 80% of ADs believe coaching experience was beneficial to role.	58 NCAA Division I ADs & 62 professional sports GMs.	Comparison of job responsibilities of ADs and professional sport managers.
Quarterman (1992)	84% of ADs had teaching experience & 89% had coaching experience. ADs at HBCUs were 5 years younger, higher percentage held masters/doctorates compared to ADs at PWIs	55 ADs from HBCUs	Identify characteristics of ADs at HBCUs and compare to ADs at PWIs.
Fitzgerald et al. (1994)	80% of ADs were college student-athletes, 65% of ADs were college coaches prior to securing AD position.	200 ADs from all three divisions.	Used sociological career paths model to examine career patterns of ADs
Schneider and Stier (2005)	81% of DI presidents say bachelors is most essential for ADs & finance courses most important	499 Presidents of NCAA affiliated colleges & universities	Understand importance of formal & informal education on success of an AD.

Table 2.1 suggests that historically, the profile of ADs included experiences as a student-athlete and/or as a college coach prior to assuming the athletic director position. The profile of

ADs at HBCUs was unique with over 80% of the sitting ADs in 1987 having teaching experience and about 5 years younger, on average, compared to their counterparts at PWIs. Overall, the profile of ADs suggested that experience as a former student-athlete or having coaching experience was beneficial to the role.

Impact of Gender and Ethnicity on the Athletic Director Position

While research is limited regarding the career paths and advancement of African Americans in athletic administration, it was shown that race has an impact on securing athletic director positions (Swift, 2011). Swift (2011) reports in his study on athletic directors that according to Richard Lapchick, an expert in sport issues (2009 Racial and Gender Report Card-College Leadership Positions), whites hold an overwhelming percentage (90%) of athletic director positions at the Division I level and the pipeline for future athletic directors is predominantly white as well at 89.2% for Division I associate athletic directors. The 2014 Division I Racial and Gender Report Card showed white administrators made up 88.2% of the overall leadership positions, with an increase to 88.8% in the 2015. The 2015 report also suggests that white administrators continue to hold an overwhelming percentage of AD positions (87%), presidential positions (90%) and conference commissioner positions (100%) at the Division I level.

Suggs (2005) describes surveys from the NCAA showing that white men received most of the external positions while women, African Americans, and members of other minority groups were hired mainly for the internal positions. Only eight percent of all athletics administrators in 2003-04 were African American but more than 20 percent of academic advisors, 13 percent of compliance officers, and 19 percent of life-skills coordinators were, with 4 percent of fundraisers and business managers identified as African American. Suggs (2005)

includes an interview with Mr. Gene Smith, current athletic director at The Ohio State University, where he shares that the scarcity of African Americans has two causes: women and minorities have been hired in token roles, reserving decision-making jobs for white males and universities have hired minority and female candidates for jobs in academic advising on the belief that they could relate better to athletes of the same color or gender.

Henderson, Grappendorf and Burton (2011) suggested gender played a role in securing the external positions that impacted upward mobility to the chief executive officer. They found at the Division I level, the main responsibility of the Senior Woman Administrators (SWA) was in the “caretaking” areas of compliance and academic support versus gaining experience with budgets and financial decision making, trapping them from moving all the way up the ladder to athletic director. The women in the study referred to these caretaking areas as the “ghetto” that restricts them from advancement out of service roles and into managerial roles (Henderson et al.)

Spenard (2013) explained that the “good old boy network”, which provides persons in the power positions the ability to hire, promote, and nurture people that closely resemble themselves, tend to use the network more when they are selecting individuals for prestigious, confidential, and trusted positions. In doing this, organizational leaders tend to hire and promote people like themselves because it is an expedient way to ensure those selected are compatible with existing norms and expectations. Seventy-nine percent of the participants in the study reported they had received employment for a job within an athletic department in part because of the networking connections they had formed with associates in collegiate athletics. With approximately 90% of the leadership positions in Division I held by white administrators, per Dr. Lapchick’s 2015 Racial and Gender Report Card, it appears critical for women and ethnic minorities to establish

networks with that group in order to increase the possibility of securing athletic director positions.

Whisenant, Pedersen, and Obenour (2002) studied the influence of gender on the success ratio of intercollegiate athletic directors. The purpose was to assess the rate of advancement of intercollegiate athletic directors, with a primary focus on gender. Using hegemony as a theoretical framework, it was defined as the condition in which certain social groups within a society wield authority through imposition, manipulation, and consent over other groups-not through power but by consent to what appears inevitable. The authors explain that a quick glance at the number of female athletic directors would convince most people that administrative positions and participation in intercollegiate athletics are definitely the preserve of men. Seven reasons why women are underrepresented in major decision-making positions in sport were reported:

1. Men have solid sports connections with other men
2. Men often have more strategic professional connections
3. The subjective evaluation criteria in job searches make women appear less qualified
4. There are limited support systems and professional development opportunities for women
5. Sport organizations have corporate cultures not readily open to the different sporting viewpoints offered by some women
6. Sport organizations are not sensitive to family responsibilities
7. Sexual harassment is likely along with a more demanding standard.

All of these reasons work to limit the entrance and promotion of women to athletic director positions.

Table 2.2

Impact of Gender and Ethnicity on the Athletic Director Position

Author(s)	Key Findings	Population	Purpose
Whisenant et al. (2002)	7 reasons males have greater influence in sports than women	157 athletic directors from Divisions I, II and III	Studied influence through hegemony (certain groups wield authority).
Suggs (2005)	White men receive external positions while women & minorities hired mainly in internal “token roles.”	N/A	Making the jump to athletic director position from an internal position is very difficult.
Henderson et al. (2011)	SWA’s avoid “caretaking” areas in order to move up.	290 NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletic administrators	Attributions of success/failure in AD position.
Swift (2011)	Necessary skills & experiences were business acumen, networking skills, and volunteering. Whites hold 90% of AD positions/89% of pipeline also white.	Five African American and five Caucasian Division I athletic directors	A qualitative phenomenological approach to understanding career paths & experiences of athletic directors
Spenard (2011)	“Good ole boy” network provides persons in power the ability to hire, promote, and nurture people who resemble themselves which hinders minorities.	99 Division I athletic directors	Impact of networking on career mobility to achieving AD position.

Table 2.2 suggests that making the jump to the athletic director position from an internal position is very difficult. Networking is an expedient way to increase one’s chances of receiving employment. White males typically receive external positions while women and minorities are hired mainly in internal “token roles.” The key finding is the suggestion to avoid “caretaking”

areas in order to obtain the skills/experiences necessary for becoming a Division I athletic director.

Role of the Athletic Director

Dosh (2013) reported that in 2001, 85% of the FBS athletic directors held assistant or associate athletic director positions prior to taking the chief position. That was a 45% increase compared to the findings in the aforementioned Fitzgerald et al. study from 1994. A major factor in the increase of department experience, and the corresponding decline on the coaching experience, is likely the growth in degree programs specifically tailored to training students to work in sports, including programs geared towards college athletics. “Today, students go to college with the goal of becoming an athletic director, a reality that largely wasn’t true thirty years ago.” (Dosh, 2013 p. 105)

Dosh (2013) also reported that although there have been several hires in recent years outside the world of collegiate athletics, the perception that universities are moving to corporate America to fill the roles and manage multimillion dollar budgets is deceiving. In 2011, there were only 15 FBS athletic directors who did not hold a position within a college athletic department immediately prior to their appointment as athletic director. Two of them held positions within college athletic administration previously in their careers, which means only 13 of the 120, or 11%, had never worked in college athletics administration prior to their appointment as athletic director. Of the 13 with no prior collegiate athletics experience, four had collegiate coaching experience and two had served on the university’s board. The most interesting number Dosh (2013) reported was that 11 of the 13 were alums of the schools that hired them to lead the athletic department. Dosh concludes that the role of the athletic director is specialized and requires working knowledge of different areas within collegiate athletics from

compliance to development to communication and more. While the MBA or law degree adds depth of knowledge, it takes more than a degree or a few years working at a Fortune 500 company to have the knowledge and connections necessary to lead a collegiate athletic department.

Today, the NCAA website (2015) reported membership in Division I athletics at 350 institutions. The average salary for a Division I athletic director was \$350,000 with average annual budgets of \$40 million (EADA Public Report, 2014). So, while many administrators get into the collegiate athletics industry to work with young people and coaches in a higher education environment, the reality of salaries and annual operating budgets clearly suggest the world of Division I college athletics is a business. The aforementioned growth in athletic director positions, salaries and department budgets may challenge the time linear sequence of the normative career pattern from 20 years ago.

Spenard (2011) studied athletic director's weekly involvement in specific departments and operations within a NCAA Division I athletic department. Athletic directors responded to a series of 16 core responsibilities they either oversee or were directly involved in.

The top ten responsibilities athletic directors were **most** involved in during a given week included:

1. Allocating financials and budgetary oversight
2. Internal policy making
3. Fundraising
4. Community relations
5. External policy making

6. Campus relations
7. Business management
8. HR
9. Sport operations
10. Communications.

The responsibilities athletic directors reported being **uninvolved** or only **slightly involved** in included:

1. Facilities/equipment
2. Recruiting
3. Teaching
4. Coaching

Veazey (2011) studied the new wave of collegiate athletic directors suggesting that once the landing spot for the old football coach, the athletic director's office took on more importance over the past two or three decades as budgets increased and financial acumen outweighed other skill sets. Included is an interview with Dan Parker, CEO of Atlanta based Parker Executive Search, and one of the most sought after search firms for athletics hires. Mr. Parker says that what schools are looking for in athletic director candidates has changed dramatically in recent years. No longer is it solely an athletics job but that "many athletic departments deal with millions in debt, and they want someone with the savvy to manage it" (Veazey, 2011, pg. 3). The author concludes that in order for an athletic director to succeed, he or she not only needs to manage academics, compliance, marketing and fundraising, among others, but must also maintain popularity among stakeholders. Success in the athletic directors office involves caring

about momentum just as much as a politician would want to stay popular enough to be re-elected.

Hardin, Cooper and Huffman (2013) conducted a study where 80% of athletic directors surveyed cited student-athlete success and development as the most rewarding aspect of the position; however, their top priorities were on budgets, financials, marketing and fundraising. The authors suggested that the days of the athletic directorship being based on mentoring student-athletes and sports management are long gone. Collegiate athletic directors are identified as the chief executive officers (CEO) within the athletic department of the colleges and universities they serve. The position has evolved, rarely do ADs interact directly with student-athletes or even staff members on a regular basis due to increasing chief executive officer (CEO) and business oriented functions. The focus of the athletic director tends to shift to revenue generation in order to continually provide resources and facilities for student-athletes and coaches to remain competitive nationally, forcing many to take on the roles they feel are most important or essential and subsequently delegate additional tasks to others.

There are positions classified as external relations (marketing, development, ticket sales, and media relations) and those classified as internal relations (compliance, business operations, academics, life skills, facilities management). The external positions emphasize skills related to glad-handing, fundraising, negotiating, strategic communication, sponsorships, and administrative skills required of modern day athletic directors (Suggs, 2005). The internal positions were considered peripheral jobs, which meant an administrator could become an assistant or associate athletic director in internal positions but making the jump to the athletic director position is very difficult (Suggs, 2005).

Hardin et al. (2013) also reported that approximately 70% of the positions most likely to produce a Division I athletic director were in areas that provided indirect support to student-athletes (fundraising, marketing, business management and communications). The career paths of division II and III athletic directors seemed nearer to the career paths described by Fitzgerald et al. (1994). Center (2011) reported that 42% and 74% of division II and division III athletic directors respectively matched both the standard experiences of collegiate coaching and athletic administration. Division III athletic directors, however, reported lower involvement in the areas of college athletics administration (community relations, fundraising, marketing and communications) associated with seeking and managing public attention for the athletics program.

Schneider and Stier (2001) stated that colleges and universities must recognize the need for potential athletic directors to be competent in the areas of fundraising and promotions. While everyone in college sports is calling for cost control and lower spending, new data shows a majority of schools have increased their budgets by double digit percentages from fiscal years 2010-2012 (Smith, 2011). In some cases, creative athletic directors have found new revenue streams that provide them more money to pump into facilities, salaries and other discretionary spends (Smith 2011).

“Catalyzed by the explosive rise in popularity of college sports and the seemingly exponential growth of spending by universities to bolster their athletic programs, there has been a greater need for professionals who bring both a dynamic and robust set of skills to manage these complex, multifaceted business operations” (Belzer, 2015, pg. 1). Belzer (2015) suggests that managing the athletic department of a major university is similar to running a major

corporation. He identifies the qualifications necessary for athletic administrators on the Power Five level as follows:

- Negotiation of multi-million-dollar media rights
- Ability to manage powerful head coaches who are often the highest paid employees in the state
- Advanced knowledge of strategic, operational, & financial business planning, including most significantly capital and investment budgeting.

Belzer (2015) goes on to identify the qualifications necessary for athletic directors on the non-Power Five level as follows:

- Recruitment, development and retention of quality coaching and administrative talent. With smaller budgets, coaches and administrators that have proven themselves are easy pickings for departments with bigger budgets.
- Advising their university administration and constituents on how best to navigate conference realignment.
- Managing ever-increasing expenses while not having the luxury of tens of millions in media rights dollars coming their way.

Belzer (2015) rounds out Division I but this time focuses on the FCS (“Mid-Majors”) and Non-football playing schools as the athletic directors at this level must contend with the following:

- Funding their departments, many of which include non-revenue producing football programs with significant scholarship obligations, while Power Five programs move away from playing them due to the College Football Playoff

- Having little to no say in the future direction of the college athletics model and must be adept at being reactive to changing markets.

Belzer (2015) suggests there is no single correct answer to identifying the skill sets of the great athletic directors, but that it is important to understand the key challenges they face at each level of the industry as one moves up in the industry.

Smith and Washington (2014) suggest that organizations tend to model themselves after other organizations within their field perceived to be more successful, and this copycat action also occurs with professionals in what is referred to as isomorphism. The core argument of the authors proposes that the collective acquisition of formal education and work experience is similar across all athletic directors regardless of the school they are leading. The transition from the autocratic, coaching-centered athletic director to one that has a strong business background with emphasis in fundraising and marketing has yet to be widespread throughout the NCAA, but it is becoming clear that athletic directors have followed a clear progression of career experiences (Smith & Washington, 2014). The authors found that athletic directors from Division I schools had less coaching and teaching experience than athletic directors from non-Division I schools and this was a similar finding between athletic directors of large schools versus small schools.

Table 2.3

Role of the Athletic Director

Author(s)	Key Findings	Population	Purpose
Dosh (2013)	85% of sitting ADs were previously assistant or associate ADs	Division I FBS athletic directors	Understanding what makes a good AD. Job is specialized and requires experience in different areas.
Spenard (2011)	AD position includes financial oversight, policy making and fundraising	99 division I athletic directors	Weekly involvement of ADs
Veazy (2011)	For AD to succeed, must be in fundraising	N/A	How has the ADs job changed?
Hardin et. al (2013)	More than 80% held a master's degree with experience in development & marketing.	99 Division I ADs	Collegiate ADs are the CEOs within athletic departments. Purpose was to examine their career experiences.
Smith & Washington (2014)	Acquisition of human capital & experience	99 NCAA AD curriculum vitas	Explore if AD experiences are unique-Isomorphism
Belzer (2015)	Negotiation of multi-million dollar media rights deals, managing powerful head coaches & financial planning as top qualifications of FBS ADs	Division I Ads	Understanding the dynamic role of the Modern Day Athletic Director.

Table 2.3 suggests how the athletic directors role has changed since the foundational study over 20 years ago. The number of ADs who were previously assistant or associate ADs prior to securing the top position has more than doubled from approximately 40% to 85%. With their involvement in fundraising, negotiating multimillion-dollar deals, managing powerful head

coaches, and financial planning as the top qualifications, the role of modern day collegiate ADs more accurately resembles that of a corporate CEO.

Career Paths of Chief Executive Officers

Spenard (2013) determined a connection between career mobility and networking as a means of enhancing one's career. Seventy-nine percent of the participants in the study reported they received employment for a job within an athletic department in part because of the networking connections they formed with associates in collegiate athletics. Networking was defined as "behaviors aimed at building and maintaining informal relationships that possess the potential benefit to ease work related actions by voluntarily granting access to resources and by jointly maximizing advantages of the individuals involved" (Spenard, 2013, pg. 14). The authors go on to state, "networking behaviors allow individuals to build and maintain personal relations that facilitate the exchange of resources, such as task advice, strategic information, career enhancement, and power (pg. 14)." However, it was concluded that some networks could serve as a hindrance and barrier to upward mobility for different groups.

The "good old boy network", which provided persons in the power positions the ability to hire, promote, and nurture (mentor) people who closely resemble themselves, hinders the growth of minorities directly due to the individuals who possess the power to reproduce themselves. The "good old boy network" was used more when selecting individuals for prestigious, confidential, and trusted positions. In doing this, organizational leaders hired and promoted people like themselves because it was an expedient way to ensure those selected were compatible with existing norms and expectations. Career development was defined as "managing your career either within or between organizations" and included "learning new skills, setting goals and objectives for one's own personal career growth, and making improvements to advance in a

career” (pg. 24). Career mobility was defined as “a planned, logical progression of jobs within one or more professions throughout working life (pg. 25).” It was concluded that networking must take place before the open position is available and career development and mobility were both necessary to achieve the position of athletic director.

Due to the changing nature of athletic departments, university presidents are looking to hire candidates with a range of skills and experiences since they are responsible for self-supporting entertainment businesses, while maintaining acceptable academic values (Duderstadt, 2003). Business professors James Piercy and J. Benjamin Forbes (1991) suggested the path an executive takes and their functional expertise, or skill set, in the business world can impact their upward mobility. Piercy and Forbes (1991) examined the major events and transitions of 230 successful CEOs that revealed six distinct phases of career development:

- Phase I, Exploration (1 to 5 years), was where organizational changes were frequent and 40% of the CEOs changed organizations at least once searching for the right fit.
- During Phase II, Development (6 to 10 years), only 12% changed employers and less than one-third spent the entire time in one functional area because they cross-trained.
- In Phase III, Commitment (11 to 15 years), the young manager became committed to a particular firm, gained credibility and visibility, and functional skills were proven.
- Phase IV, Verification (16 to 20 years) is best characterized as a period of verification of managerial and leadership capabilities. The executive was promoted to a general manager type position responsible for a unit.
- During Phase V, Payback (21 to 25 years), assignments were given in preparation for promotion to CEO or at least to place the individual in competition for that position.

- Phase VI, Payoff (beyond 25 years), suggests the time period for attainment of the CEO position after two decades of long hours, hard work and intense competition (Forbes & Piercy, 1991).

The authors determined that the early career experience included high potential employees who separated themselves and were expected to start proving their worth to the organization immediately. Upward mobility potential was measured by level of education, breadth of experience, entry through prestigious training programs, working for a powerful department, early service as assistant to a senior manager and acquiring a functional background closely related to the critical problems facing the corporation. The middle years, after appointment as general manager or functional vice president, were not only based on the bottom line performance but also “soft” issues such as values and team chemistry. Finally, selection for chief executive officer was not only based on track record but evidence the person was needed at that particular time (Forbes & Piercy, 1991).

The authors concluded that three major factors affected the upward mobility to chief executive officer: generalist vs. specialist, area of functional expertise and the extent of inter-firm mobility. When knowledge of the industry was needed, the chief executive officer was normally selected from the generalists who had a breadth of experience. However, when specialized expertise was needed at the top in marketing, operations, law etc., the firm was likely to look for the best talent available. Inter-firm mobility explains the phase where future executives broaden their experiences outside of their functional area but within the same organization (Forbes & Piercy, 1991). So while most executives settle in quickly to learning about one industry, executives in law and finance tend to have more inter-firm mobility, which positively affect their mobility to the top position.

Waldman, Smith, Anderson & Hood's 2006 study of 670 hospital and healthcare CEOs shared a corporate ladder diagram reflecting the positions held by survey respondents prior to becoming chief executive officer. The positions were categorized as follows: administration (or management), finance, operations, patient care and other (e.g., marketing, HR, legal, IT etc.). Eighty percent of the positions held immediately prior to becoming chief executive were in areas that provided indirect support to their constituency (administration/management or finance).

Favarao, Karlsson and Neilson (2010) conducted an analysis of 10 consecutive years of detailed data on chief executive officer succession planning among the world's top 2,500 companies. Two themes that emerged were convergence and compression. Convergence meant there was harmonization of chief executive officer turnover rates across the world and in every industry. The 10-year turnover averages were between 12 and 14 percent for corporate chief executive officers (Favarao et al.). The 10-year turnover averages for athletic directors was also 12% (Hoffman, 2011). Compression is the second theme that emerged from the 10-year analysis of corporate chief executive officers. It meant that today's executives had more to prove in less time (Favarao et al.). Overall, the tenure of the chief executive officer was becoming shorter and more intense, but also the margins for error or underperformance were narrow (Favarao et al.).

Table 2.4

Career Development on the Path to Athletic Director

Author(s)	Key Findings	Population	Purpose
Piercy & Forbes (1991)	Career path/functional expertise (skill set) can impact upward mobility	230 CEOs	Describe six phases of career development of CEOs
Duderstadt (2000)	Presidents looking to hire ADs with range of skills to run entertainment businesses while maintaining academic values.	N/A	Explore intercollegiate athletics and The American university
Waldman et al. (2006)	80% of CEOs held positions that provided indirect support to constituency in administration & finances	670 Hospital & Healthcare CEOs	Share corporate ladder design for positions held prior to assuming CEO position
Favarao et al. (2010)	Two themes emerged- Convergence & Compression	Top 2,500 companies	Study 10 years of CEO succession planning

Table 2.4 suggests the functional expertise, or the path one follows, in their career can impact upward career mobility along with business acumen and networking skills. While Hardin et al. (2013) reported that 70% of the positions most likely to produce a Division I athletic director came from areas that provided indirect support to student-athletes, Waldman et al. (2006) reported that 80% of positions that would most likely produce a corporate CEO came from positions that provided indirect support to their constituency in administration and finances. Convergence (harmonization of turnover rates) and compression (more to prove in less time)

were similar themes encountered by CEOs in the corporate world and in intercollegiate athletics. Finally, it appears that while the hiring of NCAA athletic directors with more business experience is not widespread yet (Smith & Washington, 2014), there are similarities between the career paths of CEOs in college athletics and CEOs in the corporate world.

Summary

In the past, athletic director positions were reserved for former celebrated head football coaches as a sign of respect. The research suggests that experiences as a coach and/or a student-athlete are beneficial to the athletic director position. The landscape of college athletics has changed over the last 30 years, however, and the career path one takes can impact the chances of securing one of these coveted positions. There is increased information about the profile of current collegiate athletic directors as it relates to education, age, race, and gender. However, there is a gap in the knowledge of the career paths of the modern day Division I NCAA athletic director position compared to the athletic directors studied over 20 years ago. One's functional expertise (fundraising, marketing, sales, compliance etc.) cannot only impact the path to the athletic director position but also the level of effectiveness as the AD.

This was a quantitative study conducted summer 2016 intended to examine the perceptions of Division I athletic director career paths nationally. The researcher created and administered a 16-question *Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths* (PADCP) instrument to survey the population, which included four open-ended questions. The goal was to not only understand the career paths of today's athletic directors but to compare the skills/experiences with those from the 1994 foundational study conducted by Fitzgerald et al. The information can suggest a normative career path to aspiring Division I athletic directors, it may provide insight on the real issues faced by athletic directors versus perceived responsibilities

of the job from the athletic directors perspective and finally, the information can contribute to the literature on the career paths of athletic directors.

CHAPTER THREE METHOD

Organization of the Chapter

Chapter three begins with an introduction to the research topic followed by the focus of the study. Next, the three research questions will be explored followed by a discussion of the theoretical sensitivity. The timeline and research design will be presented to describe the overall research strategy before introducing the participants of the study with demographic information. Research ethics will be shared regarding the rules and regulations of the University of Arkansas IRB, followed by an explanation of the data collection and a summary of the chapter.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletic director (ADs) career paths. Division I ADs hold the highest position of authority in intercollegiate athletic departments at the highest level of competition in the NCAA (Swift, 2011). However, there is a gap in the knowledge of the career paths of the modern day Division I collegiate athletic director position compared to the athletic directors studied over 20 years ago. There is also a gap in the knowledge of the skills necessary to be an effective athletic director from the perspective of Division I athletic directors. The survey solicited feedback on the level of importance in the following skills/experiences;

1. **Academic Services**

Coordinates advising, tutoring, mentoring, and educational assessments to provide support for student-athletes on their path to graduation.

2. **Business Operations**

Managing people and financial processes.

3. Capital Projects

The construction and/or renovation of athletics facilities.

4. Compliance

Educating and monitoring constituent groups on NCAA/Conference and institutional legislation.

5. Contract Negotiations

The ability to draft and execute compensation agreements for coaches, staff and third party employees.

6. Communications Training

The development of skills related to articulating and inspiring a shared vision to constituent groups.

7. Crisis Communications

Ability to develop and articulate a plan of action to constituent groups during emergency situations.

8. Development/Fundraising

Solicitation of financial support to assist the athletic department with funding special projects/initiatives.

9. Event Management

Works with service entities (parking, public safety, concessions, law enforcement, facilities etc.) to coordinate all aspects of hosting home athletics events.

10. Facilities Management

Provides oversight for athletics facilities including maintenance, scheduling, long range planning and work with outside service vendors.

11. Human Resources

Managing organizational processes and personnel issues to attract, retain and motivate a workforce.

12. Life Skills

Provides programs and services related to personal growth, career and leadership development for student-athletes.

13. Marketing

Responsible for increasing the profile of the institutions sport programs and overall department to generate interest and support from fans.

14. Media Relations

Managing the website, social media platforms, serving as the liaison to the local and national media as well as coordinating public relations efforts.

15. Sponsorship Solicitation

Sales and fulfillment of corporate partnerships

16. Sport Oversight

providing administrative vision and leadership (budget, roster management, academics, compliance, marketing, travel etc.) for an athletic team(s) to assist the athletic director with the overall management of the institutions sports programs.

17. Sports Performance

Responsible for the development of student-athlete's physical, mental and nutritional needs to perform in their sport at the highest level.

18. Strategic Planning

Identifying the mission, priorities and action steps necessary to advance the organizations mission over a specified period of time.

External positions were operationally defined as administrative roles in marketing, development, corporate sponsorships, and media relations. *Internal positions* were operationally defined as administrative roles in compliance, capital projects, business operations, academics, life skills, human resources, sport oversight, sports performance, strategic planning, facilities and event management.

Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions were addressed:

RQ1: What are the professional and educational trends most common among contemporary NCAA Division I ADs?

RQ2: What skills and experiences do NCAA Division I ADs perceive to be the most important to be effective in their jobs?

RQ3: How do NCAA ADs athletic directors perceive the acquisition of necessary effectiveness skills, based on prior administrative or executive experience?

Research Design and Timeline

Step 1 included creating the *Perception of Division I athletic Director Career Paths* (PADCP) survey instrument using Google Forms. To ensure content validity, five NCAA senior associate level athletic directors, representing NCAA Division I member institutions, reviewed the survey to edit and ensure items reflected the content domain. This was done because if the experts read into something unintended, subjects completing the survey may also read into something unintended.

Step II included using SPSS 22 to run descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and percentiles to analyze responses related to work history. The researcher also conducted an ANOVA for all 19 skills/experiences to determine if there were significant differences in the perceived level of importance of each skill based on Division I classification.

Step III included identifying themes based on the responses to the open-ended questions on the Perception of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths (PADCP) survey. The researcher used qualitative content analysis to analyze the data and interpret its meaning (Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utrianen, and Kyngas, 2014). As a research method, the authors suggest it represents a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena. The content analysis process involves three main phases: preparation, organization, and the reporting of results (Elo et. al, 2014). The preparation phase consists of collecting suitable data for content analysis, making sense of the data, and selecting the unit of analysis (Elo et al. 2014). The organization phase includes open coding, creating categories, and abstraction (Elo et al. 2014). The reporting phase is where the results are described by the content of the categories (Elo et al. 2014).

To establish trustworthiness, the researcher used triangulation. Trustworthiness, or credibility, is how the researcher can persuade his or her audiences that the findings of an inquiry were conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (Guba, 1981). Triangulation is the goal of seeking three ways of verifying or corroborating a particular event, description, or fact being reported in a study (Guion, 2002). In addition to administering a pilot study to five senior associate ADs, the researcher used confirmability by having a faculty member review results along with a research group.

Step 1: Create & Distribute PADCP Survey

Step 2: Run Descriptive Statistics for likert questions related to work history

Step 3: Identify themes from open-ended questions and establishing trustworthiness

Participants

The study's participants were Division I athletic directors from Division I conferences including The American Athletic Conference (AAC), Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big 12 Conference (Big 12), Big Ten Conference (Big Ten), Conference USA (C-USA), Mid-American Conference (MAC), Mountain West Conference (MWC), Pacific 12 Conference (PAC-12), Southeastern Conference (SEC), Sun Belt Conference, Big Sky Conference (BSC), Big South Conference (Big South), Colonial Athletic Association (CAA), Ivy League, Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC), Northeast Conference (NEC), Ohio Valley (OVC), Patriot League, Southern Conference (SoCon), Southland Conference, Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC), America East Conference, Atlantic Sun Conference (A-Sun), Atlantic 10 Conference (A-10), Big East Conference, Big West Conference (BWC), Horizon League, Metro Atlantic Conference (MAAC), Missouri Valley Conference (MVC), The Summit League, West Coast Conference (WCC), and the Western Athletic Conference (WAC), drawn from the Division IA Athletic Directors Association membership sports directory links.

Demographics

There were 122 responses from Division I ADs in this study. Six participants were removed from consideration because they held positions below that of athletics director, leaving 116 respondents. Among all participants, most of the ADs ($n=48$, 41.4%) identified as FCS, with the second highest representation classified as I-AAA ($n=27$, 23.3%) and the third largest group of participants classified themselves as FBS ($n=22$, 19%) and the least represented group of ADs identified as FBS Autonomy. Among all participants, the average age was 51.2 years ($SD=10.15$). The majority of the participants were male ($n=103$, 88.7%) and white ($n=98$, 84.5%), with an average of 22.8 years of work experience ($SD=9.14$) ranging from 5.5- 46 years. The age of the participants ranged from 29 to 70. As it relates to educational levels, the majority of the participants selected a master's degree as the highest degree earned ($n=82$, 70.69%) with the top three academic majors in Sports Management ($n=31$), Business ($n=30$), and Physical Education ($n=16$) (see Table 4.1).

There were 76 (65.5%) participants that identified as former NCAA student-athletes but only 46 (39.7%) with NCAA coaching experience. The participants who identified as former student-athletes believed their athletics experience in college was very important to their current job as AD ($M=5.8$, $SD=1.55$). The participants with coaching experience also believed their time coaching was very important in their role as AD ($M=5.9$, $SD=1.82$).

Research Ethics

The rules and regulations of the University of Arkansas IRB were honored and followed at all times during this study. IRB approval can be found in Appendix A. From the onset of the study, all participants were fully informed of the nature, purpose, and scope of the study. The informed consent document can be found in Appendix B.

Theoretical Framework

Seymour Spilerman's (1977) sociological career trajectory model was the theoretical framework used to examine the career patterns of athletic directors. By using the term "career trajectory", Spilerman meant a work history that is common to a portion of the labor force. In some cases, a career line consists of a sequence of positions within a single firm through which a worker must progress in a rigid manner: entry occurs at the bottom of the ladder, and promotion is specified through well-specified grades like police and fire departments. The author defines an entry position, or portal, as a job in the career line held by a significant proportion of persons without prior employment in another position in the trajectory. This notion of a career line is associated with the view that the job sequences exist and the trajectory a young worker enters would depend on their personal qualifications (education), predisposition for a particular kind of work (molded by parents/peers), and the resources available in competing for the entry level position.

Data Collection

The researcher developed a survey instrument, *Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths* (PADCP), to assess formal education, athletic participation and work history, professional development, job change, biographical information and perceptions of the level of importance of different career skills (Appendix C).

To assess the content validity of the items in the survey, five current senior level athletics administrators were asked to review and edit the items, but also to assess the extent to which the specific set of items reflects the content domain. Each expert received an email, which included the purpose of the study, an explanation of the procedures and a set of items to review and rate how relevant they think each of the items were to what the author intended to measure. The

experts provided feedback regarding the potential omission of items, definitions of factors, and latent variables. If the experts read something into an item the author did not plan to include, subjects completing the final scale might do the same.

Managing and Recording Data

The survey instrument was emailed to each of the 350 NCAA Division I athletic directors soliciting basic demographic information related to age, ethnicity, gender, current job title, Division I classification, total years of experience in athletics administration, NCAA student-athlete status, NCAA collegiate coaching status, highest degree earned, and academic major. Participants were then asked to list the four most recent full-time position titles prior to assuming their current AD position. Participants were also asked to rank the level of importance of 19 skills/experiences on a Likert scale from “1-not at all important” to “7-very important.” Participation in the study was voluntary and information regarding the participants’ rights were included in the email. Using Dillman’s (1978) total design method as a guide, a reminder email was sent to all participants two weeks after the original e-mail was sent to increase survey responses. Responses were then summarized using Google Forms and subsequently recorded into the statistical package for the social sciences 22 (SPSS 22) used for data analysis to address the research questions.

Summary

Chapter three began with a brief reminder of the research topic, which was focused on the perceptions of NCAA Division I athletic director career paths over 20 years after the 1994 foundational study by Fitzgerald et. al. The three research questions were presented to understand the professional and educational trends most common among contemporary NCAA Division I ADs, the skills and experiences Division I ADs perceived to be the most

important to be effective in their jobs, and how ADs perceived the acquisition of necessary effectiveness skills based on prior administrative experience. The PADCP survey instrument was created and administered to 350 NCAA Division I ADs from all Division I conferences.

CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter begins with an introduction to the research topic followed by the results of the three research questions. Next, the major themes identified from the open ended questions in the PADCP will be explained followed by a summary of the chapter.

Introduction

Despite increased information about the profile of current collegiate athletic directors as it relates to education, age, race, and gender, there is a gap in the knowledge of the career paths of the modern day Division I collegiate athletic director position as compared to the athletic directors studied more than 20 years ago. There is also a paucity of information regarding the skills necessary to be an effective athletic director from the perspective of Division I athletic directors.

Research Question 1

The first research question (RQ1) explored which professional and educational trends are most common among contemporary NCAA Division I ADs. Among all participants, most of the ADs ($n=48$, 41.4%) identified as FCS, with the second highest representation classified as I-AAA ($n=27$, 23.3%) the third largest group of participants classified themselves as FBS ($n=22$, 19%), followed by FBS Autonomy ADs ($n=19$, 16.4%). Among all participants, the average age was 51.2 years ($SD=10.15$), with a range of 29 to 70 years old. The majority of the participants were male ($n=103$, 88.7%) and white ($n=98$, 84.5%), with an average of 22.8 years of work experience ($SD=9.14$) ranging from 5.5 years to 46 years. A breakdown of personal

characteristics of ADs related to gender and ethnicity by Division I classification can be found in Table 4.2.

As it related to educational levels, the majority of the participants selected a master’s degree as the highest degree earned ($n=82$, 70.69%) with the top three academic majors in Sport Management ($n=31$), Business ($n=30$), and Physical Education ($n=16$). There were 76 (65.5%) participants that identified as former NCAA student-athletes but only 46 (39.7%) with NCAA coaching experience. The participants who identified as former student-athletes believed their athletics experience in college was very important to their current job as AD ($M=5.8$, $SD=1.55$). The participants with coaching experience also believed their time coaching was very important in their role as AD ($M=5.9$, $SD=1.82$) (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Personal and Professional Characteristics of Division I Athletic Directors (ADs)

Characteristics of ADs		Num.	%
Gender			
	Male	103	88.8
	Female	13	11.2
Ethnicity			
	White	98	84.5
	Black	14	12.1
	Hispanic	3	2.6
	American Indian	1	.9
Highest Degree Earned			
	Bachelor’s	12	10.3
	Master’s	82	70.7
	Doctoral	16	13.8
	Professional	5	4.3
	Missing	1	.9
Division I Status			
	FBS Autonomy	19	16.4
	FBS	22	19
	FCS	48	41.4
	I-AAA	27	23.3

Table 4.1

Personal and Professional Characteristics of Division I Athletic Directors (ADs) (cont.)

Characteristics of ADs		Num.	%
Student-athlete Experience			
	Yes	76	65.5
	No	40	34.5
Coach Experience			
	Yes	46	39.7
	No	70	60.3
Academic major			
	Sport management/Athletic administration	31	
	Business/ Economics	30	
	Physical Education	16	
	Communications/Journalism	12	
	Education	12	
	Sociology	3	
	Kinesiology	3	
	Psychology	3	
	Political Sciences	3	
	Law	3	
	Biology	2	
	Athletic Training	2	
	English	2	
	Mathematics	2	
	History	1	
	Zoology	1	
	Social Studies	1	
	Arts and Sciences	1	
	Missing	3	

Table 4.2

Personal and Professional Characteristics of Division I Athletic Directors by Classification

	FBS	Autonomy	FBS	FCS	I-AAA	Total
Male	19		20	41	23	103
Female	1		2	6	4	13
White	15		20	41	22	98
Black	3		2	5	4	14
Hispanic	0		0	2	1	3
American Indian	1		0	0	0	1

Research Question 2

The second research question (RQ2) aimed to explore the skills and experiences NCAA Division I ADs perceive to be the most important to be effective in their jobs. The researcher included 19 skills and experiences, asking ADs to rate the level of importance with one indicating “not at all important” and seven indicating “very important.”

The top three overall skills and experiences NCAA Division I ADs perceived as most important to be effective were fundraising ($M=5.92$, $SD=1.31$), sport oversight ($M=5.86$, $SD=1.40$) and development ($M=5.68$, $SD=1.27$) (see Table 4.3). The perceived level of importance of each skill/experience differs by the ADs Division I classification (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.3

Means and Standard Deviations of Athletic Directors’ Perceptions of the importance of the skills and experiences necessary to be an effective AD

Skills/Experiences	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Fundraising Experience	116	5.92	1.31
Sport Oversight	116	5.86	1.40
Development	116	5.68	1.27
Strategic Planning	116	5.66	1.37
Crisis Communications	116	5.65	1.30
Handling HR Issues	116	5.59	1.37
Communications Training	116	5.47	1.44

Table 4.3

Means and Standard Deviations of Athletic Directors' Perceptions of the importance of the skills and experiences necessary to be an effective AD Cont'd

Skills/Experiences	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Contracts Negotiations	115	5.44	1.42
Capital Projects	116	5.44	1.35
Business Operations	116	5.14	1.47
Compliance	116	5.03	1.40
Marketing	116	4.66	1.30
Media Relations	116	4.60	1.48
Sponsorship Solicitation	116	4.50	1.44
Sport Performance	116	4.17	1.57
Event Management	116	4.16	1.37
Academic Services	116	4.09	1.35
Facilities Management	116	4.04	1.14
Life Skills Programming	116	3.75	1.32

After conducting 19 individual one-way ANOVA analyses, the following four areas were found to be statistically significant among FBS Autonomy, FBS, FCS and I-AAA ADs: sport oversight, compliance, academic services, and facilities management (see Table 4.4).

A one-way ANOVA ($F(3, 112) = 2.82, P = .04$) suggested a statistically significant difference in the perceived level of importance of Sport Oversight experience among ADs in FBS Autonomy ($N=19, M=5.32, SD=1.89$), FBS ($N=22, M=6.41, SD=1.01$), FCS ($N=48, M=6.00, SD=1.29$), and I-AAA ($N=27, M=5.55, SD=1.31$). Post hoc LSD tests showed that ADs in FBS autonomy viewed Sport Oversight experience statistically less important than ADs in FBS, $t = -1.09, p = .12$. Meanwhile, ADs in FBS view Sport Oversight experience statistically more important than ADs in I-AAA, $t = .85, p = .031$.

There was also a statistically significant difference in the perceived level of importance of Compliance experience among ADs in FBS autonomy ($N=19, M=4.63, SD=1.30$), FBS ($N=22, M=5.64, SD=1.50$), FCS ($N=48, M=5.17, SD=1.40$), and I-AAA ($N=27, M=4.56,$

$SD=1.22$) as determined by a one-way ANOVA ($F(3, 112) = 3.23, p=.03$). A post hoc LSD test showed that ADs in FBS autonomy viewed Compliance experience statistically significantly less important than ADs in in FBS, $t=-1.00, p=.021$. Meanwhile, ADs in FBS viewed Compliance experience statistically more important than ADs in I-AA, $t=1.08, p=.01$.

One-way ANOVA ($F(3,112) = 3.87, p=.01$) revealed significant differences in Academic Services experience among ADs in FBS autonomy ($N=19, M=3.94, SD=1.18$), FBS ($N=22, M=4.77, 1.60$), FCS ($N=48, M=4.17, SD=1.23$), and I-AAA ($N=27, M=3.51, SD=1.25$). After conducting post hoc LSD tests, the results suggested that ADs in FBS valued Academic Services experience statistically significantly higher than ADs in FBS autonomy conferences, $t=.83, p=.046$. Meanwhile, ADs in FBS viewed Academic Services experience significantly more important than ADs in I-AAA, $t=1.25, p=.001$. Also, FBS ADs perceived Academic Services experience skills as significantly more important than I-AAA ADs, $t=.65, p=.041$.

Finally, a one-way ANOVA ($F(3,112) = 3.87, p=.01$) revealed Facilities Management experience was also viewed statistically significant among ADs in FBS autonomy ($N=19, M=3.94, SD=1.35$), FBS ($N=22, M=4.77, SD=1.63$), FCS ($N=48, M=3.96, SD=1.18$), and I-AAA ($N=27, M=3.67, SD=1.49$), after conducting an ANOVA test. After conducting post hoc LSD tests, the results suggested ADs in FBS viewed Facilities Management experience significantly more important than their counterparts in FCS, $t=.81, p=.024$, and ADs in I-AAA, $t=1.11, P=.006$.

Table 4.4

Results of ANOVA of skills and experiences among ADs by NCAA Division I Classification

Skills & Experiences	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Contracts negotiations	3,111	1.14	.34
Fundraising experience	3,112	1.55	.21

Table 4.4

Results of ANOVA of skills and experiences among ADs by NCAA Division I Classification (Cont'd)

Skills & Experiences	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Strategic planning	3,112	0.24	.87
Handling HR issues	3,112	1.47	.23
Sponsorship	3,112	0.89	.45
Solicitation			
Communications	3,112	0.61	.61
Training			
Crisis Communications	3,112	0.73	.54
Capital Projects	3,112	1.89	.14
Sport Oversight	3,112	2.82	.04*
Compliance	3,112	3.23	.03*
Development	3,112	0.82	.49
Media Relations	3,112	2.24	.09
Academic Services	3,112	3.87	.01*
Life skills	3,112	1.74	.16
programming			
Marketing	3,111	2.10	.11
Business Operations	3,112	1.14	.33
Event Management	3,112	2.19	.09
Facilities Management	3,112	2.81*	.04*
Sport Performance	3,112	1.83	.15

Notes: * $p < .05$

Table 4.5

Means and Standard Deviations of the perceptions of the level of importance of skills and experiences of ADs by NCAA Division I Classification

Skills/ Experiences	FBS Autonomy (<i>N</i> = 19)		FBS (<i>N</i> = 22)		FCS (<i>N</i> = 48)		I-AAA (<i>N</i> = 27)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Contract	5.42	1.30	5.86	1.21	5.45	1.43	5.11	1.63
Negotiations								
Fundraising	5.58	1.54	6.36	1.09	5.98	1.19	5.70	1.49
Strategic Planning	5.47	1.35	5.64	1.50	5.77	1.37	5.59	1.34
Handling HR Issues	5.05	1.27	5.68	1.36	5.81	1.36	5.52	1.42
Sponsorship	4.11	1.37	4.55	1.50	4.71	1.47	4.37	1.39
Communications	5.42	1.57	5.36	1.22	5.67	1.43	5.22	1.55
Crisis Comm.	5.58	1.12	5.95	1.74	5.67	1.28	5.41	1.55
Capital Projects	5.16	1.42	6.00	1.15	5.43	1.22	5.19	1.59
Sport Oversight	5.32	1.89	6.41	1.01	6.00	1.29	5.56	1.31
Compliance	4.63	1.30	5.63	1.50	5.17	1.40	4.56	1.22

Table 4.5

Means and Standard Deviations of the perceptions of the level of importance of skills and experiences of ADs by NCAA Division I Classification (Cont'd)

Skills/ Experiences	FBS Autonomy (N = 19)		FBS (N = 22)		FCS (N = 48)		I-AAA (N = 27)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Development	5.42	1.30	6.00	1.15	5.71	1.29	5.56	1.31
Media Relations	4.63	1.38	5.09	1.54	4.69	1.42	4.03	1.51
Academic Services	3.95	1.18	4.77	1.60	4.17	1.23	3.52	1.25
Life Skills	3.79	1.23	4.18	1.62	3.68	1.21	3.33	1.24
Marketing	4.74	0.99	5.13	1.28	4.66	1.31	4.22	1.40
Business Operations	4.89	1.24	5.50	1.34	5.25	1.44	4.81	1.75
Event Management	4.00	1.41	4.82	1.53	4.06	1.12	3.93	1.52
Facilities Mgt.	3.94	1.35	4.77	1.63	3.96	1.18	3.67	1.49
Sport Performance	4.11	1.52	4.86	1.96	4.00	1.29	3.96	1.63

Research Question 3

The third research question (RQ3) aimed to explore how NCAA Division I ADs perceive the acquisition of necessary effectiveness skills based on prior administrative or executive experience. To address this question, the researcher included four open-ended questions at the end of the PADCP survey and identified themes based on the frequency of responses. The top three themes that emerged were communications skills, relationship building, and fundraising. There were 111 responses to this question and 55 responses (50%) included communication skills, 33 responses (30%) included relationship building, 18 responses included comments related to fundraising and 11 (16%) responses (9%) included comments related to strategic planning (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Themes Emerging from Open-Ended Question #1-Skills most integral in Advancing Your Career Path

Identified Categories	Sample Quotes
Communication	<p>Communications are the most essential part of being AD: communicating through a variety of means to a diversity of constituents</p> <p>Clear communication and a track record of outstanding performance at every stop across functional, multi-unit assignments</p> <p>Interpersonal communications skills. Without it, you're doomed for failure inasmuch as much of your duties entail working with staffs of high ego personalities</p> <p>Communication (both written and verbal) across broad spectrum</p>
Relationship Building	<p>The ability to listen and communicate and the ability to lead</p> <p>Communications and developing quality relationships with my supervisors, head coaches, and donors</p> <p>Relationship building. You need partners to achieve all the department's goals.</p> <p>Knowing how to recruit...which translated in knowing how to build relationships with donors/fans/etc.</p> <p>Building relationships with people and asking them to invest</p> <p>Cross campus relationship building.</p>
Fundraising	<p>Ability to generate revenue.</p> <p>I believe my fundraising success has allowed me to advance in my career much more quickly than many other administrators.</p> <p>Generating revenue and developing creative initiatives.</p> <p>Fundraising, sport oversight of MBB & FB, facilities, marketing, coaching experience, business.</p> <p>Fundraising. Understanding the complex roles of coaches and athletes.</p>
Strategic Planning	<p>Managing staff, strategic planning, implementing and modifying components of the strategic plan.</p> <p>Developing and sustaining a vision and plan for realizing that vision, acquiring the resources needed to implement the plan, ensuring a comprehensive and effective process for the evaluation exists.</p> <p>Strategic planning, ability to hire quality staff, ability to ask for money, public speaking.</p>

Question #2-As a Division I athletic director, what would you change about your career path that would have allowed you to be even more effective in your current role?

Ninety-one responses to this question were coded with 27 (30%) responses indicating the AD wouldn't change anything about his or her career path. Twenty-two (24%) respondents suggested they would have engaged in fundraising earlier in their career, and seven (8%) would have learned more about compliance. The most consistent answer among ADs was they wouldn't change anything about their career paths that would have made them more effective ADs today. The major theme was that every step in the process prepared the AD for a component of their current jobs (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

Themes Emerging from Open-Ended Question #2-What would you change about your career path that would have allowed you to be even more effective in your current role?

Identified Categories	Sample Quotes
Nothing/N/A	<p>Nothing. I've enjoyed my path to directorship. I believe I've gotten the most out of every stop in my path to directorship. Having experienced the highs and lows makes me better prepared to handle what comes before me.</p> <p>Wouldn't change a thing, I was well prepared when I assumed the role and it has helped me thrive in my current position.</p> <p>I've been extremely fortunate and wouldn't change my path at all.</p> <p>Would not change anything-each role/position has enabled me to learn additional skills and develop a sound philosophy on the value of intercollegiate athletics...these have been essential for decision-making.</p> <p>None. I've had fun and never worried about the next job, only doing the job I had. That is one of the major issues with college athletics now...everyone is always looking for the next job.</p>
Fundraising	<p>More involved with advancement aspects earlier in my career.</p> <p>More exposure and training in development projects.</p> <p>I would have tried to get more involved in fundraising projects, as university president's hiring ADs probably overvalue that experience in the hiring process.</p> <p>More development and marketing experience would have been helpful.</p> <p>The only thing I would change would be to add more development and advancement experience along the way...especially dealing with annual giving and major gifts.</p>
Compliance/Law Degree	<p>I would have developed more knowledge of compliance early in my career.</p> <p>Legal training</p> <p>Degree in Law or Psychology</p> <p>More involvement in compliance and fundraising</p> <p>I probably would have worked to gain more knowledge of athletic development and NCAA rules compliance.</p>

Question #3-As a Division I athletic director, what role has a mentor served in your current career progression?

Participants generated 103 responses to this question, with 83 (81%) suggesting a mentor played a role in their personal and/or professional development. The most frequent answer to this question was that mentors were not only instrumental in helping shape vision and philosophy, but also to speak into the mentee's life truthfully as the mentor guided and facilitated the mentee's journey (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

Themes Emerging from Open-Ended Question #3-What role has a mentor served in your career progression?

Identified Categories	Sample Quotes
Personal/Professional development	<p data-bbox="513 436 1354 470">My mentors have helped me in crisis management and HR Issues.</p> <p data-bbox="513 527 1175 560">Sounding board and observation on handling issues.</p> <p data-bbox="513 579 1386 684">I have had three mentors who were very instrumental in helping me shape my vision regarding supervising coaches and creating positive learning environments for student-athletes.</p> <p data-bbox="513 688 1360 758">Very important to have mentors who can guide your career and all areas of your personal life.</p> <p data-bbox="513 762 1373 831">The largest role in my personal development. I worked for one AD over 10 years who taught me all I know about college athletics.</p> <p data-bbox="513 835 1380 905">Their guidance and support has allowed me to assume the position I have at a relatively young age for this profession.</p> <p data-bbox="513 909 1354 1014">Having a mentor who is willing to provide unvarnished advice is invaluable to your ability to grow and make good decisions in this business.</p> <p data-bbox="513 1018 1377 1087">I have a former high major DI AD who is local and I meet with him every two weeks.</p> <p data-bbox="513 1092 1367 1161">Vital. It is imperative to have someone you can call for advice and counsel.</p> <p data-bbox="513 1165 1380 1234">Mentors have assisted with networking, overall professional development, job opportunities, advice/guidance with life decisions.</p> <p data-bbox="513 1239 1409 1308">I have had to use mentors throughout my time as AD. It is vital to my success.</p> <p data-bbox="513 1312 1321 1381">Mentors have played a huge role in my career progression. My mentors serve as my own “personal board of directors.”</p> <p data-bbox="513 1386 1182 1419">Mentors are extremely valuable in all aspects of life.</p> <p data-bbox="513 1423 1373 1493">Helped me identify my professional and personal strengths and weaknesses and helped me find the career path to my ultimate goal.</p> <p data-bbox="513 1497 1414 1602">Without a mentor, it is nearly impossible to become an AD. You need a mentor to give you work experience outside of your career entry position/department.</p> <p data-bbox="513 1606 1367 1675">Invaluable. Gave me real world experience in high level situations and trusted me to perform at a high level.</p>

Table 4.8

Themes Emerging from Open-Ended Question #3-What role has a mentor served in your career progression? (Cont'd)

Identified Categories	Sample Quotes
	Supporter, pusher to finish doctoral degree, shoulder to lean on when things are tough, conversationalist, able to share experiences. Mentors encourage, challenge, lead by example and open doors. My mentors always allowed me to bite off as much as I could chew which gave me the opportunity to learn things outside a job description I mastered.
	Mentors are vital to success and career progression. People and relationships determine direction and results. Wisdom comes with experience and mentors provide insight that is not otherwise available.
	Vital. It is imperative to have someone you can call for advice and counsel.
	Mentors have assisted with networking, overall professional development, job opportunities, advice/guidance with life decisions.

Question #4-What career advice would you share for aspiring athletic directors?

With 105 responses to this question, 38 (36%) were related to diversifying an aspiring AD's portfolio with different experiences. Twenty-eight (27%) responses were related to paying dues in the industry as one climbs the ladder. A final theme to emerge related to the importance of finding a mentor (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9

Themes Emerging from Open Ended Question #4-What Career Advice Would You Share with Aspiring Athletic Directors?

Identified Categories	Sample Quotes
Diversify your portfolio	Seek new knowledge and experiences that distinguish you from others: educationally, professionally, intellectually, socially and in service.

Table 4.9

Themes Emerging from Open Ended Question #4-What Career Advice Would You Share with Aspiring Athletic Directors?(Cont'd)

Identified Categories	Sample Quotes
Pay Your Dues	Do your job well, and expand your reach into other areas within the department. Bring value beyond your job description.
	Have a breadth of experience in athletics. Become familiar with all areas but focus on revenue development, external operations, and strategic planning.
	Begin with specialization, then broaden scope of responsibility each progressive year.
	Diversify your experience. College athletics is the most diverse and visible aspect of a college. Think about it, we have doctors and grass cutters, lawyers and marketing specialists, we have coaches and equipment managers, we have PhDs and CPAs. An AD is asked to lead this diverse group, while experiencing the most visible unit in higher education. EVERYTHING is public, EVERYTHING is scrutinized. EVERYBODY thinks they are an AD.
	Focus on your current job and you will get noticed. Do not focus on your next job.
	Dedicate yourself to the vocation and have willingness to go beyond what is expected in whatever position you hold.
Find a Mentor(s)	Have passion, don't be above doing whatever it takes, remember where you came from and never give up.
	Be willing to pay your dues. Do not get in a hurry to climb the ladder.
	Grow where you are planted. Do a great job, ask for more responsibilities and never worry about your salary. Appropriate compensation will come when you do great work.
	Maintain a strong and reliable diversified panel of folks you can run ideas by and get advice from (ADs, coaches, peers, men & women, and from different parts of the country).
Actively seek out people that care about you and learn, learn, learn from them.	
Find an advocate and use your friends to help you. Also read Bob Beaudines book, You Got Who!	
Build a network of ADs who you can call on during crucial situations.	

Summary

Results of the present study helped to paint a clearer profile of current Division I athletic directors, from a description of the individual to the experiences which aided the athletic director to ascend to his or her current position. On average, a Division I AD in 2016 is a 51-year-old white male with more than 20 years of experience, a master's degree and undergraduate majors in sports management, business and physical education. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of sitting ADs were former NCAA student-athletes, and approximately 40% were NCAA coaches.

The top 10 skills perceived to be the most important by Division I ADs were fundraising, sport oversight, strategic planning, crisis planning, HR, communications, contract negotiations, capital projects, business operations and compliance.

The open-ended questions suggested the skills most integral in advancing the career path to the AD chair were communications, relationship building and fundraising. The majority of the ADs would not change a thing about their paths to the top and expressed the importance of having a mentor for the personal and professional development, but also to assist with generating ideas to solve problems.

Division I ADs believe that aspiring ADs should diversify their portfolio by becoming an expert in one area while learning about the many other areas that make up an athletics department. The ADs also suggested aspiring ADs need to pay their dues by being willing to relocate and grow the importance of their current positions. The final piece of advice was to secure a mentor(s), or a "personal board of directors," to not only assist with personal development but also to assist with navigating your professional development journey.

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter begins with an introduction to the research topic followed by a summary of the findings, limitations of the study, implications of the findings and recommendations for future research.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the profile of current NCAA Division I ADs 20 years after Fitzgerald et al's (1994) foundational study, but also to determine the skills and experiences athletic directors perceive to be most important in order to be effective in their current positions.

Summary of Findings

Among all participants in this study, the majority of Division I ADs were white males (84.5%), averaging 51 years of age with a range from 29-70, and approximately 23 years of experience. The average age of the ADs in the 1994 foundational study was 48.7 years of age but the men tended to be slightly older on average, 50.6, than the women at 43.8. Seventy percent (70.7%) of the ADs indicated a master's degree as the highest degree earned compared to the 85% in 1994 and 13.8% indicated a doctorate as the highest degree earned as compared to 21.5% in 1994.

The top three academic majors listed for Division I ADs observed in the current study were Sports Management (31), Business (30) and Physical Education (16). Previous studies indicated the Physical Education major was the most common major for ADs with 71.9% of ADs claiming that degree in Hatfield, Wrenn and Bretting (1987), while Quarterman (1992) noted

69% of ADs possessed a Physical Education degree. This finding suggests a definite shift toward the business-related skills necessary to be an athletic director. Given the trend toward fiscal responsibility and revenue generation in Division I athletics (Hardin et al., 2013), it is not surprising present ADs need more training in business-related fields. Further, the emergence of sport management as an appropriate academic major is attributable to the growth of sport management degree programs from the mid-1990s to today (Jones, Brooks, & Mak, 2008). That many ADs chose this major suggests sport management degree programs are providing aspiring athletic administrators with the appropriate skills and curriculum to become successful administrators.

Approximately two-thirds (65%) of current ADs identified themselves as former NCAA student-athletes, as compared to 80% in Fitzgerald et al.'s (1994) foundational study. Further, only 39.7% indicated they had NCAA coaching experience as compared to 65% in 1994. While the number of ADs that were former NCAA student-athletes and former NCAA coaches has decreased substantially over the last 20 years, the ADs participating in the present study believed that their past student-athlete ($M=5.8$, $SD=1.55$) and coaching experiences ($M=5.9$, $SD=1.82$) were important in aiding their current roles. However, collegiate coaching is no longer the most common antecedent professional position for the AD chair as suggested by Fitzgerald et al. (1994). In fact, of the 115 AD responses in the present study, only 16 indicated they had head coaching experience in any sport (three in football) within the previous four positions leading up to their AD position. These numbers clearly support the notion that the AD position is no longer the landing spot for the old football coach (Veazy, 2011).

When asked to identify how important an individual experience or skill was to their current role, ADs in the present study ranked fundraising, sport oversight and development as the

most important. Each group of ADs (FBS Autonomy, FBS, FCS, I-AAA) had fundraising ranked first or second in terms of level of importance to be effective in their current jobs (See Table 4.2). These results are not a surprise as previous research (e.g., Dosh, 2013; Hardin et al., 2013; Spenard, 2011) suggested the AD's role has changed since 1994. The number of assistant/associate ADs doubled from approximately 40% to 85% between 1994-2001 as these individuals gain first-hand experience in fundraising, negotiating multi-million dollar deals and financial planning (Dosh, 2013). Of the 63 ADs that identified an area of responsibility when listing their previous four job titles leading up to the AD position, 32 came from externally-focused positions (development, marketing, tickets etc.) which engage in revenue generation and relationship building. Thirty-one participants emerged from internally-focused positions (strength & conditioning, business office, compliance, academics, athletic training etc.) which primarily deal with units inside the athletic department. While there does not appear to be a clear path, external or internal, to the AD position, the path taken may impact how quickly someone ascends to the AD position. Spenard (2011) studied the weekly involvement of ADs and found they spent the most time on the budget, internal policy and fundraising. These responsibilities appear to be similar to the findings of the current study with the most important skills being fundraising and sport oversight.

In evaluating differences among four classification of ADs (FBS Autonomy, FBS, FCS, and Division I-AAA), ADs differed statistically on the perceived level of importance for four experiences: sport oversight, compliance, academic services, and facilities management. The identification of these four experiences may shed light on differences among the four subgroups of Division I. FBS Autonomy ADs scored significantly lower on the perceived importance of all four of these experiences than their FBS or FCS counterparts. As previously noted, the emphasis

on revenue generation for FBS Autonomy schools may force ADs to focus on those skills, and delegate responsibility of internal tasks such as sport oversight and compliance to assistant or associate directors.

Particularly interesting to note was the low mean score of FBS Autonomy ADs ($M=3.94$) on academic services, as opposed to their FBS colleagues ($M=4.77$). Athletic directors and even the NCAA frequently mention the education of student-athletes as critical to their jobs, but this low score of perceived importance suggests the athletic directors themselves are not involved in academic policies.

In fact, Division I FBS Autonomy ADs rated fundraising ($M=5.58$) and crisis communications ($M=5.58$) as the most important skills, while simultaneously rating academic services ($M=3.95$) and life skills ($M=3.79$) in the bottom three of importance. That academic services and life skills both relate to the holistic well-being of student-athletes is worrisome. It may suggest that the narrative about ADs caring for student-athlete experiences is just rhetoric, or that, in reality, ADs are concerned with the external piece of the department to indirectly support academics.

Finally, while each subgroup ranked fundraising as either the first or second most important skill, the Autonomy AD subgroup also ranked crisis communications as tied with fundraising ($M=5.58$) for most important. No other subgroup ranked crisis communications higher than fifth. Again, this finding may shed light on the actual job duties of an athletic director at an FBS Autonomy institution. Scandals increasingly plague college athletics, with most of the attention falling to prominent institutions such as the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and Baylor University. As the media devote time and attention to these scandals, it seems athletic directors need to have formalized experience in managing organizational

messaging and communicating with members of the media, as well as outside stakeholder groups. Fewer ADs reported an academic background in communications or journalism than in business, education and sport management, begging the question of where ADs acquire the appropriate skills and strategies for managing a crisis.

When provided the opportunity to share advice for aspiring ADs, the top response suggested diversifying a portfolio of experiences to gain a holistic perspective of the athletic department inner workings. Aspiring ADs don't have to be the master of every area, but they need to be proficient in each area in order to have a smoother transition. Next, ADs suggest paying dues early on in a career. The idea was to grow and create opportunities for oneself by going the extra mile and not worrying about compensation. The last suggestion was to get a mentor. Mentors can help navigate career paths and avoid some pitfalls, but the hope is that a mentor will speak the truth in order to stretch and grow the mentee personally and/or professionally.

Finally, through the lens of Spilerman's (1977) sociological career trajectory theory, we understand there may be a career path that is common to a portion of a labor force. Thirty-six (31%) of the 116 Division I ADs were sitting athletic directors immediately prior to their current AD role, 38 (33%) were Deputy/Senior Associate ADs, 17 (15%) were Associate ADs and seven (3%) were Assistant ADs. So while the experiences of the subjects in the present study does not suggest a new path to the athletic director position, it became evident that coaching was no longer the viable pathway to becoming a Division I athletic director that it once was. Also, despite the perception that athletic departments would be led by corporate CEOs after several non-traditional hires within the last 5-10 years, the results showed only four of the 116 current Division I ADs held positions outside of higher education leading up to the top spot.

Implications

The purpose of the study was to explore the gap in the knowledge of the career paths of the modern day Division I collegiate athletic director position compared to the athletic directors studied more than 20 years ago. There was also a gap in the knowledge of the skills necessary to be an effective athletic director, from the perspective of Division I athletic directors. Previously, many studies relied on content analysis of athletic department websites and the collection of athletic director resumes to make assumptions about what it takes to become an effective Division I AD. This study contributes new information to the industry by focusing on perceptions of the skills and experiences needed to be effective Division I athletic directors directly from sitting ADs.

Aspiring ADs should know that it will take about 23 years of experience, on average, to become a Division I AD. Most of the ADs have a master's degree, and majored in Sports Management, Business or Physical Education. While the numbers of sitting Division I ADs who are former NCAA student-athletes and/or coaches has decreased from 20 years ago, those experiences have proven to be valuable to them in their leadership of young people and coaches today.

Aspiring ADs of color should know that 90% of the sitting ADs in 2011 were white, with 89% of those in the pipeline also being white (Swift, 2011). Results of the present study confirmed this, with 85% of the sitting Division I ADs identifying as white. That being said, it would be wise to focus on the skills and experiences the ADs perceived to be most important to increase the likelihood of securing one of these coveted positions. The ADs suggested getting involved in fundraising earlier in one's career, building relationships with colleagues on campus

and throughout the industry and securing a mentor. The reality is that one can become an athletic director from any area within athletics but it may take longer to get there at the Division I level without fundraising experience.

Limitations

All research studies have limitations. First, the 2015-16 NCAA membership included 1,066 institutions (ncaa.org, 2015) and the present study only focused on athletic directors from the 350 Division I institutions so the results may not be generalizable to all ADs. There were not enough female respondent's to draw a distinction in perceptions between genders. Next, the study relied on a newly created scale, PADCP, rather than using the scale from the foundational study by Fitzgerald et al (1994). Third, the researcher did not clarify undergraduate or graduate school when soliciting information related to academic majors. While the researcher attempted to make comparisons from the study conducted about ADs from over 20 years ago, the limitation of the population to Division I ADs limits the ability to compare results.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order to address these limitations in future studies, researchers should administer a revised version of the PADCP scale, including all three divisions, to increase the response rate, have more generalizable results and to make a truer comparison to Fitzgerald et al. (1994). The 116 responses were lower than the Cooper and Weight (2011) study with a 43.9% response rate, but higher than the Dittmore et al. (2013) study which had a 18.3% response rate. The researcher's long tenure in the intercollegiate athletics industry as a practitioner and Sr. Associate AD title may have contributed to an increased response rate as compared to the Dittmore et al. (2013) study. It is also recommended that future research would remove the distinction between functional and managerial areas on the PADCP to focus on the overall skills

and experiences. Finally, it would be useful to survey university presidents to compare the skills/experiences they perceive to be most important for ADs with what ADs perceive to be most important to be an effective AD.

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APPENDIX A



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

May 5, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eric Wood
Steve Dittmore

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-03-637

Protocol Title: *Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 05/05/2016 Expiration Date: 05/04/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 376 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

APPENDIX B

Perceptions of Division I Athletic Director Career Paths (PADCP)

You are being invited to participate in a study regarding Arkansas high school athletic directors and head football coaches perceptions of MRSA. There are no risks or penalties for your participation in this research study. The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others. Data from your completed survey will be stored and kept on file at the University of Arkansas. The survey will take approximately 8-10 minutes to complete.

Individuals from the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board may inspect these records. In all other respects, however, the data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law.

Please remember that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your identity will remain confidential in any formal research paper or project which emerges from this study. By completing the interview you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to skip any particular question or to stop at any time if you choose.

You acknowledge that all your present questions have been answered in a language you can fully understand and all future questions will be treated in the same manner. If you have any questions about the study, please contact my advisor, Dr. Stephen W. Dittmore, Associate Professor/Assistant Department Head, Health, Human Performance & Recreation, at 479-575-6625 or you can reach me at 407-304-6951.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call Ro Windwalker, Research Compliance, at (479) 575-2208. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in confidence, with a member of the committee.

IRB #16-03-637
Approved: 05/05/2016
Expires: 05/04/2017

APPENDIX C

Professional Characteristics of Division I Athletic Directors

1. Please indicate your current job title: _____.
2. Please indicate the number of total years you have worked in intercollegiate athletics administration: _____.
3. Please indicate the classification of your current Division I institution:
a. FBS Autonomy Five b. FBS c. FCS d. I-AAA
4. Were you an NCAA collegiate student-athlete?
a. Yes ___ b. No ___

If yes, please indicate how important that experience as a student-athlete has on your current job performance:

1(Not important) 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Very Important)

5. Were you an NCAA collegiate coach?
a. Yes ___ b. No ___

If yes, please indicate how important that experience as a coach has on your current job performance:

1(Not important) 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Very Important)

6. Please list your four most recent full-time position titles prior to your current athletic director position. Please indicate level (FBS Autonomy Five, FBS, FCS, I-AAA) but not institution:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Personal Characteristics of Athletic Directors

7. Please identify your age: _____
8. Please identify your race/ethnicity:
a. White, non-Hispanic
b. Black, non-Hispanic
c. Hispanic
d. Multi-racial
e. Asian/Pacific Islander
f. American Indian/Alaskan Native
g. Other

9. Please identify your gender: a. Male b. Female c. Transgender

10. Please select your highest degree earned:

a. Bachelor's b. Master's c. Professional (i.e. Law/Medical) d. Doctorate

Academic Major _____

11. In your role as an athletic director, how important is it for you to have experience in each of the following managerial areas:

1 (Not at all Important) 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Very Important)

Contract Negotiations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Fundraising Experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strategic Planning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Handling HR issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sponsorship Solicitation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Communications Training	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Crisis Communications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Capital Projects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. In your role as an athletic director, how important is it for you to have experience in each of the following functional areas:

1 (Not at all Important) 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Very Important)

Sport Oversight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Compliance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Media Relations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Academic Services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Life Skills Programming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Marketing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Business Operations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Event Management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Facilities Management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sport Performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. As a Division I athletic director, what skills have been the most integral in advancing your career path? Please explain.

14. As a Division I athletic director, what would you change about your career path that would have allowed you to be even more effective in your current role?

15. As a Division I athletic director, what role has a mentor served in your career progression?

16. What career advice would you share for aspiring athletic directors?