INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS
OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC REFORM:
A FOCUS GROUP EXAMINATION

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Athletics’ rise in importance on college campuses has been widely-documented (e.g., Frey, 1986; Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Trail & Chelladurai, 2000; Zimbalist, 1999) and remains highly scrutinized by popular media outlets and select sport scholars. Increased importance of intercollegiate athletics within the sports landscape brought heightened scrutiny and calls for reform (Sperber, 1990, 2000). This study utilized stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) to look into the reform possibilities of three issues important to the functioning athletic department. These areas include the payment of student-athletes, over-commercialization in intercollegiate athletics, and academic difficulties and improprieties faced by student-athletes.

Eight focus groups, a combination of participant observation and individual interviews (Madriz, 2000), were formed to gain perceptions of the aforementioned three important issues facing intercollegiate athletic departments. Five stakeholder groups closely aligned with a large, Division-IA athletic department, student-athletes (revenue and non-revenue), faculty members (familiar with sport and non-familiar with sport), coaches (revenue and non-revenue sports), athletic administrators and student-athlete
academic support officers were chosen as parties with vested interests in the issues at hand.

Themes that emanated from the participating stakeholder groups offered valuable insight into the views and perceptions of those groups toward athletic reform. For the most part, each stakeholder within the various focus groups, and across stakeholder groups, held similar views toward the reform issues investigated. Other thematic findings included the view that student-athletes are compensated fairly for their efforts on the playing field, but the time and effort they put forth on the field keeps them from gaining employment that helps pay various expenses. Also, commercialization in intercollegiate athletics is vital to the continued support of intercollegiate athletics, and any restriction would spell the end for non-revenue sports that are not widely-supported by the American population.

Lastly, the academic welfare of the student-athlete is important to the athletic department, and for the most part, it believes it succeeds in educating and developing the intercollegiate athletic student-athlete. Numerous efforts are made by the various factions within the intercollegiate athletic organization that attempt to support the academic responsibilities faced by the student-athletes.
Dedicated to my family
and to the memory of
my grandfather, Gordon Brand
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Cultural significance of intercollegiate athletics in America is unlike any other country in the world. While European countries utilize a club sport system for amateur competition, the United States amateur sport began between institutions of higher education and has grown in importance within the sport landscape as the 20th Century has come and gone (Davenport, 1985). Because of this unique history, and partly influencing it, there has been a constant struggle to define the role of athletics within the university governance, as well as a tug-of-war relationship between athletics and academics. East Coast colleges, such as Harvard and Yale were designed to uphold similar traditions and values of their English counterparts, Oxford and Cambridge (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). Higher education was meant to better American society, through knowledge and innovation, with mainly practical purposes driving decisions. For instance, the Morrill Act of 1862 provided access for colleges focusing on agriculture, industry and business driving the development of our nation’s state university systems (www.britannica.com, 2003).

Intercollegiate athletics were organized as a means of entertainment, as well as an impetus to development of the whole student, beyond the knowledge garnered in the classroom (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). Athletics’ rise in importance on college campuses would
has been widely-documented (e.g., Frey, 1986; Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Trail & Chelladurai, 2000; Zimbalist, 1999) and was discussed throughout the study’s pages. Combating problems within intercollegiate athletics has been part of the mission of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), since President Theodore Roosevelt formed the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) shortly after 1900, an organization which would become the NCAA, the current-day governing body of intercollegiate athletics (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). As a foundation for this study, three issues, important to the functioning athletic department were reviewed, with particular emphasis on reform possibilities within each individual area. These areas include the payment of student-athletes, over-commercialization in intercollegiate athletics, and academic difficulties and improprieties faced by student-athletes. This chapter provides an introduction to the issues faced by intercollegiate athletic departments and the need for scholarly work focusing on these topics.

Statement of the Problem

On page 1 of its 2002-2003 Division I rules manual, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) states as its purpose: “…to maintain intercollegiate athletics as an integral part of the educational program and the athlete as an integral part of the student body and, by so doing, retain a clear line of demarcation between intercollegiate athletics and professional sports”. As an institution in charge of maintaining this distinct separation, the NCAA has held a front row seat to the unprecedented financial growth of intercollegiate athletics, the blurring of the demarcation between the two aforementioned entities, and the creation of a chasm
between the academic mission of colleges and universities and those schools’ athletic departments.

Reports of poor graduation rates, exceedingly large athletic budgets and academic improprieties (Boyer, 1985; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998) have stirred interest from NCAA critics who cite facts such as the 11-year, $6 billion television contract signed by CBS to televise the men’s basketball tournament each March as the “new” face of intercollegiate athletics (www.ncaa.org). Commercialization, corporate interests and million-dollar contracts for college coaches create a cloud over the future of intercollegiate athletics (Andre & James, 1991; Zimbalist, 1999) and the issues do not stop there. College athletes are not remunerated for their services rendered, beyond an athletic grant-in-aid (Byers, 1995), unlike their coaches or athletic directors, and the millions of sponsorship and television dollars used to meet payrolls and to fund construction of “pro-style” stadiums and arenas are not taxable by the US Government.

Each of the aforementioned issues is eroding the public’s positive view of college sports and the end result will have an impact on all parties with a compelling interest in intercollegiate athletics. Sports and athletes are held in high regard in our society, and the entertainment and passion they provide are a source of pride for millions of people, and a means of employment for many others. With all of the attention given in popular media, few empirical investigations have been performed focusing on intercollegiate athletics reform from sport management or business scholars, creating the need for this study. Likewise, stakeholder theory is one of the prominent frameworks in management theory, but is just beginning to catch on in sport management research.
This investigation combined these two areas of limited focus, using the stakeholder mentality of ethics and morality, away from profit maximization (a prime area of intercollegiate problems) to look at three issues that pose the potential to alter the face of intercollegiate athletics (payment of student-athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization and academic improprieties and difficulties).

Stakeholder theory has a place in this study because many sport organizations, from intercollegiate athletic departments to professional teams hold a high regard for the development of profits. This mindset runs parallel to that held in the nearly all corporations, who have faced an alteration in their viewpoints in recent years from profit maximization for stockholders toward the needs of various stakeholder groups, with considerable interest in the success, failure and everyday operations of those businesses. To this point, the interests of associated parties have not translated to intercollegiate athletic departments, either in practice or scholarship with any regularity. This paper addresses the dearth of stakeholder studies in sport management by looking at intercollegiate athletic issues through the eyes of those parties with a vested interest in those college programs.

Rationale and Justification

Amateurism. College student-athletes are viewed by the NCAA as amateurs, governed under that associations’ principle of amateurism, which reads:

Student-athletes shall be amateurs in intercollegiate sport, and their participation should be motivated primarily by education and by the physical, mental and social benefits to be derived. Student participation in intercollegiate athletics is an
avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises. (NCAA Manual, 2002-2003, p.5) This principle, above all others, has been challenged by opponents of the current “business mentality” system of intercollegiate athletics. Sack and Staurowsky (1998), Sperber (1990, 2000), Zimbalist (1999) and Andre and James (1991) are just a few scholars who see intercollegiate athletics as an institution moving far past the “physical, mental and social benefits” described by the NCAA.

Amateurism is a product of England, where amateur competitions were necessary for the entertainment of the upper class. Entrants were eligible to compete if they had not received any public or prize money, and if they were not mechanics, artisans or other lower class individuals who were not permitted to compete at such high level affairs (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). Today, student-athletes are permitted gift allowances and meal money as part of their athletic grant-in-aid, an issue to be discussed in proceeding sections.

Payment of student athletes. In response to these growing arguments against the amateurism ideal, discussions from the national media to scholarly pieces have talked about the idea of payment of student-athletes for their services rendered. Currently, a full athletic grant-in-aid subsidizes tuition and fees, room, board and books; a package that ranges from $5000 to $35,000 a year, depending on type of institution and whether the tuition is in- or out-of-state (Byers, 1995). Insurance coverage is included (as is catastrophic injury insurance) an addition in the past two decades after a couple of athletes, including Kent Waldrep of Texas Christian University, were severely injured on
the field, and fought the NCAA rulings that injuries incurred were not the responsibility of the NCAA (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998).

Supporters of the payment of college athletes cite the last line of the amateurism ideal as listed by the NCAA, which speaks about the protection of exploitation from commercial and professional enterprises (NCAA Manual, 2002-2003). Zimbalist (1999) cited that sales of officially licensed athletic department merchandise can reach into the millions of dollars, and while jerseys cannot have the name of a particular player printed on them, the numbers and availability of uniforms at certain points is clearly, in his opinion, exploitation. In 1995, according to a NCAA survey, the average Division I-A school earned approximately $700,000 in licensing income, with the higher-profile schools earning more (Zimbalist). Michigan earned $6 million in licensing revenue after reaching the regional finals in the NCAA men’s basketball tournament in 1994, while Nebraska took in more than $3 million after winning back-to-back football national championships. Also, it is estimated by Collegiate Licensing Company that approximately two dozen schools earn annual licensing income above $1 million, and university logo product sales reached around $2 billion in 1995, and remained relatively steady throughout the remainder of the 1990s.

Athletes are increasingly being recruited from disadvantaged backgrounds. Supporters of payment plans cite these individuals’ inability to cover living expenses with the money provided by the university (Thornton, 2003). Following this line of thinking, these athletes are stretched thin financially and will seek other sources of income, such as gambling or payments from boosters in order to pay for food or buy
other necessities. These payments are illegal, according to NCAA guidelines, and only play to the argument of uncontrolled corruption within the walls of athletic departments.

In legislative efforts to challenge the current amateurism ideals, the state legislature of Nebraska has passed resolutions that would permit remuneration to student-athletes in exchange for their services rendered on the playing field. Legislative Bill 688 was introduced by Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers, a long-time proponent of the payment of college athletes, and was passed by Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns in April of 2003 (Legislature of Nebraska, 2003). The bill called for a stipend to be paid to football players at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for an amount to be determined by the university, as well as to other student-athletes, outside of football players as long as similar laws are passed by at least four other states that have teams playing in the Big XII Conference (Legislature of Nebraska, 2003). While the realization of athletes’ payment is in the future, a Texas lawmaker has proposed similar legislation in the Texas legislature, and has been passed to the next session commencing later in 2003.

California is slightly behind Nebraska and Texas in their legislative process, but the California State Senate has proposed Senate Bill 193 or the Student-Athlete’s Bill of Rights meant to eliminate the cap placed by certain organizations such as the NCAA on college scholarships (Thornton, 2003). Still in committee, the bill would ban institutions from entering into relationships with organizations placing such bans, potentially eliminating schools such as University of California-Berkeley, UCLA, USC and other California state universities from participating in NCAA-sanctioned events (Thornton, 2003). Other areas impacted by signed legislation would be transfer and eligibility
standards, insurance coverage during off-season workouts and the elimination of restrictions on off-season employment wages earned by student-athletes. Efforts for this portion of the study were focused on understanding whether the stakeholders believed that student-athletes should be paid, what type of payment plan should be included and rationales for the participants thinking.

*Commercialization and over-commercialization.* “A stage (usually the last) in the development cycle for a new product. Commonly thought to begin when the product is introduced into the marketplace, but actually starts when a management commits to marketing the item.” (www.faculty.catawba.edu). This definition is but one of many that work to place a meaning behind a term used commonly across the business world. As has been discussed to some level in the preceding pages, college athletics has been transformed into big business, and commercialization of that enterprise has occurred as athletic directors work to position their brand in the marketplace. At the highest level, Division I-A, athletic departments have budgets exceeding $50 million with The Ohio State University leading the way with a $73 million athletic budget for the 2002-2003 academic year (www.ncaa.org).

To help subsidize the cost of scholarships, salaries and other expenses, the marketing of athletic departments is a task undertaken by athletic personnel. Commercialization has grown from agreements with local companies to large television contracts, crossing a subjective line and raising the ire of opponents of “big-time” intercollegiate athletics. The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) was formed by faculty members of universities with major Division-I athletic programs to fight for
reform of intercollegiate athletics. Their views include that the marketing of intercollegiate athletics impairs institutional control, and may undermine support for academics (COIA, 2003). Their interests in intercollegiate athletic reform revolve around athletics possible negative influence on institutional values, perhaps damaging public perception of higher education (COIA).

A major part of athletic department budgets that lends itself to arguments of groups like COIA is debt service arising from athletic facility construction and renovation occurring over the past 5 years. Ohio State renovated Ohio Stadium from 1999-2001, costing $150 million. Seating capacity was boosted to 96,000, including increases in the number of luxury boxes, club seats and other amenities for athletic supporters whose contributions assisted in the construction of the stadium, endowment of athletic scholarships, and many other causes. This renovation came on the heels of the construction of a new 20,000-seat basketball facility with many of the same revenue producing amenities of Ohio Stadium; and a new track/lacrosse/soccer stadium, baseball field and softball field.

Ohio State is not alone in the development of new facilities, as sports as a whole realized a boom over the past 12-15 years. Noll and Zimbalist (1997) cited industry experts who conservatively estimate that between 1996 and 2006, more than $8 billion will be spent on sport facilities. This number includes professional sport as well as college sport; but Texas, Tennessee, Penn State, Michigan, Florida, Nebraska, and Notre Dame are among the schools that will have renovated or constructed new football facilities. Each of these construction decisions are designed to remain competitive, not
only in terms of revenue, but in the recruiting wars for interscholastic student-athletes who may come in and produce a national championship, the supreme revenue producer.

Beyond the construction and renovation boom and the aforementioned licensing agreements, sponsorship signage is a depended upon revenue stream for athletic departments. In the biannual NCAA survey published in 1997, schools at the Division I-A level earned an average of $459,000 in sponsorship and signage income in 1995, creating an ever-present corporate influence in the direction of intercollegiate athletics.

One final area of corporate influence that has the potential to negatively impact intercollegiate athletics and the direction of the educational institution comes in the form of apparel contracts with coaches. These agreements, multi-million dollar contracts negotiated by the coach on behalf of their universities are the main source of remuneration for coaches. Companies such as Nike, adidas and Reebok offer between $1 and $3 million in return for being the sole provider of uniforms, shoes and other university related apparel (Zimbalist, 1999). These contracts add to the ills of intercollegiate athletics as they create a chasm between the coaches and the players they are in charge of leading and developing. Student-athletes, who have been described already as facing financial difficulties in some cases are often times responsible for the success on the field which line their coaches’ pockets, while the student-athletes themselves struggle to make ends meet. This disparity in resource allocation is commonly viewed as an area for needed reform. Work on this section examines the depth of these revenue producing activities (necessary commercial connections and their over-commercialization counterparts), their impact on the everyday operation of an
intercollegiate athletic department, and the possible need for reform in this area of college athletics.

Academic improprieties and difficulties. As a matter of course, student-athletes graduate from colleges and universities at a higher rate than their non-competing student counterparts. The NCAA News (2003) reported in a study investigating the first Proposition 16 class of student-athletes that graduation rates are higher than at any point in recent history (62%) and the graduation rate disparity between student-athletes and the student body is larger than it has been in a decade (three percentage points). With that being said, there have been a number of allegations and investigations of high profile athletic programs where academic measures have been ignored, raising the ire of the NCAA, dimming the positive light shed by the previous study results.

As an example, at the University of Georgia, former basketball player Tony Cole accused head coach Jim Harrick and his son, assistant coach Jim Harrick Jr. of handing out grades in a class taught by the younger Harrick. Academic records revealed that Cole, and other members of the basketball program were enrolled in the aforementioned Coaching Basketball class, a clear evasion of NCAA rules prohibiting coaches from educating their own players. Moreover, those student-athletes repeatedly did not attend class, yet were awarded grades of A in the course. The uncovering of these wrongdoings resulted in the termination of Jim Harrick and his son, as well as embroiling the University of Georgia athletic department, and athletic director Vince Dooley who hired Harrick after alleged problems at two previous positions, UCLA and the University of Rhode Island.
Two other high profile cases came in the past year from the Fresno State University basketball team, and The Ohio State University football team. In both cases, players were accused of receiving preferential treatment, a clear violation of the NCAA rules, and followed in a long line of prominent athletic teams facing similar allegations. A win-at-all costs mentality has enveloped college sports and it has spread to the very heart of the higher education institution, the academic viability and integrity of the university. This study will attempt to identify the factors contributing to increased academic misconduct, and search for ways to alleviate these problems.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the proposed study is to examine the perceptions of stakeholder groups toward three areas of reform inquiry within intercollegiate athletics. These issues include the payment of college athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization of intercollegiate athletics, and academic improprieties and difficulties of student-athletes, and are important toward gaining a clear view of the intercollegiate landscape. Through listening to the voices of these stakeholder groups: student-athletes, faculty members, coaches, athletic department administrators and athletic-academic support officers; this study targeted their views on three specific issues important to the continued popularity of intercollegiate athletics. The study attempted to draw out their experiences, which inform perceptions and provide a human touch to a topic of inquiry that has too often been studied at a distance.

As a second area of interest, the study will examine the heterogeneity present within stakeholder groups. Wolfe and Putler (2002) outlined their belief that stakeholder groups were not homogeneous in their views, as had previously been discussed by
Donaldson and Preston (1995) and Clarkson (1995). Different individuals that comprise these groups come from different backgrounds, with different experiences, and this study utilized the focus groups and interviews to focus on the heterogeneity present within the stakeholder groups. Views on the current state of intercollegiate athletics, as well as potential future directional strategies will be culled from the study’s participants.

Each of the stakeholder groups have been chosen due to their role as internal stakeholders to the operating athletic department. External stakeholders such as fans and government agencies will be investigated in forthcoming projects, but this study is interested in those parties that are directly impacted, and impact the everyday operations of an intercollegiate athletic department.

Research Questions

1. What perceptual similarities and differences exist between stakeholder groups as they relate to the payment of college student-athletes?

2. What perceptual similarities and differences exist between stakeholder groups as they relate to the increased level of commercialization in intercollegiate athletics?

3. What perceptual similarities and differences exist between stakeholder groups as they relate to the academic improprieties and difficulties faced by student-athletes?

4. Is there a level of heterogeneity within stakeholder group when viewing the issues of payment of college student-athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization in intercollegiate athletics, and academic improprieties and difficulties of student-athletes?
Significance of Study

Wolfe and Putler (2002) proposed the idea of heterogeneity within stakeholder in their piece, an assertion largely ignored by stakeholder theorists, but one that will be taken further in this study. In an intercollegiate athletic department, student-athletes come from a diverse set of homes and experiences, as do employees, fans, and numerous other stakeholder groups. Gaining and understanding of this idea of heterogeneity, as well as the possible dynamic nature of the model is an avenue unique to sport, and one explored in this project.

Intercollegiate athletics as an entity has received a large amount of attention from popular authors such as Sperber (1990, 2000), Zimbalist (1999), and Sack and Staurowsky (1998) who spent pages espousing the ills that faced athletic directors and other parties privy to the everyday operation of intercollegiate athletic departments. These works preferred breadth to depth, taking the initiative to address issues facing athletic administrators first, but in doing so did not take an in-depth look at the factors contributing to various problems, creating the need for works such as this study, which ask the active participants of intercollegiate athletics their views, opinions and perceptions. This study took the issues popular media discusses in the sports pages and on SportsCenter to those constituents with a vested interest in the athletic department activities, opening the door for more in-depth analysis in future projects.

Limitations

There are several limitations and delimitations in the proposal of this study. Limitations refer to limiting conditions of the research design, whereas delimitations are related to generalizability of the findings (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987). First,
only being able to converse with the five stakeholder groups for a short period of time is a limitation, as those perceptions may be impacted by external occurrences in a particular person’s private or professional life. For instance, a student-athlete may have been notified of a family illness, and have a midterm examination to study for at the end of the week. Other problems could include spousal disputes, personal illness, increased workload in the office, off-season conditioning, and NCAA investigations of program wrongdoings. Post-focus group interviews will be an attempt to gain a confirmatory glimpse, but the nature of the design lends itself to these outside stresses.

Only those individuals who volunteered to take part in the study will be interviewed, so it is quite possible that a true, broad picture of the various stakeholder perceptions will not be gained from this project. Another definite limitation stems from the nature of the topic, and the importance it holds to the futures of these individuals. While every effort will be made to create an open, anonymous and free-speaking environment, student-athletes may not feel comfortable volunteering information regarding enforceable sanctions, or an athletic administrator may not be willing to confess to wrongdoings. Also, employees of the athletic department, including coaches may feel the same personal pressures not to disclose incriminating information in front of their peers, a certain issue that was monitored closely by the researcher.

Delimitations

Delimitations include the specific nature of the sample, a selection of five stakeholder groups who hold a vested interest in one athletic department, in an association (NCAA) which governs over 300 Division I-A programs, as well as countless other smaller schools. While the results should provide a glimpse into the nature of
intercollegiate athletics, it is possible, and expected, that different schools will have
different competitive environments with varying atmospheres and leadership styles. Due
to the nature of the study, it cannot be generalized beyond the sample used in the focus
groups, but through rich description it is hoped to overcome this deficiency (Denzin,
1994).

Definition of Terms

The following section contains definitions of the primary terms to be used in this study. They are provided to familiarize the reader with the terminology that is used and referred to throughout this work.

Amateurism. College student-athletes are viewed by the NCAA as amateurs, governed under that associations’ principle of amateurism, which reads:

Student-athletes shall be amateurs in intercollegiate sport, and their participation should be motivated primarily by education and by the physical, mental and social benefits to be derived. Student participation in intercollegiate athletics is an avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises. (NCAA Manual, 2002-2003, p.5)

Athletic Administrators. As formulators of athletic policy, and decision-makers in the leadership of athletic departments, the viewpoints of this group are vital to a discussion regarding the issues at hand. Administrators is a broad term and is meant to include any member of the athletic department, beginning with the Director of Athletics, who makes decisions that impact the future directions of college sports. Included in this group are Associate/Assistant Athletic Directors in compliance, as well as administrators
in marketing/external affairs, internal affairs, communications/sports information and academic support services.

*Athletic Grant-in-Aid.* Student-athletes are limited to the value of a full grant-in-aid in exchange for their participation on an intercollegiate athletic team. A full grant-in-aid is financial aid, paid by the athletic department to the university that consists of tuition and fees, room and board, and required course-related books.

*Coaches.* As employees of the athletic department, these individuals are empowered with the job of balancing the athletic expectations with the academic rigors of their student-athletes. Coaches are in a position where their performance is measured on their competitiveness on the field, which may draw athletes’ emphasis away from academics. Coaches also serve as role models and mentors in the development of their student-athletes. Important to the purpose of this study is the relationship between the athletic department and the rest of the institution of higher education and coaches with varying backgrounds and interests can speak to all three facets of the inquiry. Their salary is supplemented, in some cases dominated by apparel contracts, and their insight into the commercial aspect of college sports is of particular interest. Coaches were selected in the same manner as student-athletes, with diversity between revenue sports and their Olympic counterparts.

*Commercialization.* Athletic departments engage in relationships with commercial entities, ranging from boosters to corporate sponsors to the media as a way to increase revenue in order to subsidize the activities of the athletic department. Zimbalist (1999) stated that commercial connections are the nexus that sustains intercollegiate athletics.
Pertinence of this issue to the overall project lie in the individual interpretation in the boundary segmenting useful arrangements that provide opportunities from an excess of agreements, which threaten the sanctity of intercollegiate athletics and the integrity of the institution housing that athletic department. These partnerships are viewed as commercialization for purposes of this project.

Faculty Members. In order to gain a clearer view of the relationship between the athletic department, and its academic counterparts, the perceptions of two groups of faculty members were gathered and analyzed. These individuals work daily with student-athletes and their experiences with those individuals and the insight they have into the pressurized situation provided a glimpse into the academic side of the athletic department. Their affiliation with the university and its missions and goals offered value to the examination of athletics’ negatively publicized impact on the integrity of higher education.

Over-commercialization. Those commercial connections discussed in commercialization cross the line into over-commercialization when they begin to infringe upon institutional control, undermining support for academics and threatening the athletic values of the intercollegiate athletic department (COIA, 2003). This threshold is different for each person, but the actions that are viewed by a sizable group of individuals were termed over-commercialization for purposes of this study.

Stake. Something of value, some form of capital, human, physical or financial, that is at risk, either voluntarily or involuntarily (Clarkson, 1995).

Stakeholder. Those persons or groups or interests that have a stake, or something to gain or lose as a result of its activities (Clarkson, 1995).
Student-Athletes. As perhaps the closest group to the actions and issues of an intercollegiate athletic department each of the three highlighted topics influences, and/or has influenced student-athletes. These individuals, participating in a variety of sports from revenue-producing football and basketball to Olympic sports such as field hockey and soccer, are the fundamental unit of the athletic department and can call upon their experiences in athletics and in the classroom in building their perceptions. In much of the previous research, their voices have not been heard. This study provided a forum for these student-athletes to espouse their thoughts.

Student-athlete academic support officers. Separate from the administrator(s) who lead this division of the athletic department are individuals who mentor, tutor, and assist student-athletes with the inevitable dilemmas that arise as a college student. While their main focus is on the academic success of their student-athletes, their role expands in some instances to include counseling in a variety of areas including career, relationship and the overall pitfalls of college life. Their impact in this study was predominantly in the area of academic issues and perhaps improprieties, but also provided insight into the thought-processes and developmental issues facing young adults, aged 18-22, who are attempting to balance their academic, athletic, social and personal lives.

Overview of Chapters

In the proceeding pages, investigation of the perceptions of five stakeholder groups, student-athletes, coaches, athletic administrators, faculty members and academic counselors within the athletic department toward three reform issues in intercollegiate athletics (payment of student-athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization in
sport and academic difficulties and improprieties) was undertaken and comprised in the following chapters:

Chapter 1 included an introduction to the issues at hand, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, major research questions, limitations and delimitations of the study and a definition of terms.

Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of the literature pertinent to this study. A discussion will commence reviewing work completed on stakeholder theory, including pieces completed with athletics as the basis for inquiry, history of intercollegiate athletics, and athletic reform needs. Chapter 2 affords the reader with critical background information needed to understand the foundational elements of the study.

Chapter 3 offers a complete description of the methodology to be employed for this study. It includes an overview of the qualitative methodological paradigm framing the inquiry, as well as procedures ensuring trustworthy data, (triangulation), selection of participants, data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 presents and highlights the results of the data collection. Through the use of narratives developed throughout the focus groups and individual interview processes, as well as quantitative findings in the demographic background questionnaire, the voices of the study’s participants will be unveiled and emerging themes will be illustrated.

Finally, Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the results unfurled in the preceding chapter, as well as conclusions and implications of the study. In this chapter, the author drew together the voices from each individual focus group, offering a cross group
analysis pinpointed on the three main research questions dealing with the reform issues.

The fourth question, focusing on the heterogeneity of stakeholder perceptions will also be
interpreted. These findings were related back to the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and offer the researchers’ views regarding the study results. In addition, recommendations and suggestions for further research are discussed.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to put a spotlight on particular stakeholders of an intercollegiate athletic department, particularly their perceptions as they relate to intercollegiate athletic reform. This chapter offers a review of the literature which constitutes the foundation upon which the study will grow. Specifically, the principles of stakeholder theory, its relevance to sport management and this particular project were espoused within the chapter’s pages. In addition to stakeholder theory, a more expansive discussion of intercollegiate athletics, its history, current situation and future directions were raised.

Stakeholder Theory

As the global landscape was changing in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, so was the business mentality of a corporation being focused on delivering returns on investment to their stockholders. What if there were other parties, whose interests needed to be identified and catered to? What if taking into consideration these needs and desires would increase the efficiency and profitability of a company? R. Edward Freeman recognized that everyday managers of corporations the world over were dealing with multiple constituencies, all of which had their own interests in the decisions and
directions of the company or companies they dealt with. In his 1984 book, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, Freeman began a discussion that would not only endure the past twenty years of turbulent and prosperous economic times, but prosper itself to the point of being a prominent discussion topic in management classrooms as well as in casual business discussions.

But, what is a stakeholder, and why is it important for organizations to recognize their interests? Moreover, why should this viewpoint be embraced in the face of numerous management theories depicting organizational processes and concepts? This discussion will attempt to address these questions, and many others from a variety of perspectives, and in a variety of fields. Business literature is ripe with discussions of stakeholder influences on corporate social performance (McGuire, Dow & Argheyd, 2003) to total quality management (Wicks, 2001), and is the undoubted center of attention given toward stakeholder theory. While this examination will include a review of the business literature focused on stakeholder, it will attempt to provide a broader based definition together of the theory itself, so as to gain an understanding of how stakeholder strategies and influences impact education and sport management.

Stakeholders have just recently been identified in scholarly discussions involving these two fields, and there is much more room for study. Educational discussions of stakeholders have mainly revolved around funding issues and redistricting efforts, and sport management efforts from Wolfe and Putler (2002) and Trail and Chelladurai (2000) are the most prominent discussions from sport management scholars. Each of the issues addressed by researchers in these areas will be addressed, as will a look at topics that are
possibilities for stakeholder discussions, and a vision toward how stakeholder theory can be of assistance to understanding management issues in sport management, so as to pique the theoretical and practical interests of sport management constituents.

In short, this discussion will utilize a review of existing literature involving stakeholder management to offer a comprehensive definition of the theory itself. Also, literature bases in business, education and sport management will be reviewed, and a critique of the utilization of stakeholder theory by education and sport management scholars will be offered. Next, the paper will take a look at problems in sport management, and offer insights as to how stakeholder theory can be of assistance in overcoming those dilemmas. Lastly, a vision toward the future of sport management/stakeholder theory research will be offered, with a focus on the practical side of the field of sport management.

History and Background

Corporate missions, and management of those missions, were questions that existed inside each individual organization as the large, modern business enterprise was making its rise in the late 1800’s (Blair, 1998). Discussions as to who the corporation was designed to serve, and who had control over the corporate operations never were matters of the law, but a conscious decision of the managers and owners in charge of directing the firm. As the 20th Century began to unfold, these issues took on more prominence, and questions arose regarding the apparent loss of control by shareholders over the corporations, as the companies grew and the number of shareholders grew. However, in 1919 the law proved with clarity, that corporations were to be run for the benefit of stockholders. In a renowned case, Dodge v. Ford Motor Co., the Michigan
Supreme Court heard, and ruled on a case where the Dodge brothers sued Henry Ford’s company citing that Ford had decided to not offer dividend payments, instead using the money, $58 million, to expand business and lower the price of its products. As shareholders, the Dodge brothers wanted Henry Ford to pay out some of those profits because the shareholders owned the company (Blair, 1998). In their decision, the Court ruled in favor of the stockholders, saying, “A business corporation is organized and carried on primarily for the profit of the stakeholders. The powers of the directors are to be employed for that end” (Allen, p.10).

This system of corporate governance prevailed for the next three generations, the “theory of stockholder primacy” (Clarkson, 1995, p.4) has remained at the forefront of management literature, rising and falling in appeal as economic and social events and climates dictated (Kaysen, 1996; Smith & Dyer, 1996). The 1960’s were ripe with urban crises, the civil rights movement and protests over the Vietnam War, increasing calls for social responsibility. As momentum swayed in that direction, calls for support from leading economists rang loud for the profit-maximizing principle (Friedman, 1970). As the 1970’s melted away, the 1980’s brought concerns about American industry in the face of international competition, from Germany and Europe to Japan and the Far East (Aoki, 1988; Wever, 1995), both countries which embraced the stakeholder ideal and its tenets.

These revelations stirred the American management pot, to the point where stakeholder theory was infused by R. Edward Freeman. In his aforementioned book, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, Freeman took ideas from the writings of Clark (1916) and Dodd (1932), who viewed the corporation in an entirely different light than the Michigan Judiciary. Clark saw business as more than economical
transactions, he was interested in an alteration of the values of business exchanges, a true precursor to the ethical foundation of stakeholder theory. His counterpart E. Merrick Dodd saw corporations as in business for more than the maximization of stockholder profit. He believed that managers should be concerned “with the interests of employees, consumers, and the general public, as well as of stockholders” (p.37). He also heeded Clark’s calls for more ethical behavior in business, discussing social responsibility and its development into an attitude that should pervade all businesses.

From there, Freeman (1984) developed a framework that had a different conception of the firm, one that took into consideration the business’s interaction with all of its constituencies, from customers to employees to government. His work has gained immense popularity in management literature, as there have been over 100 articles and at least a dozen books written about stakeholder theory and its various uses over the past 20 years (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). These writings, both in favor of, and detracting from stakeholder theory will be examined in full, but first a working definition of stakeholders, and stakeholder theory, is in order before this piece can move forward.

What is Stakeholder Theory?

“Stakeholder” has become a common term across businesses and industries, in classrooms and in everyday discussions, but what is a stakeholder? A stake can be defined as something of value, some form of capital, human, physical or financial, that is at risk, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Stakeholders are those persons or groups or interests that have a stake, or something to gain or lose as a result of its activities (Clarkson, 1995). What is key to a discussion on stakeholders is the idea of risk. Risk is
a common thread or element underlying claims, ownership, interests, and legal or moral rights in a corporation and its activities. Stakes are always at risk (Clarkson).

Those parties who bear a risk, or hold a vested interest in the dealings of a business must be accounted for under stakeholder theory. The framework itself provides a classification for the various viewpoints on the relationships a firm has with its various constituencies. It is the duty of the management of these various firms to manage the relationships fostered with the various stakeholder groups, as well as their risks, the reason they are involved with an organization to begin with.

Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1998) offered a proposition that assisted with the identification of stakeholders, as well as reviewing their salience, or degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims. At the foundation of their idea were three relationship attributes that combine to result in various types of stakeholders, as well as demonstrate their importance and to managers of a firm. Classes of stakeholders can be identified by their possession or attributed possession of any of the following three attributes:

1.) *power* to influence a firm;
2.) the *legitimacy* of the stakeholder’s relationship with the firm;
3.) the *urgency* of the stakeholder’s claim on the firm (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, p.276)

With this preliminary view into stakeholder theory, and a brief review of the shareholder approach so prevalent in the early part of the 20th Century recently completed, a review of the key distinctions between the two viewpoints is in order.
Table 2.1, as outlined in Kochan and Rubinstein (2000), is provided below, and offers a brief glimpse inside both competing views of the firm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Shareholder Firm</th>
<th>Stakeholder Firm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal(s)</td>
<td>Maximize stakeholder wealth</td>
<td>Pursue multiple objectives of parties with different interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance Structures and Key Processes</td>
<td>Principal-Agent Model: Managers are agents of shareholders. Control is the key task</td>
<td>Team Production Model: Coordination, cooperation, &amp; conflict resolution are the key tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Metrics</td>
<td>Shareholder value sufficient to maintain investor commitment</td>
<td>Fair distribution of value created to maintain commitment of multiple stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Risk Holders</td>
<td>Shareholders</td>
<td>All stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Salience/Influence</td>
<td>Finance/investor/owners only stakeholder with sufficient power and legitimacy to achieve “definitive” status in governance processes</td>
<td>More than one stakeholder with sufficient power and legitimacy to achieve “definitive” status in governance processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1

*Key Distinctions Between Shareholder and Stakeholder Firms (Kochan & Rubinstein, 2000, p.369)*

Now that a working definition of stakeholders has been established, attention must turn to the numerous viewpoints that have combined over the past 20 years to provide our understanding of the influences stakeholders have on various decision making processes.
Stakeholder Theory Literature

It is certain that the majority of stakeholder literature is housed in business and management literature. Adams, Dodd, Freeman and Clarkson are all management theorists, and their ideas and writings have fostered the growth of stakeholder theory to the point that its prevalence is beginning to cross literature boundaries.

In this review of the literature, those business writings will be given ample attention, but the spotlight will also shine on work done in education, so as to gain a better idea of the utility of stakeholder theory in the education realm. In addition, sport management, a field with underpinnings in both education and management has begun to embrace stakeholder theory as a viable theoretical foundation, not only in scholarship, but also in real-life, practical settings. These works, and examples will be noted and discussed in the proceeding section.

Business

Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1998) offered the proposal of individual stakeholder classification that will be used throughout this paper, but there have been a number of other ways developed to categorize stakeholder groups in an attempt to gain a clearer view of how management can deal with so many constituent groups. The most prominent is Clarkson (1998), in which he viewed stakeholder groups as either voluntary or involuntary, based on their level of awareness of the risks they are incurring. Voluntary stakeholders are those who have chosen to take a stake, and bear some risk in anticipation of some form of gain or increase in value. For example, a shareholder, customer or employee made a conscious decision to enter into a relationship with the firm, and has a vested interest in the outcome of that relationship based on known
information. On the other hand, involuntary stakeholders, such a government entity, local community members and the environment are exposed to the activities of a firm, and invested in its outcomes without having been made aware of the risks inherent as a consequence of that corporation’s activities.

Similarly to the voluntary/involuntary comparison, stakeholders can be identified as either primary or secondary in their relationship with the central firm. Svendsen (1998) identified primary stakeholders as those whose interests have a direct link to the outcomes of the company. Primary stakeholders most often come in the form of shareholders, but can include customers of the firm, employees, suppliers, residents of the communities where the company operates and the natural environment (Svendsen). Secondary stakeholders are those who can only indirectly influence the activities of a corporation or who are less directly affected by the firms operations. These groups are not directly engaged in transactions with the organization and are not essential for the survival of the firm. Examples of secondary stakeholders include the media and groups such as activist groups, who attempt to pressure an organization into a decision through lobbying.

As has been evidenced thus far, there are a number of varying viewpoints about how stakeholder theory looks, how it influences managers, and how firms influence the individual stakeholder groups. With that being said, stakeholders have been defined for purposes of this review as those persons or groups or interests that have a stake, or something to gain or lose as a result of the activities of a corporation (Clarkson, 1995).

Before entering into further discussion regarding the various viewpoints of stakeholder theory, Figure 2.1 is offered as a visual representation of the model. This
figure, as proposed by Donaldson and Preston (1995), offers a solid view of the
relationships that occur between the firms and those who bear risk in the firm’s activities.
An important aspect of the proposed model is the two-way relationship exhibited between
the firm and the various stakeholders. As opposed to the one-way views of other
organizational theories such as Agency Theory (Ross, 1973), Freeman and other
stakeholder scholars demonstrate the practical orientation of the theory.

![Stakeholder Model Diagram](image)

*Figure 2.1. The stakeholder model of the corporation (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p.177)*

Stakeholder theory is in place as a framework describing managerial
relationships, and the decisions made to foster those relationships. Beyond describing
current situations or predicting outcomes arising from various decisions, it leads to best practices, procedures and attitudes needed to overcome various situations.

As stakeholder theorists continue to develop their ideas, it has become apparent that the focus in on the establishment and fostering of stakeholder relationships (Svendsen, 1998). Understanding which relationships are important, those that are of marginal importance, and some that are of no importance is vital to the efficient management of an organization. In continuing their discussion of stakeholder typology, Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1998) translated their discussion of stakeholders beyond power, legitimacy and urgency to a model which offers a glimpse into the inter-relationships between these three attributes, and their influence on stakeholder importance (Figure 2.2).
Freeman (1984) took a different approach in developing a means by which to identify the salience of stakeholder groups. Using a stakeholder grid, Freeman used power and stake as the two axes supporting his matrix. A stakeholder group’s stake was divided into three sections, equity, economic and influencers, diminishing in relevance through the three. Likewise, power was divvied up into three sections, formal or voting, economic, and political, also moving down in power throughout the three sections. The relationship a stakeholder had with a firm was then compared to the nine positions, and

Figure 2.2. Stakeholder typology: One, two or three attributes present (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1998, p.298)
were slotted into position. Table 2.2 is a representation given by Freeman in his seminal work in 1984.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power Stake</th>
<th>Formal or Voting</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Political</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Stockholders</td>
<td>Suppliers</td>
<td>Dissident Stockholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>Debt Holders</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minority Interests</td>
<td>Customers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
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<td>Local Governments</td>
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<td>Foreign Governments</td>
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<td>Consumer Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencers</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Nader's Raiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEC Outside</td>
<td>OSHA</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trade Associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2. “Real World” Stakeholder Grid (Freeman, 1984, p.63)

Since the concept of stakeholders is still in the evolution stage (Svendsen, 1998), and there is little agreement as who (or what) are the stakeholders of the firm (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1998), many concepts are explained and used by various authors in very different ways and supported with diverse, and often contradictory evidence and arguments (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). As a way to attempt to overcome this “scattered” work focused on stakeholders, Donaldson and Preston formulated a summarization of stakeholder theory that has been oft reviewed, and equally discussed by other scholars reviewing this theoretical framework. In their work, Donaldson and Preston conceptualized stakeholder theory through three different aspects, descriptive, instrumental and normative. In their description of their ideas, the authors sought to legitimize stakeholder theory as more than a description of those participants in a firm’s activities, but rather realize that those participants are seeking multiple, and often
incongruent purposes (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Next is a brief synopsis of the three different aspects, as well as example of each type within the stakeholder literature.

**Descriptive/Empirical Theory**

This aspect of stakeholder theory is a reflection of the past, present and future state of affairs of corporations and their stakeholders. As part of the descriptive facet, simple description is common and desirable in the exploration of new areas and usually expands to generate explanations and predictions for the future of a firm’s stakeholder relationships and everyday operations. Examples of descriptive use in stakeholder literature are depictions of the nature of the firm (Brenner & Cochran, 1991) and a look at stakeholder theory through the lens of the organizational life cycle (Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001).

**Instrumental Theory**

Studies using this type of stakeholder theory utilize empirical data to create connections, or demonstrate a lack thereof, between the practice of stakeholder management and the achievement of any number of organizational goals, including profitability. Use of the instrumental approach often fails to uncover specific cause and effect relationships in detail, but some definitions of stakeholders, including that from Freeman (1984) which sees a stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives” lend themselves to the instrumental philosophy. A primary area of study within the stakeholder literature that utilizes this perspective is corporate social responsibility (Cochran & Wood, 1984; Preston & Sapienza, 1990).
Normative Theory

Under normative guidelines, stakeholder theory is used to interpret the function of the corporation, including the identification of moral or philosophical guidelines for the operation and management of corporations. To meet these guidelines, the normative aspect involves two different ideas:

First, stakeholders are persons or groups with legitimate interests in numerous aspects of corporate activity, regardless of whether the organization is interested in developing relationships with them; and

Second, all stakeholder interests hold intrinsic value. Each individual stakeholder attempts to develop a relationship with the firm for its own personal good, rather than for any altruistic rationale, or to further the interests of any other salient stakeholder group.

As far as normative research is concerned, the relationship between theory and practice is irrelevant. Instead, normative theory uses moral or ethical principles to offer insight into the corporation. This ethical undertone has driven a large percentage of stakeholder discussion in the literature, and is another primary distinction between stakeholder theory and its shareholder primacy brethren. One example, by Kochan and Rubinstein (2000) focused on Saturn, a car manufacturer with a business plan focused on empowering its employees, recognizing their importance to the profitability of the organization. Saturn’s mission, governance structure and internal processes mimic those of a stakeholder firm, permitting employees to use their knowledge to improve organizational performance. Union and company leaders worked together to formulate a union where power could be shared and efficiency could be maximized. Similar efforts are underway in other corporations, but Saturn, with its roots in the General Motors
family is a high-profile example, and one that took time to establish legitimacy of those stakeholder groups, but has turned out to be head-turner across industries.

As part of this normative discussion, stakeholder theory has been viewed as an ethical framework, a view of the business world aside from the profit-generating focus of shareholder primacy (Clarkson, 1998). While every stakeholder of a firm is motivated to be in a relationship with the organization by intrinsic rewards, the foundation of the theory is built upon morals and ethical behavior (Jones & Wicks, 1999). These fundamental aspects have driven stakeholder research to move toward discussions of social responsibility and obligation(s) an organization holds toward their stakeholders.

Drawing a connection between stakeholder theory and this obligation of moral decisions has established a further association between the terms justification and fair play, which are common within various studies of ethics. An obligation is a moral requirement generated by the performance of some voluntary act (Phillips & Reichart, 2000). Stakeholder theory dictates that a degree of moral consideration above and beyond what is due to all humans is a necessity to maintain status as a stakeholder (Phillips & Reichart). Because of the added emphasis placed on ethical actions taken by corporations and their employees, many organizations have developed ethical codes of conduct emphasizing the need for fairness and justification (Svendsen, 1998).

Much like other aspects of stakeholder theory, the emphasis placed on corporate social responsibility wavers between two extremes: one that determines the organization’s responsibility to the obtainment of profit for its shareholders; and the other that extends the firm’s accountability to a wide range of actors holding an interest in the firm. The competing viewpoints between social responsibility and organizational
economics is one that will continue to evolve, as stakeholder theory develops, and broader and clearer utilities of the theory are constructed and tested.

One area of stakeholder theory that is full of discussion is that between divergent and convergent stakeholder theory. This issue, the important points, and future possibilities will be addressed in the next section.

Divergent vs. Convergent Stakeholder Theory

One area of stakeholder that is constantly being discussed and debated is whether the three aspects of stakeholder theory should remain as individual ideas and foci, or whether there are commonalities between the various viewpoints, where a comprehensive, overarching picture of stakeholder theory can be taken. In much of management theory and literature there is a line of thinking that calls for consensus and agreement as it pertains to an organizational theory and its use in research and in real-life situations. These forces have combined and led to a spirited discussion between a number of scholars, focused on the typology offered by Donaldson and Preston (1995). The following sections will outline the two factions, their thoughts, ideas and rationales for those beliefs.

Divergent stakeholder theory. The discussion of normative stakeholder theory outlined briefly the diverging thoughts of stakeholder scholars, with one faction seeing the stakeholder framework as a potential foundation for the growth of social science-based research, and the other seeing stakeholder theory for all of its moral principles, describing a class of narrative accounts in an umbrella-type fashion. This viewpoint, of many parts to a theoretical framework, without any substance holding the different parts
together is one very different than is generally accepted in management theory (Wicks & Freeman, 1998).

Freeman (1999), in his view of the development of a divergent stakeholder theory called for more instrumental theories, which draw linkages between theory and practice. His view is that instrumental perspectives are the area of stakeholder theory that has the most room for growth, and they add to the divergent nature of the framework by allowing for a multitude of different avenues of scholarship. Supporters of divergent stakeholder theory question the foundation upon which the convergent theory is predicated, Donaldson and Preston (1995) theses focused on three types of theory; normative, instrumental and descriptive. Trevino and Weaver (1999) question whether there is a true instrumental or descriptive theory to compare, contrast and integrate with the normative view. They continue on to argue that stakeholder theory, as a theory, constricts scholars as they try to pigeonhole their work under the umbrella of that framework. Instead, Trevino and Weaver call for a stakeholder research tradition, opening up the avenues for study, utilizing the stakeholder ideals in a wide variety of manners, optimizing its use.

Proponents of the divergent path are in search of many of the same things as their convergent counterparts, but are looking to take a diverse path to reach those ends. Attempting to bridge gaps from the normative view to other empirical visions is very difficult. From a normative perspective it is important to understand, and argue for that matter that attention to multiple stakeholders is the best path for moral reasons, but to attempt to accommodate each and every demand from those constituencies, and do it under one single framework is a gargantuan, and ultimately, impossible task, so argue divergent theorists.
Convergent stakeholder theory. On the other side of the coin are those who are searching for a way to combine the various aspects of stakeholder theory under one broad framework, and these individuals are not alone in their attempts. Perhaps the most intriguing question evident in the stakeholder literature is whether a broad conceptual view of stakeholder theory can be established, holding together all of the facets and views comprising the framework (Donaldson, 1999). Jones and Wicks (1999) offered one of the original pieces addressing this topic, one that has seen momentum grow for diverging viewpoints, basic theories. In their piece, Jones and Wicks outlined their thoughts that either of the emergent forms of stakeholder theory, one based on moral principles, the other focusing on the empirical identification of stakeholder desires can not be considered complete without the other form to complement and support it. Their view is a hybrid theory unifying the tenets supporting the three types of stakeholder theory.

As defense of their stance, Jones and Wicks (1999) concluded “that the shared values and shared understandings driving stakeholder research render fundamentally incomplete any theory that is either exclusively normative or exclusively instrumental” (p.210). Social science research is not being pursued efficiently if there are only narrative accounts available, the staple of descriptive/empirical work. Likewise, morally supported studies are lacking if they are solely focused on meeting those ethical standards, because the source of that morality within firms has not been settled (Jones & Wicks). Weaver and Trevino (1994) called for parallel development of the normative and empirical approaches, which would permit for the sharing of interest, as well as for what they termed symbiosis. Symbiosis would require both aspects to draw from each other, while retaining their distinct values and directions.
One of the main criticisms of convergent stakeholder theory is its strong normative foundation, so normative some critics argue, that it does not allow for a solid view of the framework and its many parts (Gioia, 1999). Irregardless of convergent defenders calls that the normative aspects are offset by the focus of being practically viable, Freeman (1999) and others believe that convergent stakeholder theory is collapsing the three varied aspects into one theory, eliminating the possibility for broader research topics, examining the depth to which stakeholder theory can address various management issues.

Sport Management

As a very young field of inquiry, sport management has a limited literature base, and the literature base that exists is focused on the correction of various ails of the sport industry. Commercialization, gender and race issues, leadership and other basic management principles have been at the center of many sport management research pieces. Only recently has there been a move to include commonly-accepted management theories into those studies. Stakeholder theory, the basis of this discussion has not received very much attention as a theory, per se, but those stakeholders who are influenced by the actions of a particular sporting event or sport organization have seen the lion’s share of the attention. For the most part, these articles have placed a focus on
the descriptive or empirical nature of stakeholder theory, but some sociological issues approached in a few studies have moved stakeholder theory into the area of stakeholder most commonly referenced in the business literature.

To offer a glimpse into stakeholder theory within sport management, a few of the topics and issues viewed in various sport management periodicals have been included. A common topic is the under-representation of females in sports, but particularly intercollegiate athletic departments (Lee, Barr & Wolfe, 2002), impact of various sport events and facilities on the stakeholders of a community (Mason & Slack, 1997; Mason, 2002) and various issues impacting intercollegiate athletics (Trail & Chelladurai, 2002). Sociological changes sought by many scholars focusing on gender and race issues, and to an extent intercollegiate reform have made a move past the empirical motives of stakeholder theory, to the normative, or moral viewpoint. For example, Lee, Barr and Wolfe (2002) offered work investigating the influence that gender has on stakeholders of an intercollegiate athletic department. While there is perhaps an influence of this issue on the profitability of an athletic department, the primary issue and focus of the article was tilted toward doing the right thing, which in this case is the leveling of the gender playing field in athletics at the college level. The need for more of these studies will be examined in detail later in this stakeholder discussion.

Wolfe and Putler (2002) published perhaps the most business-oriented piece related to sport management in their attempt to identify the stakeholder ties that combine various groups to the firm. Their empirical application to intercollegiate athletics investigated the priorities held by numerous stakeholder groups toward the activities of an athletic department. Intercollegiate athletic reform is another hot issue within sport
management, and Wolfe and Putler’s study took on seven factors identified as important in determining stakeholder perceptions of an athletic department, they included: success on the field, student-athlete education, athletic program ethics, interest in athletics from community, gender equity, breadth of program offerings and the extent to which an athletic program is self-supporting. Their research worked on both sides of the normative/empirical divide, as it was interested in the perceptions various groups had toward. While still quite descriptive in its analysis, this normative-tilt is somewhat unique to sport management, and needs to be addressed in further studies, beyond intercollegiate athletics. Other articles that would hold normative foundations would attempt to address issues which attempt to understand the function of the corporation, or sport organization. Suggestions for further sport management changes as they pertain to stakeholder theory are forthcoming. Next is a look at the stakeholder theory research in education, which faces a situation with limited theoretical based literature similar to sport management.

Part II – What is Stakeholder Theory?

At the beginning of this paper, a preliminary definition of stakeholder theory was offered as a starting point for the proceeding discussion. Now, as definitions, and discussions, and arguments have abounded from business and sport management, what is our understanding of stakeholder theory? What is a definition that can capture the preceding sections and often varying viewpoints? For starters, stakeholder theory, framework, management or viewpoints has a solid foundation in the management literature, and has only been used as a model, sans the theoretical forces driving that model in the other fields.
Sport management is, as the name suggests, business within the sport industry, but due to its relatively young age as a field of study, has yet to develop a literature base solid enough to delve into organizational theories such as stakeholder theory or agency theory or resource-based view of the firm to a great extent. Because of its similar base to the management literature, the leap from the attributes offered by Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1998), or Donaldson and Preston (1995) to sports organizations should not be a large one.

For the most part, public education has taken just a piece of the theory, here and there, to help better understand the multiple constituencies, and their needs and desires of the educational system. School redistricting, school funding, the development of community or collaborative schools all have forced manager or decision-makers in those areas to focus their attention on “stakeholders”, but not the theory itself. In the view of divergent stakeholder theorists, this example of the framework’s use demonstrates its utility, furthering their argument that there is no need for a glue to hold together the various pieces of stakeholder theory, that the sum of its parts is more useful than one large, overarching view.

Stakeholders, as defined by Clarkson (1998) to be those persons or groups or interests that have a stake, or something to gain or lose as a result of its activities are the focus of this theory, a change in mindset for businesspeople, and those scholars who study the tactics used to maximize profit of those organizations. Stakeholder theorists are interested in the relationships developed between organizations and those parties with vested interests in their activities. In education, an interested stakeholder may be a parent of children in a school district that will be altered, and that student will now have to go to
school on a bus, or at a different time, or at a less-renowned school. Stakeholder theory is generally thought to bring an ethical or moral set of values to the business table, moving decision makers beyond the maximization of profits for investors, and on to meeting the needs of those various constituencies, even if it costs the corporation a few thousand dollars.

Intercollegiate Athletics

Cultural significance of intercollegiate athletics in America is unlike any other country in the world. United States university athletics hold a unique history in higher education in this country. Because of this unique history, and partly influencing it, there has been a constant struggle to define the role of athletics within the university governance, as well as a tug-of-war relationship between athletics and academics. East Coast colleges, such as Harvard and Yale were designed to uphold similar traditions and values of their English counterparts, Oxford and Cambridge (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). Higher education was meant to better American society, through knowledge and innovation, with mainly practical purposes driving decisions. For instance, the Morrill Act of 1862 provided access for colleges focusing on agriculture, industry and business driving the development of our nation’s state university systems (www.britannica.com).

As time moved on student recreational needs developed, providing the impetus behind sports’ rise on college campuses. As the 19th Century approached its conclusion, football and baseball games were prevalent, but so were calls of improprieties and questionable practices. Included in these problematic actions were non-students and coaches participating in games, payments to participants for their services and students enrolling in classes only during their competitive seasons (Wilson & Brondfield, 1967).
Shortly after 1900 football took on a violent face with numerous deaths and serious injuries prompting President Theodore Roosevelt to call for the founding of the IAAUS, or Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States, a predecessor to the current day athletic governing body, the NCAA.

College sports continued to prosper, causing college presidents to embrace the activities on the field as they attracted students and donors, the two revenue streams vital to university survival (Chu, 1985). Successful teams created a sense of unity, not only on campus, but also within the surrounding community, further entrenching intercollegiate athletics as a vital piece of the higher educational foundation. In the 1920’s athletics received greater acceptance on college campuses with the development of physical education curricula and the housing of many athletic programs within the department (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). Some coaches were given physical education faculty appointments in addition to their coaching duties adding to the entrenchment of athletics within the academic landscape.

Even as this relationship between athletics and the rest of the university was building, there were intensifying efforts by college presidents to control the burgeoning growth of athletics. University of Michigan President James Burrill Angell attempted to corral Michigan football by imposing rules on shortened seasons and coaches as full-time university employees, a move supported by the Big Ten. Fielding Yost, UM’s football coach rebelled and eventually the Board of Regents voted to exit the Big Ten, so Michigan football, and Yost would be satisfied (Byers, 1995).

Many universities used athletics as a means to garner national prominence, creating corruption within athletic departments in the process. For example, the
University of Houston strived to compete with its fellow Texas universities in Austin and College Station, using athletics as its meal ticket. It went from a junior college in 1927 to the Cotton Bowl as a member of the Southwestern Conference in 1977, while running large athletic deficits (3.4 million dollars in 1982) and creating a rift within its student body, who protested increased fees to subsidize the athletic budget.

Corruption in college athletics was rampant, creating the need for the Sanity Code of 1948, a national academic and financial aid rule adopted to clean up college sports (www.ncaa.org). After two years of failed enforcement, the Sanity Code was repealed, leading to more uncontrolled growth and questions. Eventually, in 1956, athletics grants-in-aid, or scholarships were established in an attempt to eliminate the common practice of booster payments to athletes (Zimbalist, 1999). Rules enforcement followed in 1957, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) began on an explosive ride of growth, culminating today in multi-million dollar contracts for coaches, multi-billion dollar television contracts, and multiple questions regarding the sanctity and honesty of college sports (Byers, 1995).

In 1929, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching published a landmark study questioning university presidents for their inability to defend the integrity of higher education. However, little was done, as evidenced by the aforementioned brief history, and the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics was formed in the late 1980’s in the face of loud calls for reform and fears that intercollegiate athletics was draining the public trust from American universities (Knight Foundation, 1999). A. Bartlett Giamatti, former president of Yale and Commissioner of Baseball, wrote a book critically addressing the need for reform in college sports. In A Free and
Ordered Space, he said, “Athletic programs of a certain king are so visible, such surrogates for their institutions, that those programs do get the public’s attention…What was allowed to become a circus – college sports – threatens to become the means whereby the public believes the whole enterprise is a sideshow” (p.75)

After their years of work, the Knight Commission made a number of proposals in their 1991 report titled Keeping Faith with the Student-Athlete: A New Model for Intercollegiate Athletics. Their model, the “one-plus-three” model focused on three different areas of intercollegiate athletics, while calling for control of athletics to fall to university presidents. The three areas: academic integrity, financial integrity and independent certification of intercollegiate athletic departments became the foundation for a number of reform issues, most of which were supported and adopted by members of the NCAA.

Two other reports were published prior to the dissolution of the Knight Commission in 1996. A Solid Start: A Report on Reform of Intercollegiate Athletics came in 1992, and was a look back at the previous year’s response from the NCAA to the commissions’ findings. A New Beginning for a New Century: Intercollegiate Athletics in the United States was a second review, containing further proposals based on the current state of athletics on campus. By 1993, two-thirds of the Knight Commission’s specific recommendations had been endorsed by the NCAA (Knight Foundation, 1999).

Much attention has been paid to the role athletics plays in an American institution of higher education, with some sociological works completed that honed in on the topics stressed for this study. The level of focus in these studies have varied, for instance, some articles are honed in on more issue-specific pieces like those focused on the faculty’s role
in college athletic reform (Frey, 1987; Atwell, 1991; Sperber, 1991; Weistart, 1991; Sacken, 1992). This was an area within the sport sociology literature that was ripe with efforts made by faculty members to generate a call to action. Perceptions of the faculty in this study will be examined to determine if these calls were heeded. Other issues addressed within various works are NCAA violations (Baxter, Margavio & Lambert, 1996; Padilla & Baumer, 1994), gender issues (Pastore & Meacci, 1995; Sabo, 1998) and economics and commercialization (Padilla & Boucher, 1988; Padilla & Baumer, 1994; Wenner, 1994). Intercollegiate athletics has held a strong place in the sport management and sport sociology journals. Within those journals, many authors such as Andre and James (1991), Eitzen (1986, 1992), Frey (1986), Maloney and McCormick (1992) and Sack (1987) have taken time to investigate the role intercollegiate athletics play in college life, and in the lives of student-athletes. Reform of the current system of athletics has been called for by popular authors such as Sperber (1990, 2000), Boyer (1985) and Santomier and Cautilli (1985) with the majority of their emphasis being placed on the capitalistic mentality of intercollegiate athletic administrators and its crippling, or potentially crippling effect on higher education.

Duderstadt (2000) provided a much acclaimed, broad overview of the current situation in college sports, as well as avenues to be taken to reform the situation. In a discussion given at the 2003 North American Society for Sport Management Convention, Dr. Ted Leland, athletics director at Stanford University referenced his views of the future needs of this industry. He discussed a necessary move in mindset from big business to academic by athletic departments, or the popularity of college athletics will erode as it moves closer to their professional sport brethren.
Additional work focused on intercollegiate athletics includes Beyer and Hannah (2000) who addressed athletics’ role in a higher educational institution utilizing a culture as the foundational assessment point. Boyer (1985) cited previous work done by the Carnegie Foundation, which attempted to pinpoint problem areas in intercollegiate athletics back in the first half of the 20th Century. Many of his reform ideas focus on the effect on other higher education facets, such as the student body, and wear and tear on the student-athletes bodies.

Many of the authors discuss the business and profit mentality of athletic departments, attempting to address its issues using sociological paradigms. Understanding how the athletic department affects other important pieces of the higher educational puzzle is important, as these pieces lack the organizational theory foundation from which decisions are made by administrators leading their departments and college sports into the troubles that reformists are calling upon for change. Stern (1979) attempted to address the loose structures holding the various portions of the athletic system (i.e. NCAA and member institutions) together. His move toward the development of a network focused on inter-organizational control and worked to find a workable situation for athletics within the sport landscape. Organizational theories are important as a foundation for studies within the sport industry because the business activities undertaken by sport organizations involve these theories, using their tenets to inform the decision making processes and strategies formalized.

shifted the thinking to the “home turf” of the athletic department in an effort to view the issues facing this industry from their perspective. These “new” avenues to this problem area of sports have prompted this study, but what about this avenue, stakeholder theory, is new and why is it important to the discussion at hand?

*New Avenue into Intercollegiate Athletics Reform – Stakeholder Theory*

Corporate visions have, for a long time, centered around the maximization of profit for the stockholders who have invested capital, which has in turn enabled the business to function. In his seminal piece, Freeman (1984) questioned this single way of thinking, supported by so many for so long, but ignored the external parties who formed the foundation for a given company’s profitability. Freeman (1984) “hoped to offer a method” to managers that would help them “…to begin to understand their environment systematically and to begin to manage it in a positive proactive manner” (p.4).

These environments, full of organizational stakeholders, are “persons or groups that have or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present, or future” (Clarkson, 1995, p.106). Broadening the view of organizational effectiveness to include these multiple constituencies with vested interests has taken root in much of the management literature, and has received interest from managers looking for a way to maximize the capabilities of their organizations (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Frooman, 1999).
Figure 2.3 provides a glimpse at Freeman’s (1984) view of stakeholder theory, tailored to fit a basic intercollegiate athletic department:

![Stakeholder View Diagram](image)

*Figure 2.3. Stakeholder view of an intercollegiate athletic department (Adopted from Freeman, 1984, p.35).*

Stakeholder theory is malleable and can be viewed in a broad or narrow sense, depending on what is deemed important by the researcher, scholar or businessperson. Broad definitions include any person or group who “can affect the achievement of an organization’s objectives or who is affected by the achievement of an organization’s objectives” (Freeman & Reed, 1983, p.91). More narrow definitions pinpoint stakeholder groups, as Clarkson (1994) did by terming stakeholders as voluntary or involuntary,
based upon their risk in an organization’s activities. Narrower views of the theory are generally based upon the reality that resources are finite and limited, from money to time to manpower, external constraints place barriers around the breadth of a given foundation’s stakeholders.

Stakeholder theory finds it roots in corporate social responsibility, and has strong ethical ties, as the trust and cooperation between firm and stakeholder must be developed in order to maximize the relationship between the two parties. Moving away from the singular view of profit to a more diverse and dynamic approach of managing relationships with stakeholders, realizing their importance to the productivity of a firm places the central cog in the stakeholder view displayed above in a difficult situation.

There are numerous groups whose relationships must be cultivated, and needs and desires catered to, but these parties often have conflicting interests creating difficulty for managers of those organizations.

It is this conflict of interests that makes the easiest use of stakeholder theory with an intercollegiate athletic department. There are boosters, coaches, fans and others who are demanding that money be spent to gain a competitive advantage, leading to success on the field, and ultimately to success on the bottom line. On the other side of the discussion are faculty members, university trustees, perhaps students, and some student-athletes who wish to have athletics act as a complement to the academic mission, diminishing the importance on multi-million dollar contracts and facility constructions. Stakeholder theory provides a base, an accepted paradigm to follow in the discussion of athletic reform. In this study, five stakeholder groups; student-athletes, faculty members, coaches, athletic department administrators, and academic support officers of the athletic
department came together in separate focus group settings to outline their views and thoughts as a constituency of the athletic department, one with a strong vested interest in the direction and vision of intercollegiate athletics. Much of the work completed thus far on intercollegiate athletics has been of the quantitative variety, with nearly none constructed to capture the essence of college sports as it is now. This study addressed three issues in particular, but covered a wide swath of the issues facing the college sports industry. Those topics of inquiry included the payment of college athletes above the athletics grant-in-aid they presently receive, the boom in commercialization that college athletics has faced in the past 20 years, and academic improprieties and problems of student-athletes.

Stakeholder Groups

Due to the vast number of constituencies influenced by the workings of an athletic department, this study could only address the perceptions of five groups. Below is a description of those five stakeholder groups (student-athletes, coaches, athletic administrators, faculty members and student-athlete academic support officer).

Student-Athletes

As perhaps the closest group to the actions and issues of an intercollegiate athletic department each of the three highlighted topics influences, and/or has influenced student-athletes. These individuals, participating in a variety of sports from revenue-producing football and basketball to Olympic sports such as field hockey and soccer, are the fundamental unit of the athletic department and can call upon their experiences in
athletics and in the classroom in building their perceptions. In much of the previous research, their voices have not been heard. This study provided a forum for these student-athletes to espouse their thoughts.

For this study two focus groups were organized, investigating the student-athletes views of the issues at hand. One of focus groups enlisted student-athletes who participate on revenue-producing teams (i.e. football, men’s & women’s basketball and men’s hockey), while the other group will entail student-athletes who are a part of a non-revenue or Olympic sport squad that does not produce enough revenue to positively impact the bottom line of an athletic department. These groups were represented because the division between teams that make money, and teams that lose money is a rift created by the media and propagated by vast public interest. They were divided up in an effort to examine whether there is a disparity between views, which addresses the fourth research question dealing with stakeholder group heterogeneity. Discussions surrounding the issues at hand, payment of athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization and academic improprieties and difficulties generally surround athletes on revenue-producing teams, and the study was performed, in part, to determine any differences in viewpoints that may occur within stakeholder groups, including student-athletes.

Faculty Members

Faculty members play one of the most vital roles on campus, to interact with, educate and mentor young adults interested in knowledge and searching for a direction in life. These interactions and the knowledge and experiences that result, move to the heart of this study and the many reform issues that swirl around intercollegiate athletics. One group of faculty were selected because of their knowledge of and interest in sport and
physical activity, and resulting proximity to the goals and themes of the athletic department. Due to their chosen field of research and teaching, these individuals are more apt than others on campus to come into contact with student-athletes and it was hoped a division could be drawn between those with a professional love for sport and physical activity and the other faculty members on campus.

In an effort to expand the view of faculty member perceptions, a second focus group will be organized of faculty members with very little or no sport background professionally. These group members had very little knowledge of the athletic department, its programs and overall goals, creating a knowledge gap between them and the more sport-savvy faculty members. Again, a keen interest was placed on the possible heterogeneity of responses and discussion avenues that arose over the course of the group session.

Coaches

As employees of the athletic department, these individuals are empowered with the job of balancing the athletic expectations with the academic rigors of their student-athletes. Coaches are in a position where their performance is measured on their competitiveness on the field, which may draw athletes’ emphasis away from academics. Coaches also serve as role models and mentors in the development of their student-athletes. Important to the purpose of this study was the relationship between the athletic department and the rest of the institution of higher education and coaches with varying backgrounds and interests can speak to all three facets of the inquiry. Their salary is supplemented, in some cases dominated by apparel contracts, and their insight into the commercial aspect of college sports is of particular interest. Coaches were selected in the
same manner as student-athletes, with diversity between revenue sports and their non-revenue or Olympic counterparts. One focus group was formulated by revenue-producing coaches (head or assistant), while the other housed the ideas and perceptions of the head coaches only of the various non-revenue sports

**Athletic Administrators**

As formulators of athletic policy, and decision-makers in the leadership of athletic departments, the viewpoints of this group are vital to a discussion regarding the issues at hand. Administrators is a broad term and is meant to include any member of the athletic department, beginning with the Director of Athletics, who makes decisions that impact the future directions of college sports. Included in this group are Associate/Assistant Athletic Directors in compliance, as well as administrators in marketing/external affairs, internal affairs, communications/sports information and academic support services. One focus group was set aside for athletic administrators to speak upon a subject near to their profession. It was anticipated that because each department within the larger athletic department has a different goal and possibly, viewpoint on the issues being discussed in this study, administrators agreeing to serve in this study would constitute a broad sample of athletic department roles. To gain the opinions of a wide variety of administrators provided insight into the missions of the various areas, and those individuals who make decisions that influence commercialization, academic issues and possibly the payment of college athletes.

**Student Athlete Academic Support Officers**

Separate from the administrator(s) who lead this division of the athletic department are individuals who mentor, tutor, and assist student-athletes with the
inevitable dilemmas that arise as a college student. While their main focus is on the academic success of their student-athletes, their role expands in some instances to include counseling in a variety of areas including career, relationship and the overall pitfalls of college life. Their impact in this study was predominantly in the area of academic issues and perhaps improprieties, but will also provided insight into the thought-processes and developmental issues facing young adults, aged 18-22, who are attempting to balance their academic, athletic, social and personal lives. Similar to the athletic administrator format, one separate focus group was reserved for the student-athlete academic support officers, to sit down and discuss their views of the payment of student-athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization issues in college sports and academic difficulties and improprieties faced from time-to-time by these academic counselors.

Included is a table that provides a visual representation of the stakeholder groups involved in the study, the number of group members to be present for each session, and the prime areas of interest or insight looked upon from these groups (Table 1).

Reform Issues

There has been a lot of progress made toward athletic reform, however, a number of changes remain prevalent. Issues involving amateurism, athletic department governance, college sport economics, personal development of student-athletes, payment of student-athletes, commercialism and the issue of academic improprieties and difficulties remain as problem areas. As a matter of course for this study, possible payment of student-athletes, college sport economics and commercialization and recent academic issues faced by athletic departments will be briefly discussed, so as to provide a background for understanding as this discussion continues.
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Table 2.3

*Stakeholder Table of Study Participants*
Amateurism. College student-athletes are viewed by the NCAA as amateurs, governed under that associations’ principle of amateurism, which reads:

Student-athletes shall be amateurs in intercollegiate sport, and their participation should be motivated primarily by education and by the physical, mental and social benefits to be derived. Student participation in intercollegiate athletics is an avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises. (NCAA Manual, 2002-2003, p.5)

This principle, above all others, has been challenged by opponents of the current “business mentality” system of intercollegiate athletics. Sack and Staurowsky (1998), Sperber (1990, 2000), Zimbalist (1999) and Andre and James (1991) are just a few scholars who see intercollegiate athletics as an institution moving far past the “physical, mental and social benefits” described by the NCAA.

Amateurism is a product of England, where amateur competitions were necessary for the entertainment of the upper class. Entrants were eligible to compete if they had not received any public or prize money, and if they were not mechanics, artisans or other lower class individuals who were not permitted to compete at such high level affairs (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). Today, student-athletes are permitted gift allowances and meal money as part of their athletic grant-in-aid, an issue to be discussed in proceeding sections.

Payment of student athletes. In response to these growing arguments against the amateurism ideal, discussions from the national media to scholarly pieces have talked about the idea of payment of student-athletes for their services rendered. Currently, a full athletic grant-in-aid subsidizes tuition and fees, room, board and books; a package that
ranges from $5000 to $35,000 a year, depending on type of institution and whether the
tuition is in- or out-of-state (Byers, 1995). Insurance coverage is included (as is
catastrophic injury insurance) an addition in the past two decades after a couple of
athletes, including Kent Waldrep of Texas Christian University, were severely injured on
the field, and fought the NCAA rulings that injuries incurred were not the responsibility
of the NCAA (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998).

Supporters of the payment of college athletes cite the last line of the amateurism
ideal as listed by the NCAA, which speaks about the protection of exploitation from
commercial and professional enterprises (NCAA Manual, 2002-2003). Sales of officially
licensed athletic department merchandise can reach into the millions of dollars, and while
jerseys cannot have the name of a particular player printed on them, the numbers and
availability of uniforms at certain points is clearly exploitation (Zimbalist, 1999). In
1995, according to a NCAA survey, the average Division I-A school earned
approximately $700,000 in licensing income, with the higher-profile schools earning
more (Zimbalist). Michigan earned $6 million in licensing revenue after reaching the
regional finals in the NCAA men’s basketball tournament in 1994, while Nebraska took
in more than $3 million after winning back-to-back football national championships.
Also, it is estimated by Collegiate Licensing Company that approximately two dozen
schools earn annual licensing income above $1 million, and university logo product sales
reached around $2 billion in 1995, and remained relatively steady throughout the
remainder of the 1990s.

Athletes are increasingly being recruited from disadvantaged backgrounds.
Supporters of payment plans cite these individuals’ inability to cover living expenses
with the money provided by the university (Thornton, 2003). Following this line of thinking, these athletes are stretched thin financially and will seek other sources of income, such as gambling or payments from boosters in order to pay for food or buy other necessities. These payments are illegal, according to NCAA guidelines, and only play to the argument of uncontrolled corruption within the walls of athletic departments.

In legislative efforts to challenge the current amateurism ideals, the state legislature of Nebraska has passed resolutions that would permit remuneration to student-athletes in exchange for their services rendered on the playing field. Legislative Bill 688 was introduced by Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers, a long-time proponent of the payment of college athletes, and was passed by Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns in April of 2003 (Legislature of Nebraska, 2003). The bill called for a stipend to be paid to football players at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for an amount to be determined by the university, as well as to other student-athletes, outside of football players as long as similar laws are passed by at least four other states that have teams playing in the Big XII Conference (Legislature of Nebraska, 2003). While the realization of athletes’ payment is in the future, a Texas lawmaker has proposed similar legislation in the Texas legislature, and has been passed to the next session commencing later in 2003.

California is slightly behind Nebraska and Texas in their legislative process, but the California State Senate has proposed Senate Bill 193 or the Student-Athlete’s Bill of Rights meant to eliminate the cap placed by certain organizations such as the NCAA on college scholarships (Thornton, 2003). Still in committee, the bill would ban institutions from entering into relationships with organizations placing such bans, potentially eliminating schools such as University of California-Berkeley, UCLA, USC and other
California state universities from participating in NCAA-sanctioned events (Thornton). Other areas impacted by signed legislation would be transfer and eligibility standards, insurance coverage during off-season workouts and the elimination of restrictions on off-season employment wages earned by student-athletes.

*Commercialization and over-commercialization.* As has been discussed to some level in the preceding pages, college athletics has been transformed into big business. At the highest level, Division I-A, athletic departments have budgets exceeding $50 million with The Ohio State University leading the way with a $73 million athletic budget for the 2002-2003 academic year (www.ncaa.org). To help subsidize the cost of scholarships, salaries and other expenses, the marketing of athletic departments is a task undertaken by athletic personnel. Commercialization has grown from agreements with local companies to large television contracts, crossing a subjective line and raising the ire of opponents of “big-time” intercollegiate athletics. The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) was formed by faculty members of universities with major Division-I athletic programs to fight for reform of intercollegiate athletics. Their views include the marketing of intercollegiate athletics impairs institutional control, and may undermine support for academics (COIA, 2003). Their interests in intercollegiate athletic reform revolve around athletics possible negative influence on institutional values, perhaps damaging public perception of higher education (COIA).

A major part of athletic department budgets that lends itself to arguments of groups like COIA is debt service arising from athletic facility construction and renovation occurring over the past 5 years. Ohio State renovated Ohio Stadium from 1999-2001, costing $150 million. Seating capacity was boosted to 96,000, including increases in the
number of luxury boxes, club seats and other amenities for athletic supporters whose contributions assisted in the construction of the stadium, endowment of athletic scholarships, and many other causes. This renovation came on the heels of the construction of a new 20,000-seat basketball facility with many of the same revenue producing amenities of Ohio Stadium; and a new track/lacrosse/soccer stadium, baseball field and softball field.

Ohio State is not alone in the development of new facilities, as sports as a whole realized a boom over the past 12-15 years. Noll and Zimbalist (1997) cited industry experts who conservatively estimate that between 1996 and 2006, more than $8 billion will be spent on sport facilities. This number includes professional sport as well as college sport; but Texas, Tennessee, Penn State, Michigan, Florida, Nebraska, and Notre Dame are among the schools that will have renovated or constructed new football facilities. Each of these construction decisions are designed to remain competitive, not only in terms of revenue, but in the recruiting wars for interscholastic student-athletes who may come in and produce a national championship, the supreme revenue producer.

Beyond the construction and renovation boom and the aforementioned licensing agreements, sponsorship signage is a depended upon revenue stream for athletic departments. In the biannual NCAA survey published in 1997, schools at the Division I-A level earned an average of $459,000 in sponsorship and signage income in 1995, creating an ever-present corporate influence in the direction of intercollegiate athletics.

One final area of corporate influence in intercollegiate athletics comes in the form of apparel contracts with coaches. These agreements, multi-million dollar contracts negotiated by the coach on behalf of their universities are the main source of
remuneration for coaches. Companies such as Nike, adidas and Reebok offer between $1 and $3 million in return for being the sole provider of uniforms, shoes and other university related apparel (Zimbalist, 1999). These contracts add to the ills of intercollegiate athletics as they create a chasm between the coaches and the players they are in charge of leading and developing. Student-athletes, who have been described already as facing financial difficulties in some cases are often times responsible for the success on the field which line their coaches’ pockets, while the student-athletes themselves struggle to make ends meet. This disparity in resource allocation is commonly viewed as an area for needed reform. Work on this section will examine the depth of these revenue producing activities, their impact on the everyday operation of an intercollegiate athletic department, and the possible need for reform in this area of college athletics.

Academic improprieties and difficulties. As a matter of course, student-athletes graduate from colleges and universities at a higher rate than their non-competing student counterparts. The NCAA News (2003) reported in a study investigating the first Proposition 16 class of student-athletes that graduation rates are higher than at any point in recent history (62%) and the graduation rate disparity between student-athletes and the student body is larger than it has been in a decade (three percentage points). With that being said, there have been a number of allegations and investigations of high profile athletic programs where academic measures have been ignored, raising the ire of the NCAA, dimming the positive light shed by the previous study results.

As an example, at the University of Georgia, former basketball player Tony Cole accused head coach Jim Harrick and his son, assistant coach Jim Harrick Jr. of handing
out grades in a class taught by the younger Harrick. Academic records revealed that Cole, and other members of the basketball program were enrolled in the aforementioned Coaching Basketball class, a clear evasion of NCAA rules prohibiting coaches from educating their own players. Moreover, those student-athletes repeatedly did not attend class, yet were awarded grades of A in the course. The uncovering of these wrongdoings resulted in the termination of Jim Harrick and his son, as well as embroiling the University of Georgia athletic department, and athletic director Vince Dooley who hired Harrick after alleged problems at two previous positions, UCLA and the University of Rhode Island.

Two other high profile cases came in the past year from the Fresno State University basketball team, and The Ohio State University football team. In both cases, players were accused of receiving preferential treatment, a clear violation of the NCAA rules, and followed in a long line of prominent athletic teams facing similar allegations. A win-at-all costs mentality has enveloped college sports and it has spread to the very heart of the higher education institution, the academic viability and integrity of the university. This study will attempt to identify the factors contributing to increased academic misconduct, and search for ways to alleviate these problems.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

With an understanding of the background information and underlying premise behind this study in place, this chapter addressed the methods to be employed in attempting to capture athletic department stakeholder perceptions toward three intercollegiate athletic reform issues. In the following pages, focus groups were discussed, as was their utility to this study’s goals, methods of triangulation and other data collection techniques.

Quantitative Research

Qualitative research is a field of inquiry consisting of many complex, interconnected terms, concepts and assumptions…it is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Over the past 10-12 years, qualitative research has made leaps far beyond those seen since the “Chicago school” in the 1920s and 1930s. The Chicago School of Economics was highly critical of alternative paradigms, such as positivistic and laissez-faire economics, believing that their theory, the neoclassical theory of economics could answer all of the issues discussed by any other paradigm. In stark contrast, qualitative research has seen the development of numerous paradigms, or cognitive blueprints on how to look at things has moved qualitative researchers beyond
the positivist lens, which contends there is reality out there to be studied, captured and understood. Post-positivist views state that reality can never be fully apprehended, only approximated, and places an emphasis on discovery and verification (Denzin & Lincoln). Other viewpoints include interpretivist, post-structuralist/constructivist, critical theory and post-modernist.

Interpretivist ideals, viewing reality as constructed through the eye of the beholder have moved qualitative research in a critical direction. Interpretivist philosophies dictate that to understand a particular social action, the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute the action (Schwandt, 2000). In interpretivism, reality is constructed through culture, with the ideas of culture being constructed by society. In many cases, feminist researchers take upon an interpretivist view of the world, because many of the realities have been constructed in a male-dominated society. For example, Mary Field Belenky, in her piece *To the Other Side of Silence* wrote, “Along with other academic feminists, we believe that conceptions of knowledge and truth that are accepted and articulated today have been shaped throughout history by the male-dominated majority culture” (p.5). Constructivist views revolve around the idea of relativism, where realities are locally and specifically constructed to match the background and experiences of a particular individual (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Critical theorists envision the world as being shaped by “social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values crystallized over time” (Lincoln & Guba, p.168). Their descriptions often take on an “advocacy” feel, which provides the sense of conflict in their writings. Finally, post-modern views are a compilation of all of the previous paradigms. Post-modernism is characterized by contemporary sensibilities with no single
authority, method of study or paradigmatic view. This study attempted to find meaning through an interpretivist perspective, where the participants’ voices and actions are described through an interpretation of what is said and an understanding of the subjective meaning of those actions in an objective manner.

Focus Groups

Two major techniques used by researchers to collect qualitative data, participant observation and individual interviews are foundational to the field of qualitative research (Madriz, 2000). Focus groups utilize both of these methods and were incorporated into the study design of the proposed project. Focus groups utilize many of the techniques of individual interviews but without the intrusive, often intimidating atmosphere, instead, replacing it with a small group setting that is more inviting for participants, fostering free expression of ideas, and encouraging all members of the group to speak up (Frey & Fontana, 1993).

Focus groups permit the chasm that exists between those with power and those lacking it to narrow, where channels of communication are open and both sides can voice their opinions and views in an atmosphere free from worry about retribution (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Morgan and Krueger (1993) also discuss the ability of focus groups to discuss issues that are complex and controversial, traits held by these reform issues, as well as in situations where more information is sought about the degree of consensus pertaining to an issue, also the focus of this study.

Study Design

As has been discussed, this study utilized focus groups to gain perceptions of three important issues facing intercollegiate athletic departments. Using stakeholder
theory as the foundational framework for the project, five stakeholder groups, student-
athletes, faculty members, coaches, athletic administrators and student-athlete academic
support officers were chosen as parties with vested interests in the issues at hand.
Following is a description of members of the various groups, with rationale for their
inclusion in the study.

Student-athletes. As perhaps the closest group to the actions and issues of an
intercollegiate athletic department each of the three highlighted topics influences, and/or
has influenced student-athletes. These individuals, participating in a variety of sports
from revenue-producing football and basketball to Olympic sports such as field hockey
and soccer, are the fundamental unit of the athletic department and can call upon their
experiences in athletics and in the classroom in building their perceptions. In much of the
previous research, their voices have not been heard. This study provided a forum for
these student-athletes to espouse their thoughts.

For this study student-athletes were chosen from across the gamut of sports
offered within the athletic department. The athletes were divided into two distinct
groups, those from revenue-producing sports (football, men’s and women’s basketball
and men’s ice hockey); and the other from non-revenue or Olympic teams, represented by
the rest of the athletic teams offered. These groups were both represented because the
division between teams that make money, and teams that lose money is a rift created by
the media and propagated by vast public interest. Discussions surrounding the issues at
hand, payment of athletes, commercialization and academic improprieties and difficulties
generally surround athletes on revenue-producing teams, and the study was performed, in
part, to determine any differences in viewpoints that may occur within stakeholder
groups, including student-athletes.

Faculty members. Faculty members play one of the most vital roles on campus,
to interact with, educate and mentor young adults interested in knowledge and searching
for a direction in life. These interactions and the knowledge and experiences that result,
move to the heart of this study and the many reform issues that swirl around
intercollegiate athletics. One group of faculty were selected because of their knowledge
of and interest in sport and physical activity, and resulting proximity to the goals and
themes of the athletic department. Due to their chosen field of research and teaching,
these individuals are more apt than others on campus to come into contact with student-
athletes and it was hoped a division could be drawn between those with a professional
love for sport and physical activity and the other faculty members on campus.

In an effort to expand the view of faculty member perceptions, a second focus
group were organized of faculty members with very little or no sport background
professionally. These group members had very little knowledge of the athletic
department, its programs and overall goals, creating a knowledge gap between them and
the more sport-savvy faculty members. Again, a keen interest was placed on the possible
heterogeneity of responses and discussion avenues that arose over the course of the group
session.

Their participation in this study was important as one of the three tenets includes
academic issues, but also because they deal each day with student-athletes and the rest of
the student body. Experiences with relationships between the two factions and views of
the future of higher education were particularly important to the thrust of this study. The
distinction is the researchers’ effort to provide a picture of the various faculty viewpoints of student-athletes and intercollegiate athletics within the faculty stakeholder group.

Coaches. As employees of the athletic department, these individuals are empowered with the job of balancing the athletic expectations with the academic rigors of their student-athletes. Coaches are in a position where their performance is measured on their competitiveness on the field, which may draw athletes’ emphasis away from academics. Coaches also serve as role models and mentors in the development of their student-athletes. Important to the purpose of this study is the relationship between the athletic department and the rest of the institution of higher education and coaches with varying backgrounds and interests can speak to all three facets of the inquiry. Their salary is supplemented, in some cases dominated by apparel contracts, and their insight into the commercial aspect of college sports is of particular interest. Coaches were selected in the same manner as student-athletes, with diversity between revenue sports and their Olympic counterparts. Two separate focus groups were held, encompassing revenue sports and non-revenue sports and looked to offer a view into the pressures and opinions of these stakeholders, who have so much influence on student-athletes, while facing so much pressure from fans, boosters, media members and the athletic department itself.

Athletic administrators. As formulators of athletic policy, and decision-makers in the leadership of athletic departments, the viewpoints of this group are vital to a discussion regarding the issues at hand. Administrators is a broad term and is meant to include any member of the athletic department, beginning with the Director of Athletics, who makes decisions that impact the future directions of college sports. Included in this
group are Associate/Assistant Athletic Directors in compliance, as well as administrators in marketing/external affairs, internal affairs, communications/sports information and academic support services. Members of the athletic department, in differing capacities participated in the focus group session dedicated to uncovering their perceptions. Each department within the larger athletic department has a different goal and possibly, viewpoint on the issues being discussed in this study. To gain the opinions of a wide variety of administrators provided insight into the missions of the various areas, and those individuals who make decisions that influence commercialization, academic issues and possibly the payment of college athletes.

*Student-athlete academic support officers.* Separate from the administrator(s) who lead this division of the athletic department are individuals who mentor, tutor, and assist student-athletes with the inevitable dilemmas that arise as a college student. While their main focus is on the academic success of their student-athletes, their role expands in some instances to include counseling in a variety of areas including career, relationship and the overall pitfalls of college life. Their impact in this study was predominantly in the area of academic issues and perhaps improprieties, but will also provide insight into the thought-processes and developmental issues facing young adults, aged 18-22, who are attempting to balance their academic, athletic, social and personal lives. Multiple members of this group were present for their individual session, providing insight into the academic environment of the athletic department, while speaking to the developmental issues facing student-athletes. Variety was important because each of the counselors work with student-athletes in different sports and from different backgrounds adding to the depth of the perceptual investigation.
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Table 3.1

*Stakeholder Table of Study Participants*

Included above is a table that provides a visual representation of the stakeholder groups involved in the study, the number of group members to be present for each session, and the prime areas of interest or insight looked upon from these groups (Table 3.1).
Development of Interview Questions

While the researcher has background knowledge and experience in intercollegiate athletics, a panel of experts, including members of the stakeholder groups being examined were asked to make additions and alterations to a preliminary set of questions that will be tested in a pilot study, prior to the actual study. Eight to ten current and former student-athletes, coaches, administrators, faculty members outside of sport management, and sport management scholars will be asked for their input. Once their input is given, the researcher coordinated the suggestions into an interview guide that was perused by a very limited number of experts in the field. The final interview guide was then ready for examination by the pilot study group, a representative sample of the final study group.

Panel of Experts. Asking the right questions which are targeted toward the correct audience is essential in maximizing the efficiency and utility of focus group research (Morgan, 1993). As a strategy to ask the correct questions, the researcher called upon a panel of experts in various fields which were asked to review the data collection methods and individual components comprising those methods and make suggestions for changes to increase the usefulness of the study. Experts were called upon in the areas of intercollegiate athletics and reform, stakeholder theory, qualitative research methods and quantitative research methods. An example of the cover letter is provided in Appendix D, and was included in a packet containing the study’s materials. The cover letter was catered to the particular role of that expert, and the suggestions made by the panel were incorporated into the study.
Pilot Study. Completion of a pilot study served a multitude of purposes, none of which was more important than further development of the interview guide, and a trial run of the focus group interview process. This process was not one that has been completed before by the researcher, and the pilot study was be used as a learning tool toward the intricacies of running a semi-structured focus group. Intricacies include learning when to direct the group and when to allow them to self-direct themselves, as well as developing an overall sense of comfort and confidence with the process. The insights and experiences of those pilot test members were closer to the practical side of these issues, and information they provided in the preliminary discussions inevitably allowed the researcher to alter and amend the interview guide, ensuring the most representative group of questions and topic areas. Due to the fact that qualitative studies have not been performed to a great extent in sport management and none on the issue of intercollegiate reform, interests of the participants may be different than expected and the pilot study helped to reduce the surprises and possible unforeseen interest changes in the actual study.

Selection of Participants and Setting

Traditionally, focus groups have been used to tackle issues related to marketing, consumer opinion and political research, but has also been used in sociological research (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Moreover, focus groups are being used more frequently within “new, often more critical, politicized, and more theoretically driven research contexts” (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p.80). Focus groups were chosen as the primary source of data collection for two main reasons. First, they assist in establishing rapport between the participants and the researcher. Instead of the interaction occurring between researcher
and participant solely, the interaction occurs between participants, relaxing the atmosphere and relationship between researcher and participants (Kvale, 1994).

With an increased role in the groups’ proceedings, each participant feels a sense of empowerment, which in this study is advantageous because the participants are representing a stakeholder groups’ perceptions (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). Another potentially important result of focus groups is the educational process between stakeholder groups. Each participant shared their opinions as they related to various topics, opening lines of communication between stakeholder groups and perhaps spurring the reform process.

Focus group participant numbers vary depending on the purpose of the research. Emerging views within marketing research literature stipulate an ideal number of participants per focus group ranges between 8 and 12 (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). However, groups of this size are too large for sociological studies, as too many voices can clutter the discussion and limit the amount of depth, especially in an examination of perceptions such as the study presented here. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) cited several contributors to their book who prefer to work with groups of five or six participants, sometimes with groups of as few as three members.

With these group size numbers in mind, the researcher attempted to organize focus groups with participants from diverse backgrounds and experiences. To accomplish this, a number of sampling methods were pursued. For some groups, such as student-athletes (revenue and non-revenue), convenience samples were drawn from individuals where the researcher had established previous relationships. The groups of people being asked to participate all held very busy schedules. The task of coordinating meetings was
difficult, but was made easier by calling on prior relationships whenever possible. The primary form of communication was electronic mail, as this medium was the least intrusive, and the most convenient for most parties involved. Other stakeholders, such as the faculty were contacted through a random list generated by the human resources department at the host institution. Each selected faculty member was contacted and invited to participate in the study’s proceedings.

Yet other groups, like the revenue coaches, student-athlete academic support officers and the faculty athletic council had a small number of possible participants, so each member in those sections was contacted and invited to participate. Lastly, the athletic administrators and non-revenue coaches were groups where the researcher had view contacts, and the population size was too large to canvas all members. In these instances, the highest level of group members, head coaches for non-revenue sports and senior administrators, holding at least the title of assistant athletic director were targeted for participation.

Initially, blanket emails with attached documents were disseminated to all targeted stakeholders, followed by a letter of invitation and an informational sheet outlining the research design and the responsibilities of participants. Each letter listed three possible times to meet, offering some constraints on time, but leaving options for the invitees to work around busy schedules and prior commitments. Depending on response rates, additional emails were disseminated and eventually sampling groups were expanded beyond the initial scope. For instance, a second random group of faculty was contacted after the first round bore limited responses. Additionally, members of the athletic department beyond the senior management were contacted, and invited.
One stakeholder group, members of the faculty athletic council, were unable to match up free time in their schedules, and an alternative group of faculty was organized, one made up of faculty with a basic knowledge of the operation of the athletic department and of physical activity and sport. Views from this group would be compared to those from the other factions, in an effort to examine the influence of ignorance and hearsay on the development of individual perceptions.

At the conclusion of the recruitment efforts, eight stakeholder focus group sessions were held, with sizes ranging from 2 (revenue coaches) to 7 (non-revenue student-athletes). In addition to the eight focus groups that were held, individuals from each stakeholder group (not included in the focus group) were interviewed to assess their perceptions on the same issues. Following is a discussion of those focus group sessions, as well as from the individual interviews.

Data Collection Techniques

“Human beings are complex, and their lives are ever changing, the more methods we use to study them, the better our chances to gain some understanding of how they construct their lives and the stories they tell is about them” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 668). Data collection included a demographic background questionnaire, eight focus group sessions, and individual interview sessions with selected participants representing each focus group. This variety of methods was used to verify the accuracy of the study participants’ statements within the focus group setting.

Focus Group Sessions

Eight focus group sessions were held with separate sessions for members of each stakeholder group: two for student-athletes (revenue and non-revenue), two for faculty
members (sport savvy and non-sport savvy), two for coaches (revenue and non-revenue), one for athletic administrators and one for student-athlete academic support officers. Members of each group are being brought together in a homogeneous atmosphere as a way to help the participants feel more secure and comfortable, which should permit for more descriptive and open focus group sessions. Heterogeneous groups could potentially create situations where the influence of a superior (i.e. administrator) may preclude a student-athlete from offering his or her true views and opinions. Also, it is hoped that by grouping the focus groups homogeneously, a better grasp of the heterogeneity influences can be gained. The purpose of the study was to examine three issues facing intercollegiate athletics: the payment of student-athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization of intercollegiate athletics, and academic improprieties and difficulty of student-athletes. Stakeholder groups are heterogeneous in nature, so it was important to draw upon a diverse sample of each group to ensure a representative sample of their voices. Qualitative researchers suggest questioning as many subjects as is needed to find out what it is the researcher is studying (Kvale, 1994).

Demographic background questionnaire. At each group session, participants completed background questionnaires, addressing various demographic areas important in determining reasons for differences between members of a particular stakeholder group (see Appendix A). Heterogeneity is caused by a number of factors, and this background questionnaire was implemented in an effort to pinpoint some of these factors, providing the researcher a clearer vision of the underlying themes impacting various decision making processes. Each participant was be asked to include their age, racial
background, family social class when growing up, and currently, their stakeholder group and sport(s) played in college.

After that questionnaire had been completed, the nature of the research was, once again discussed, as were the methods being employed. Each participant was made aware of the audio recording and field notes being completed throughout the course of the session, as well as the follow-up interview and quantitative survey at the end. Also in this portion of the session, the verification system being employed (member checks) were discussed, and the participants were made aware of their opportunity to re-read verbatim transcripts of the sessions and verify the accuracy of the transcription. After being made aware of the various data collection techniques being employed, an informed consent form was distributed for each participant to sign, provide a pseudonym that would be used to identify their statements and the focus group interviews commenced.

These focus groups followed a semi-structured format, allowing for the group to lead themselves and pose imperative questions within the scope of the session. The researcher provided semi-structured questions (see Appendix B) to keep the group on task, and address the relevant information as it pertains to the study at hand but the rigidity of a question, response, question, response-type format is not needed, and was not be employed. Following the group discussion, the audiocassettes were transcribed by the researcher and a transcript of the proceedings was given to each member of the group for member checking. They had the ability to dispute something attributed to them, and verify the accuracy of the transcription. Also, due to the sensitive nature of the proceedings, if a member of a focus group made a comment that he or she did not feel
comfortable being published, they were allowed to make those wishes known, and any statement they did not want included was overlooked in the results section.

After the focus group sessions were held, individual interviews were set up with members of the stakeholder group that were not part of the focus group. These interviews were used to compare and contrast against the perceptions intimated in the focus group meetings, but also were used to provide a wider view of the stakeholder group.

**Individual interviews.** Individual interviews with at least one member of each stakeholder group, who were not involved in the focus group meeting, permitted the researcher to delve deeper into the topics with those individuals in an attempt to get at the heart of the issues and the opinions of those particular members. Individual interviews occurred with individuals who were not present at the focus group because the researcher feared that the reduced interest from respondents was limiting the breadth of the voices being heard. Interviews were used not only increase the number of perceptions used to examine the three reform issues, but also were used as a checking mechanism of the initial focus group meetings by offering additional insight from a person not caught up in the flow of the initial conversation. Individual interview questions entailed probing qualities, in many cases the same questions as the focus group faced, and looked for more information than was discussed in the focus group (See Appendix C).

These interviews were used to supplement and confirm the findings within the focus groups sessions. If a large disparity between the interview answers and focus group sessions was found, the interviews held a greater role in the overall discussion because they were not tainted or biased by the presence of peers and superiors. Findings
in the one-on-one session were meant as a different method of data collection and helped support the discussions in the focus groups. Individual interviews took place in the days following the focus group meeting, most often in the office of the stakeholder group member, or in a location comfortable for them. Individual interviews offer “rich first-person narratives that form the heart” (Sabo, 1990, p.63) of qualitative research, and were used as part of the foundation for this study.

Data Analysis

“Data analysis is the process of organizing and storing data in light of your increasingly sophisticated judgments, that is, of the meaning-finding interpretations that you are learning to make about the shape of your study” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.129). In this study, there were three main areas of data that must be collected, organized, analyzed and synthesized. Those sections included the demographic background questionnaire, the proceedings of the focus groups, and the in-depth interviews with selected participants. This section looked at the three areas, and how each piece of information will be categorized and analyzed, prior to being synthesized.

*Demographic background questionnaire.* This questionnaire was focused on those demographical differences that occur between groups, as well as within each stakeholder groups. The information from these questions was used to examine backgrounds, experiences or interests that may have an effect in how one views the reform issues focused on in the study. Heterogeneity in stakeholder group perceptions is expected, and this survey provided insight into whether socio-economic status, race, age or another variable has an impact on one’s reasoning.
Focus group proceedings. Many qualitative researchers estimate that as much time should be spent on the analysis and write-up of the fieldwork, as was spent in the field collecting the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). For this study, the time spent analyzing was spent reviewing field notes, audiocassettes and transcriptions of the focus group sessions, comparisons of findings with information found in an analysis of previous works and other measures designed to increase the trustworthiness of the results (these steps will be addressed in pages to come).

Preliminary plans call for the researcher to review the field notes immediately following the focus group session, to fill in the blanks left due to time constraints, and provide an overall sense of the proceedings of that outing. Audiotapes of the focus group were transcribed in the days after the group met, and were listened to and re-read repeatedly, in an effort to draw out emerging themes. Manual coding occurred here using the transcripts as a guide. These transcripts were continuously compared to the field notes kept during the group meeting looking for further linkages. Next, the transcripts of the individual focus groups were read over for themes by two people familiar with the study. The themes that emerged for each person were written out, and those themes that matched on the two lists were used to organize the information.

When it came time to review the transcripts and write up from each individual focus group, the transcripts were taken to a computer to be analyzed by NUD*IST (Non numerical Unstructured Data: Indexing, Searching and Theory building), a computer assisted qualitative data analysis program. NUD*IST was able to take the researchers preliminary codes and elaborate on the findings, drawing linkages between the voices of the participants, and the key areas of development within the proceedings. However, the
difficulty in organizing codes and nodes that were suitable for the program, led the researcher and research assistant (who took the field notes and acted as the member check) read through the themes from each of the eight stakeholder groups, searching for those that emerged from most or all of the groups. Those themes that emerged to both researchers were used in the Chapter 5 discussion of the results.

It is important to understand that the computer generations are only a portion of the analytical work needed to gain an understanding of the problem issues. The primary responsibility of analyzing in qualitative research rests on the shoulders of the researcher. It is up to the researcher to transform the data from its acquired form (i.e. field notes, transcriptions) into useable information with the ability to communicate meaning to the project’s readers.

*In-depth interviews with selected participants.* In much the same way that the focus group sessions were categorized, analyzed and synthesized, the in-depth interview materials were scrutinized using a variety of techniques fitting of their importance to the overall research project. Minus the field notes but including an interview guide, the one-on-one interviews were captured on audiocassette, which were then reviewed and transcribed, and then subjected to manual and mechanical analysis through the use of NUD*IST. The responses were analyzed for codes matching the results of the focus groups, as well as other interviewees. Again, these transcripts were open for review by the individual who provided the interview information (member checks), and other efforts to maximize the trustworthiness of the information will be discussed in the proceeding pages.
Trustworthiness of Data

Important to any research project is the accuracy of the findings, as projected to the readers. Credibility is of the utmost importance to a researcher, and the trustworthiness of a qualitative research project may mean the difference between that study being used by others and being disregarded (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Multiple factors combine to answer the question of trustworthiness (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994): To what extent can we place confidence in the outcomes of the study? Do we believe what the researcher reported? Included in these multiple factors are time spent in the acquisition of trustworthy data, triangulation and continual alertness to your own biases (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Not much can be said about putting time in as a researcher to maximize the credibility of a study. More time that is spent developing sound research questions and procedures, at the research site, interviewing, building sound relationships, and coding and analyzing information, the less likely a researcher is to make up or feign behaviors of the participants. Additionally, constant reflection, perhaps in a reflexive journal allows a researcher to look introspectively at his/her own subjectivities and biases. By understanding how one may wish to sway views one way or another, the researcher can work to eliminate any sign of that subjectivity, increasing the trustworthiness and utility of the information being presented. Thirdly, is triangulation of research methods, a process that can be systematically altered, and whose importance were unveiled in the following section.
**Triangulation**

Qualitative research is inherently multi-method in focus, but the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, is evidence of an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation (Flick, 1998). By using multiple methods of data collection and analysis (triangulation), the researcher hopes to increase the trustworthiness of the results and ensure the true voices of the participants are displayed throughout the project. Mason (1996) advocates the use of triangulation as a way of judging the efficacy or validity of the different methods employed throughout the study and sources of information by comparing the products, or outcomes of those methods.

However, some qualitative researchers oppose triangulation based on its paradigmatic foundation, as it implies a view of the social world which says there is one objective and knowable social reality, and all qualitative researchers have to do is employ multiple, appropriate triangulation points, and the study is trustworthy. Positivist stances, such as the connotation carried by triangulation, drive away some researchers who oppose the one, single reality viewpoint, but its tenets were utilized in this study, as the researcher views its impact on validity as important to the acceptance of the study. Some of the sources of information that were used to provide an all-angles view of the reform issues in intercollegiate athletics have already been discussed, but here is a list of those sources: focus group participant background questionnaires, member checks of the transcripts of the focus group proceedings, field notes compiled by the researcher during the focus group proceedings, the employment of a peer de-briefer, and post-focus group
individual interviews with selected participants. A brief discussion followed regarding each of the triangulation methods and their importance to the study.

*Demographic background questionnaire.* Clarkson (1995) discussed the issue of heterogeneity within stakeholder groups, and the interpretivist viewpoint sees reality as socially constructed meaning that different members of a stakeholder group have been subjected to widely varying social environments, altering their view of the world. For this reason, a background demographic questionnaire was disseminated to the study’s participants in an effort to see if any demographic variables such as social class, race, gender and sport(s) participated in correlate to particular views on the three issues being studied.

*Member checks.* According to Glesne (1999), the objective of using member checks in a study is to ensure that the statements attributed to a particular stakeholder are accurate. By asking the various participants to verify the accuracy of the transcripts, the researcher is, in essence, receiving confirmatory testimony that the transcripts are true. To member check appropriately, each and every stakeholder in the study was given a transcript of their focus group session and their individual interview, if applicable, to review. The researcher asked for feedback that could have personal or political ramifications if used in an incorrect form in the final document.

*Field notes.* Throughout the focus group process, the researcher kept notes on various themes that are occurring and recurring. These notes are important, as they are the researchers’ longer-term eyes, picking up on non-verbal cues transmitted by the participants, and offered a richer view of the sessions, beyond the words and other sounds of the session. Following the completion of the focus group meeting, the field notes were
used in combination with the session transcripts to develop a clearer picture of the views and opinions of the various stakeholders. Also, field notes assisted in developing trustworthiness in the study by providing a true reflection of what the researcher saw, and in comparison with the true transcription, can bring to light any subjectivities and/or biases held by the researcher.

Peer de-briefer. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a procedure be put in place for enlisting an outsider to “audit” fieldwork notes and subsequent analysis and interpretations. By enlisting a third party, the researcher can work to make sure their interpretations are sound, and the field notes being used to supplement the transcripts, grounded surveys and other methods of data collection are free from bias and useful to the overall intent of the study. Denzin (1994) stated that by employing a peer de-briefer in a qualitative study, the researcher is increasing the credibility of the study. This peer de-briefer also served an invaluable purpose by assisting in the development of codes that make sense of the materials and are the easiest to apply and maximize the worth of the findings. It was important for the peer de-briefer to be familiar with the research project, and as free as possible from biases or subjectivities of his or her own in order to maximize their worth to the researcher.

Post-focus group individual interviews. As discussed above, select participants, one from each stakeholder group were interviewed individually after the focus group meeting has been completed. Rationale for these interviews was to gain an in-depth view into the issues being studied, in a private, one-on-one setting. These interviews were more structured than those in the focus group, and provided a richer sense of how one member of each group views reform issues in intercollegiate athletics. Interview
transcripts were compared to those from the focus groups in an effort to see how thought processes carry across the small group setting, and individual setting, as well as compare the stances of the interviewee to other members of that particular stakeholder group.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of those internal stakeholders of University of Pachay’s Division I-A athletic department institution toward three areas of athletic reform. The researcher focused on these three areas of major reform issues being raised currently by critics of athletics: payment of student-athletes, commercialization of intercollegiate athletics, and academic improprieties and difficulties faced by athletic departments and members of those programs. To accomplish this task, the researcher organized eight homogeneous focus group sessions that created an atmosphere of discussion and held eight individual interviews that coincided with the focus group meetings. Additionally, using the results from the focus groups, this study worked to address the level of heterogeneity evident from the perceptions of members within each of the stakeholder groups.

This chapter presents the combined findings of eight focus groups, as well as the results of eight corresponding individual interviews of members of the same stakeholder group who were not present at the original focus group meeting. As a way of creating a broad picture of the true perceptions of the stakeholders involved in the study, voices of each of the stakeholder groups were offered separately, with each of the three issues being outlined within each group discussion. Each of these focus group and interview
transcripts was read for themes by two different researchers working on the project. Conclusions were made by each researcher independently, and were compared to each other for common themes. These themes were deemed to be important in painting a perceptual picture of intercollegiate athletic reform and were supported by quotes throughout from the participants themselves. This micro examination of stakeholder perceptions provided the background for thematic comparisons to be made between stakeholder and focus groups.

Description of Stakeholder Groups

Subjects for this study came from University of Pachay, a state-supported land grant institution located in the central portion of the country. University of Pachay’s athletic department participates in the National Collegiate Athletic Association’s (NCAA) Division I-A level, the division representing one of the largest, and most comprehensive athletic departments in the country. Each of the participants were recruited for one of eight focus group sessions organized for homogeneous attendance by the stakeholders. The eight focus groups held were: revenue sport student-athletes, non-revenue sport student-athletes, revenue sport coaches, non-revenue sport coaches, athletic administrators, student-athlete academic support officers, faculty members who value athletic participation and are in positions that afford them interactive opportunities with student-athletes, and faculty members who are not familiar with the athletic department. The eight focus groups utilized in this study were comprised of individuals from five different stakeholder groups: student-athletes (non-revenue and revenue), coaches (non-revenue and revenue), athletic administrators, student-athlete academic support officers, and faculty members (familiar with sport and physical activity and unfamiliar with sport
and physical activity). Following is a discussion of each of the five stakeholder groups utilized for this study. For a review of the rationale leading to the inclusion of these five stakeholder groups in this study, see page 70 in Chapter 3 of this document.

Individual Focus Group Presentation Guidelines

As a way to help clarify the presentation of the forthcoming material, and ease the reading of these results, this brief section provided insight into the rationale of the informational display. Leading the discussion is an overview of the perceptions held by each individual focus group and the individual interview corresponding with that focus group. The questions asked of the focus groups were the same; therefore, by offering the views of each individual group, the themes that emerged are clear and can be thoroughly examined across stakeholder groups at the end of the chapter. The three reform issues that drove the discussion are listed, and the headings that fall below each reform issue are the themes that emerged within that particular discussion. The results in this chapter only pertain to the singular focus group sessions and corresponding individual interviews. Comparative analysis for emergent themes will occur in the fifth chapter, as the researcher utilized the topics that emerged to answer the four research questions presented earlier in this document. These wider views were made easier by the familiarity of the reader toward the themes that emerged, and the stakeholder voices that produced those themes. To ease the confusion that may inevitably result from multiple stakeholder names, table 4.1 is included below with names and stakeholder groups. Only the participant pseudonyms will be used, as confidentiality was of the utmost concern to all involved. In addition, their overall stakeholder group, as well as the focus group number assigned to that group was included in this table.
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Table 4.1 Stakeholder Pseudonym Table
Focus Group/Individual Interview One: Non-Revenue Sport Student-Athletes

Non-revenue sports, constituting 32 of the 36 sports and nearly 800 student-athletes at University of Pachay, play a major part in the academic and athletic fabric of the university’s athletic department. For this focus group session, seven athletes were present, three men and four women from an array of sports. As discussed above, the sports represented by members of this group, and those to follow, were kept confidential as promised to the participants in exchange for their candid and open contribution to the study.

Payment of Student-Athletes

There was a little bit of variance in the views of the athletes, which can be partly attributed to the scholarship status of those student-athletes. Of the seven athletes, the four female athletes were on full scholarship, while the three men who contributed to the study were absent of financial support from the athletic department. Although it was not a topic of discussion, the influence of Title IX was very much evident after stepping back and looking at the discussions with these athletes. Nate, an athlete on a team of over 25 men said, “We have four full scholarships, and everyone else breaks up a few others… like eight people break up four full scholarships.” (Nate, Focus Group 2, 17; 23-24, 3/30/2004). Meanwhile, women’s hockey has 18 full scholarships and women’s volleyball has an excess of scholarships available. “We have 13 or 12 people on the team, so we don’t use all of ours obviously.” (Lucy, Focus Group 2, 36, 3/30/2004).

Perceptual differences between scholarship v. non-scholarship athletes. The influence that the grant-in-aid had on the fiscal stability of the student-athletes came out in descriptions of their own financial situation. The stark chasm that existed between
those receiving aid and those who were left to support themselves, or rely on other sources of aid was typified by the different viewpoints of the following quotes: “It’s hard to buy books. It is coming out of our pockets, because for me, being non-scholarship the money comes out of your pocket, so it is hard to find the money.” (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 9-11, 3/30/2004). Joseph continued on to describe another non-scholarship athlete’s financial problems, “One of my teammates had to move out of the dorm because he couldn’t afford it, and then he had to quit the team. He left out dorm and tried to move off-campus, but could not pay for that either, so he had to quit.” (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 180-182, 3/30/2004). Other student-athletes not on scholarship had to find employment, in addition to their athletic and academic responsibilities, “I was actually working part time while I was competing and going to school because I needed the money to pay for things…(I worked) about 15 hours a week, it was just part-time, just 15-20 hours a week.” (Nicole, Individual Interview 1, 64-65; 69, 4/15/2004).

In contrast, the scholarship athletes faced their own set of pressures and troubles, ranging from learning how to properly budget the funds provided to pressures to succeed on the field and support the worth of the grant-in-aid provided by the coach and athletic department. “You have to budget real well…You can definitely make it work.” (Jennifer, Focus Group 2, 120; 126, 3/30/2004). Seemingly, the task of budgeting is difficult for some student-athletes to master, “People just have trouble budgeting money. They give it to us all at the beginning of the month, and people are like ‘we got a check’ and they
spend all of their money and the last two weeks they are eating hot chocolate and noodle soup, because they can’t afford to buy anything. (Lucy, Focus Group 2, 201-204, 3/30/2004).

Another area of contention from non-scholarship athletes was that those teammates that were on scholarship were receiving breaks from their coaches because of the financial outlay sacrificed by teams on limited budgets. “For example one kid who runs better one week and they don’t get to go on a trip because they are not a scholarship athlete. Last year I came in and I was running better than a kid on 40% scholarship, and he got to travel because he was getting money and I wasn’t. Like, if you are getting money you get to go.” (Nate, Focus Group 2, 57-61, 3/30/2004). This experience was validated by another member of the group who participated in a different sport where scholarships were limited.

Yeah, you see it. You know who the guys are that are on scholarship and they travel whether they are pulling their weight, or you see who is playing and who is not, and sometimes the guys who aren’t on scholarship are playing or practicing as good or better than those that are on scholarship, but the scholarship guys are playing, and the others either stay behind or sit on the bench. (Tony, Focus Group 2, 71-75, 3/30/2004).

Reactions to this perceived lack of fairness ranged from student-athletes who internalized the situation, driving themselves to work harder, to stories of others who were frustrated over the occurrences enough to transfer to other schools.

*Variations in budgeting decisions among sports.* In order to defray some of the costs and accrue more income, these student-athletes discussed the per diem they receive
on trips to athletic contests. In doing so, the autonomy of athletic coaches as it pertains to budget decisions was uncovered and discussed at length. “It is not a bad situation, but if your parents don’t have money and your friends want to go to the movies, which is like $8 you can’t go. If you save your $10 they give you on the road on Sunday, maybe you could go.” (Frosty, Focus Group 2, 227-229, 3/30/2004). Each team and school has their own policies as they pertain to the distribution of meal money, mainly revolving around the size of the squads that travel and the number of road trips each team takes in a given year. “We usually get our meals paid for, it’s like the layover and we have to eat at McDonald’s…I know that when we are on the road, all of our meals are planned for us.” (Frosty, Focus Group 2, 255-256; 286, 3/30/2004). But, another athlete added, “I know from other schools though, that they won’t have any meals like we do, but they will get some money, like $80 for the weekend and they have to pay for it themselves.” (Sandy, Focus Group 2, 291-293, 3/30/2004).

Excessive athletic responsibilities and practice time. A much disputed area of intercollegiate athletics is rule 17.1.5 in the NCAA Manual. This rule, titled “Time Limits for Athletically Related Activities” has a number of sub by-laws that combine to regulate the amount of time student-athletes are required to participate in activities associated with their sport (NCAA Manual, 2002, p.21). As required under rule 17.1.5.1, “A student-athlete’s participation in countable athletically related activities shall be limited to a maximum of four hours a day and 20 hours per week” (NCAA Manual, 2002, p.21). This rule was adopted in 1991 as a way of restricting the time athletes were spending on the fields, with the hope and intention of offering more time for the pursuit of academic interests.
The above regulations pertain to in-season activities, while another set of rules govern out-of-season activities. Rule 17.1.5.2 encompasses the limitations placed on athletes and coaches outside of the playing season. Its contents state that outside of the playing season and in the academic year, athletes cannot be required to participate in “countable athletically related activities” for more than 8 hours a week. Countable athletically related activities encompass everything from conditioning to strategy. A student-athlete may not, however, participate in any other activities during any institutional vacation period that includes the summer. The NCAA rules govern voluntary workouts, which is what most coaches ask of their student-athletes as a way to go beyond the restrictions placed upon the coaches by the national governing body.

Student-athletes that the researcher met with laughed at the question about the off-season and down time they may have in the off-season. “…our season goes all year long; it just runs all year long.” (Nate, Focus Group 2, 526, 3/30/2004). Others felt the same way:

Our off-season was worse than our season. We were expected to go in and lift, so get a workout in between 8-11 and get in your running, and then you have individuals two times a week, and then at night we were expected to play together like three nights a week. And that is our coach, that is what we were expected to do, and if we didn’t we would get beat down during spring season. (Lucy, Focus Group 2, 533-537, 3/30/2004)

The consensus of the group was that there was no off-season, even in the summer, when there are no athletic seasons, or contests held. “There is no off-season, not even in
the summer.” (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 539, 3/30/2004). “Yeah, we are here all summer working.” (Lucy, Focus Group 2, 545, 3/30/2004). “I wish I had a summer.” (Tony, Focus Group 2, 547, 3/30/2004).

In the discussion on this topic, it was evident that although there was a lot of work, the student-athletes enjoyed most of the activities, the interaction with their teammates and understood that there were sacrifices, but the responsibilities they held were greater than expected. “One of my teammates was like ‘Coach, I have two jobs, I am a student and I am an athlete’ he just spent so much time there.” (Nate, Focus Group, 585-586, 3/30/2004). “All of the other things that go into it with the trainers and icing and cooling down and everything else, it is like a full time job.” (Joseph, Focus Group, 588-589, 3/30/2004).

Opposition to legislation on the payment of student-athletes. When introduced to the pieces of legislation regarding student-athletes’ rights being introduced in various state legislatures, the student-athletes seemed to take a more negative stance than they held previously, with one exception. Throughout the notes on non-verbal cues being taken at this time, all of the participants, except for Joseph, were nodding in agreement of their peers’ opinions that student-athletes should not be paid, regardless of the financial situation, time and effort put in. While Tony was making the following statement, Sandy and Lucy were noted to be nodding in agreement. “I don’t think it should be allowed. I hate to say it, but if student-athletes were getting paid, what makes us different than the marching band that is probably putting in the same amount of time and going to school and practicing.” (Tony, Focus Group 2, 640-642, 3/30/2004). Lucy responded to Tony’s opinion by making another statement that was almost unanimously supported non-
verbally by the others in the group, “We had a choice to be a student-athlete, regular students have no other choice. They are struggling to get work in and money to spend and all that other stuff, we don’t have to be student-athletes, it is our choice.” (Lucy, Focus Group 2, 644-646, 3/30/2004).

Joseph, as stated above, was the only athlete in the group that had a different viewpoint on the situation. “I think they should be paid though, because people like that may only go to college if they are getting paid. Maybe I am different because I come from a different background where my family doesn’t have a lot of money; it benefits athletes on an all-around level because a lot of people aren’t as fortunate as others.” (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 659-662, 3/30/2004). When the conversation shifted to the NCAA and whether the payment of athletes would have an impact on the loopholes evident in the association’s by-laws, Joseph responded:

That’s another reason you could say that student athletes should get paid because schools like that that don’t, well the NCAA’s making millions off of us basically. Like we’re non-revenue sports but the NCAA is making millions off of what we do every day and I don’t think that’s fair at all. We’re like busting our butts basically to get nothing, other than the glory of the championship. (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 681-687, 3/30/2004).

Commercialization and Over-Commercialization of Intercollegiate Athletics

As the conversation shifted to commercialization, a topic that moves away from the personal discussion that encompassed the payment of student-athletes questions, it became clear there was not a lot of thought given in the past to the way that money was being developed by the athletic department, and the impact of the relationships with those
commercial entities on the operation of the athletic department. Examples of the student-athletes perceptions of commercialization are offered in the following sections.

Athletic department and individual program support from commercialization.

Statements that the student-athletes made were generally in favor of attracting more outside organizations to enter into financial relationships with the athletic department because that money will help support their programs. “I don’t think there is a point where it (commercialization) goes too far. If it is there and it helps out with the university and athletic department then it is there.” (Tony, Focus Group 2, 908-909, 3/30/2004). A typical definition of commercialization was offered in an individual interview with Nicole, who said, “…when sports are being more publicized, or being more marketed and brought out to the public.” (Nicole, Individual Interview 1, 115-116, 4/15/2004). Building off this definition of commercialization, a few student-athletes nodded in agreement with the following statement, “If you have to compete with other sports, then for that certain school it might be a big deal to get out there and commercialize, but it’s not over-commercializing because they need to be doing that to try and make money.” (Nate, Focus Group 2, 922-925, 3/30/2004).

Neither the influence of the media nor the dollars generated by the NCAA, the various conferences and individual athletic departments were even a discussion point with the athletes. When the influence of the media was inquired about, the athletes shifted the attention to the inconveniences of television timeouts and the up-in-the-air nature of football schedules. Nicole briefly discussed the influence on larger sporting events like the NCAA men’s basketball tournament on the surrounding community, but other than the influence of television on football and basketball schedules, and the
residual effect on other sports, the linkage between the $6 billion CBS television contract to broadcast the NCAA men’s basketball tournament was not discussed.

*Benefits and problems associated with apparel contract.* Another area of commercialization that did draw the interest from the non-revenue student-athletes was the contract signed between the athletic department, along with its coaches, and major apparel and equipment companies. These agreements provide millions of dollars to the athletic department and to the coaches, but also permit student-athletes to wear top-quality apparel, shoes and other pieces of equipment that may not be available from the athletic department without these agreements due to the expensive price tags that come with the clothes and other sporting goods. “I think a lot of the coaches and stuff want the best equipment for their athletes. And if you do take away that sponsor in some way or another you’re not going to get as good stuff, so it’s hard to say. Because you don’t want to take away the Nike, or whatever logo is on the clothes or you lose a lot of money.” (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 1178-1181, 3/30/2004). At University of Pachay, the athletic department has entered into an exclusive agreement with a well-known apparel company to provide shoes, apparel and equipment for all of its athletic programs. This agreement prohibits the use of competitors’ goods unless the logos of those organizations are covered or colored in with black unless the contracted company did not manufacture equipment for that particular sport. “We got in trouble because we were wearing other running shoes other than Nike in the airport when we were traveling. They would give us only one pair of running shoes and they weren’t very good at all. So we wore
nice shoes that we liked and were comfortable and we traveled in them and we got in a lot of trouble for wearing non-Nike shoes.” (Sandy, Focus Group 2, 1204-1208, 3/30/2004).

This exclusivity was a point of contention with a few of the athletes, who discussed the lack of quality in the equipment provided and the impact it had on their play or practice.

   You know we can practice in Foghorn and then when game time came we had to wear Nike. That’s terrible because our shoes were falling apart, we could not find a good shoe to wear. We were getting shin splints, back problems, knee problems, and all this kind of stuff from the shoes. It was the shoes. And we couldn’t wear any other shoe. (Lucy, Focus Group 2, 1197-1202, 3/30/2004).

**Academic Improprieties and Difficulties**

   The third area of discussion relates to the academic issues faced by the student-athletes; the pressures they endure as they balance their academic, athletic and personal lives. Situations have arisen recently that have placed scrutiny on the academic integrity of athletic departments nationwide, and independent groups such as the Knight Commission have made calls for reform measures that focus on the relationship between the athletic department and the academic integrity of the higher education institution.

   **Difficulties in balancing the roles of student and athlete.** One of the most discussed topics was the balancing of responsibilities by the student-athletes between their academic and athletic responsibilities. Part of the problem, they said, was the timing of practice, and the lukewarm attitude their coaches showed toward leaving practice early for other responsibilities.
I had a test my freshman year in stats, and I am terrible in stats and I am a bad test taker. I have to get there early and prepare and relax. I had practice until 11:00 or something like that, and I had the exam at 11:30, so I told my coach that I had to leave at about 10:45 because of this test and he was like ‘Ok’. So I get to practice and it is getting to 10:50, 11:00, 11:15 and I was like, I have to go, I have this exam. I sprinted into this exam, was late and grabbed the test took it, and did horrible on it because I was not relaxed and ready for the test. I had told my coach that I had an exam, and he said it was not his problem, that I had to take care of my academics on my own. So it was like ‘You are a volleyball player first, and a student last’.” (Lucy, Focus Group 2, 1279-1288, 3/30/2004).

This attitude was supported in another statement in this same discussion, “Our coach says it all the time, academics, academics, academics and I think she is pretty good with it, but I don’t know, when you are in the midst of it, and you are on the ice, she is not very good about letting you go.” (Jennifer, Focus Group 2, 1313-1315, 3/30/2004).

Other athletes did not have this same experience, although the expectation was that the time blocked off for practice would not be violated. “…our coaches are like, block time off for practice, from like 4-6 every day we will have practice, so don’t try to schedule anything in there, classes or anything. So we know when we have classes and practice and when we can study so it makes it a little easier.” (Tony, Focus Group 2, 1304-1307, 3/30/2004). Each of the athletes had blocked schedules, but the problem seemed to be the venue in which the sport was being participated in. If it was an indoor sport, where there was finite space and a schedule had to be kept with numerous other groups, the block schedule came in the middle of the day, when classes were held. If it
was an outdoor activity, the timing of the practices was later in the afternoon when there were fewer classes, and thus, fewer possible conflicts with classes and other academic activities.

There were a number of statements made that shifted the portrayal of coaches to individuals truly interested in the academic welfare of the student-athletes, but the majority of those examples revolved around the issue of eligibility.

I know that this last quarter, I wasn’t doing well, and he would come to me every so often asking me if I was doing alright, if I was going to the counselor. If you do end up doing what is needed to stay on the team, staying eligible, they will stay hush about it and won’t bring it up much, but if you are at that borderline they are going to be on top of you because…they need you. It is basically they need you to stay eligible, they don’t care how you are doing, just stay eligible. (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 1366-1370; 1374-1375, 3/30/2004).

One thing apparent among all of the student-athletes that were present at this meeting was that they understood this is what they signed up for, and did not feel as if they were being placed under too much of a burden by members of the athletic department, or the environment they are in. To the contrary, the majority of conflict they feel is either self-imposed or comes from parents who they are working to impress.

I pressured myself more than anything else, when I was young, there was a little pressure to get good grades, but as I got older it is like, my parents don’t even see my report card anymore, I tell them what I got and stuff, but I get personally upset when I know I should have got an A, but I got a B. That pressure came
from them, but it came from being an athlete, ok, you have to keep your head above water, and now it is just on my shoulders. (Lucy, Focus Group 2, 1453-1458, 3/30/2004)

*Lack of academic corruption at University of Pachay.* Throughout the country, questions of the academic practices of the athletic department have been cropping up over the last few years. In the face of these issues, both on other campuses and on their own, the student-athletes in this group, for the most part, maintained that they believed that the corruptive activities were not the norm and have seen or heard of very little in their time and experience at University of Pachay.

Very rarely are you ever going to see that happen. When you travel you are not going to have tutors there to help you out, first of all you are not going to get a test when you are traveling, or anyone who is going to write a paper for you, I don’t know if you will ever see that. (Tony, Focus Group 2, 1491-1494, 3/30/2004).

“I don’t think they would just go and write the whole paper. Maybe help you with parts, but not write the whole thing. Maybe they will fix grammar and spelling, but is that wrong?” (Frosty, Focus Group 2, 1505-1507, 3/30/2004).

These viewpoints were maintained by everyone in the group except for Jennifer, who took a more cynical view of the athletic department, “I don’t know, I think it may happen more than we actually think. I think that if those were the only instances that were caught, there were probably more out there that are going on. (Jennifer, Focus
Group 2, 1503; 1543-1544, 3/30/2004). This view opened the eyes of the others in the group, but as the discussion picked up this topic, the main views of the group stayed with the cleanliness of the athletic department and its operations.

*Effects of positive relationships with faculty members.* The final theme that arose from the group discussion revolved around the relationships each of the student-athletes have with their professors. Many of these athletes were forced to miss class time because of athletic events, and ask their professors for leniency in terms of scheduling. For the most part, the conscientious nature of the student-athletes came through, and they believed that by being attentive to the situation and notifying the professor the first day of the quarter and by taking care of the work they missed, the professors were more than willing to be flexible with them. “If you show that you are interested in the class, go up and introduce yourself to the instructor and ask them if you can do things to make up for classes you are going to miss. They are generally pretty receptive to you being an athlete and the work that it takes to be an athlete.” (Tony, Focus Group 2, 1587-1590, 3/30/2004). Jennifer agreed with Tony’s observation, “They have to respect that, if you come in the first day with a list of dates that you will be absent, they will respect you more for being up front.” (Jennifer, Focus Group 2, 1592-1593, 3/30/2004).

*Summary*

For the most part, the members of the non-revenue student-athletes held similar views on all three reform issues. There was however, a difference that emerged in the views of the non-scholarship and scholarship athletes. Scholarship athletes, with their financial support from the athletic department felt secure financially, and saw no reason for paying additional monies to student-athletes. Their non-scholarship counterparts
struggled a little more for spending money, and one member in particular, Joseph, felt there should be extra financial assistance for student-athletes. Viewpoints across the group were similar on commercialization and the academic issues, with appreciation for the opportunities offered by commercial relationships, and nary a belief that academic improprieties that made headlines from other schools occurred much, if at all, on campus.
Focus Group/Individual Interview Two: Revenue Sport Student-Athletes

Each year, millions of television viewers tune into college football games as well as the NCAA Men’s and Women’s Basketball Tournaments in March. Those eyes are all transfixed on 18-22 year old athletes who have worked a lifetime to reach such an elite level of competition. Millions of dollars are exchanged between multi-national corporations and the NCAA and its member institutions. Meanwhile student-athletes, the center of attention, receive grant-in-aids and a place in the middle of this showcase, or public try-out and interview. This fiscal disparity in compensation has been the source of many hotly-debated conversations, This group of individuals, revenue student-athletes, is the center of this discussion on athletic reform. Nearly all of the calls for debate; from academic standards, to paying athletes, to exploitations and over-commercialization; revolve around the revenue sport athletes. The section offers a voice to a subset of this group of athletes, a look into a high-pressure world of constant balancing between athletic demands and academic responsibilities, all while being in the public eye every day. Due to the possible controversial nature of this material, the confidentiality of these participants will be given the utmost attention. Due to this, no other demographic information will be provided and each of the proper names listed in this section have been altered, some changing gender affiliations.

Payment of Student-Athletes

When discussing the need for payment of student-athletes, revenue athletes are discussed most often not only because of their revenue-generation potential to the athletic department, but also because of the nature of revenue sports. It is generally accepted that these activities lend themselves to participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
Student-athletes from these backgrounds are less apt to have financial support from their parents and the ability to supplement the room and board money they receive as part of their athletic grant-in-aid. Also, there is a perception that the high-profile nature of these sports creates an interest among wealthy fans and agents who are looking to profit; either financially, through a friendship or on the field successes; off of these young adults. This section examines the revenue student-athletes’ view of a number of issues connected with the previous statements and offers a glimpse into their thoughts and lives.

Parental support needed to survive. The student-athletes interacted with all discussed candidly the current financial situation they are in and the pressures they feel to pay their bills and live the way they desire to live. Most of them indicated that they receive assistance from their parents, and without that extra money, they would not be able to live comfortably, let alone play their sport and succeed academically. “I stay in the dorms like Jane, so that helps out also, plus I only live about 30 minutes away from here, so I can go home whenever I want, if I have time and my parents will help me out.” (Tom, Focus Group 8, 22-23, 4/22/2004).

But I know that for myself, there’s no time to have a job. So, we get a check and my parents have to help me with rent and stuff. Even in the summer when you can get a job, you have to do all your workouts and stuff. That’s even hard, but it’s a struggle. If you don’t have the help from your parents I don’t really know how you would do it. (Laney, Individual Interview 2, 10-14, 4/19/2004).

There was one student-athlete who indicated that there was no financial support being received from home, and the need to learn how to budget and make sacrifices was important. However, the amount of money being spent on extraneous goods like a car,
insurance, clothes and a cell phone are included in the monthly budget, and can be argued against as being above and beyond what is needed to survive.

I wouldn’t call it struggling, but it is real hard to budget everything, especially when you are doing things by yourself. We get like $850 or $860 a month, so you have your car and car insurance, utilities, cable and then you have got food and clothing and it comes to way more than $860, so it is hard to decide what you are going to do with the money that you have. (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 27-31, 4/22/2004).

*Enough time for only infrequent work, relegated mainly to summer camps.* At the revenue level, there is a lot of pressure on coaches and players to succeed because of the financial ramifications of a poor season or seasons. This pressure has served to extend the length of the sport season to year-round, and limited the opportunities for student-athletes of any kind, but especially the revenue student-athletes, to gain employment and the income that is derived from that. “Yeah, in the summer time, what happens is, there are people who offer jobs to (people on our) team, and all they want to do is pay you around. But you can’t do that…there are other jobs out there for certain people. You still can’t work that much due to class and practice. So some guys don’t even work.” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 61-63; 68-70, 4/22/2004). “Sometimes I work on campus, but that’s about it, mostly camps and stuff, that is about all we have time for.” (Jane, Focus Group 8, 57-58, 4/22/2004).

*Most would like extra money.* In light of the prior comments, and the lack of individual ability to be self-supporting, there were some student-athletes in this group who felt that student-athletes should receive additional monies to help with the expenses
they incur. “I think they should help us out. Like Oscar was saying, you have bills to pay. Then it would be nice to have a little extra money in your pocket since you’re working hard for it. It’s not like you’re just sitting at home.” (Jane, Focus Group 8, 120-122, 4/22/2004). “Oh yeah, I think we should get paid. But, we have extra money on our (student) ID that some stores around campus take. I think we should get money along with the (student) ID since it’s only taken in certain stores. And that goes quick.” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 126-128, 4/22/2004). However, there was some dissention from the ranks of those who feel there should be payment. “I’ve talked to (a teammate) and they don’t think we should be paid… most of the time, we’re coming here, we’re getting a free education, and that’s paying a lot. So there are two sides you can look at.” (Laney, Individual Interview 2, 75;79-81, 4/19/2004).

When asked about the perception that others on their team, or in their stakeholder group, have toward additional payment, many of them felt their peers would like to be paid. “I guess some of them do, but a lot of my teammates live off campus, they all got their own places and some of them are struggling a little bit. They may need extra money, (that would) help them out a lot.” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 161-163, 4/22/2004). Another stakeholder member had this to say, “I’m sure the football players think they should be paid. I mean they bring in a lot though. And they do work hard.” (Laney, Individual Interview 2, 75-77, 4/19/2004).

*Outside influences lead to corruption in athletics.* Conventional thinking holds that if you have high profile student-athletes playing revenue sports and they are faced with financial trouble, there are always “friends of the program” around that will be there to line the pockets of the student-athletes. This thought, that it is human instinct to look
for the means needed to survive and live the way one wishes to live, was somewhat supported in the discussions with student-athletes. “Once you pay your bills, you don’t have any money left. So you’re thinking I’m going to get this and I’m going to get that, and you’re asking for money, and the bad part is, if you get offered something you can’t take it. But the people that do take it, they get caught.” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 137-140, 4/22/2004).

Another student-athlete in another sport agrees with the line of thinking that student-athletes will look elsewhere for money if they need help and do not feel like they have enough in their current situation, “I think that’s a great argument. You look at some of the people who get in trouble it’s because they don’t really have a lot, of course they’re going to take it. I know agents work like that too. They kind of egg it on.” (Laney, Individual Interview 2, 151-154, 4/22/2004). While the enticement is great, Oscar went on to say that the opportunities for corruptive actions are not as great as believed by the public. Furthermore, the fear of the ramifications squelches most of the illegal activity.

It’s not as many as you think, but one or two will probably give you whatever you need for a couple years, you know what I’m saying? It’s not public or like that, people don’t just come up to you and offer you stuff like that, but it is, there are people around. You just don’t even want to risk it, because if you get caught that’s it. There are no ifs, ands, or buts; you’re done for a year at least. (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 149-153, 4/22/2004).

Commercialization and Over-Commercialization of Intercollegiate Athletics

As has been the case in other focus groups, the student-athletes did not have a lot of strong opinions for issues dealing with commercialization. There did not seem to be a
strong thought that they were being exploited and that the university and/or its athletic
department were making out with millions of dollars in money that was derived directly
from their performance as athletes. The discussion was interesting, and perhaps a sign
that the public cries against the burgeoning trend of commercialized agreements are
inflated and overly negative.

They do not feel commercially exploited. “I think that comes with the territory
too. I know when I was looking at….it’s going to always be the best player that gets his
jersey on the racks. I don’t necessarily think it is exploitation because like you said
earlier, it kind of goes both ways.” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 249-251, 4/22/2004). These
student-athletes are very close to the operation of the athletic department, whether they
understand the rationales behind the business dealings or not. They do understand that
the money gained provides opportunities for everyone in the athletic department,
including themselves, and are more understanding of those relationships. “I understand
the point, but I’m more happy just to see somebody with the jersey on than anything. It’s
hard getting money off having your number on a jersey and stuff, but a lot of people
don’t get their numbers on jerseys so I’m just happy to see my number on somebody’s

Athletic departments are about big business. One of the most interesting points
that was raised in the focus group meeting and individual interview was the view of the
athletic department. It speaks volumes about the changes in the college sports landscape
that have occurred in the past 15-20 years, with a focus on the generation of revenue in
order to support the growing demands of an athletic program. On the topic of the goal of
the athletic department, a sample of the views includes,
Its business. That’s all it is, big business. Once you get out of high school its business. College, pros, it’s just a business and you got to, there’s always somebody above somebody above somebody who’s making the calls and is going to take care of everything. But the whole key to the athletic department, I think, is to be the mediator between the average student-body and the student-athletes, just trying to keep everybody happy. (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 271-275, 4/22/2004).

Another view sounded like this,

Probably to make sure everything is successful, or as successful as they can be. To make sure the players are getting treated right. Some schools don’t have the opportunities like we have, like the training table, or the facilities we have to train in and study in, so probably just to make sure that their athletes are getting treated right cause they chose to come to (the University of) Pachay and they want to make sure that they’re comfortable here and have the best opportunities. (Jane, Focus Group 8, 265-269, 4/22/2004).

Academic Improprieties and Difficulties

While there have assuredly been academic misconduct in other programs, the news-worthy stories emanate mostly from revenue athletes receiving extra perks and being caught at major institutions. When graduation rates are posted each year, the field hockey team and the women’s golf team are not listed and bantered about in the newspapers and on television, it is the basketball team in the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament, or the top-five football team who has graduated only 29% of their athletes. Due to society’s amorous support of revenue sports at the intercollegiate level, the student-athletes that participate in those sports are scrutinized and forced to answer
questions that not many of their peers face. The researcher looked to dig deeper than the questions about their relationship with an assistant coach or an allegation of wrongdoing by a graduate assistant. The purpose of this section is to put a face on the athlete that is in the classroom, on the practice field and in the training room. Their voices are the most informed of any that have been, or will be portrayed in this project, as they are in the middle of the major issues that form the foundation of this study.

Many burdens and responsibilities. There are a number of responsibilities, duties, or burdens completed by these young adults. However, the general feeling is that there were no illusions of grandeur in the minds of these athletes when they entered school. They knew there was a lot of hard work to do, and the expectations of them would be high, so the responsibilities are all just expected, “You know what you’re getting into.” (Jane, Focus Group 8, 96, 4/2/2004). “The only way to play ball is to stay eligible, so you have to (do what you have to do in class). Whether you need to get done what they want you to or whatever else needs to get done. Some (coaches) say you have to keep your GPA at 2.5. Some are at 2.2. But it’s your responsibility.” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 100-102, 4/22/2004).

Another look at the situation came from the individual interview and illustrates the rigid schedule held and the driven nature of these athletes,

We’re playing a game that we love. Yeah sure, like I’m just so busy right now, but the week that we had off I was depressed because I didn’t know what to do with myself. So it’s kind of like, yeah maybe once in a while I’d just like a
breather. But I think it’s worth it. You just have to learn to manage your time.

You learn so much from having so many things thrown at you. (Laney, Individual Interview 2, 95-100, 4/19/2004).

The researcher came away from the discussion with the feeling that the engrained drive, and resilience developed in the student-athletes is vastly underrated by the general public and there is a misperception propagated by the media that portrays student-athletes as wanting everything for free and expecting the handout, or easy way out of the situation. It is the belief of the researcher that more effort by the media needs to be placed on the positive lessons of athletics. The potential that these student-athletes have as role models for thousands of young children is vast, and is squandered by the inherent need to find and report the negative stories.

**Difficulty in maintaining a balance.** In the focus group, a theme emerged that centered on the orientation and learning process needed by the student-athletes to get acclimated to the rigors of life as a Division I, revenue sport athlete.

It is pretty hard, at the beginning of the year. I had practice, conditioning, had to study, and after you ran a couple of miles sometimes you were too tired to even study. So I went from being a straight A student in high school to a student I didn’t even know. I had to pick it up next quarter, get myself together. I know if I don’t keep my grades up I won’t be able to play. So I had to have that mindset. Some things I had to cut out. I felt like I didn’t have a social life my fall quarter, I was like I’m just going to study for five minutes here and go to hang out. I had to cut all that out winter quarter to get myself back on track. (Jane, Focus Group 8, 176-182, 4/22/2004).
In a reactionary comment, Oscar replied, “Same here. When I was in high school I was a B student. But I came here and it was real hard, especially being away from home. You know, you’re living at home, this is Pachay. So I partied, everybody want to go out and have fun. But as an athlete, you can’t go out all the time. You have got to be focused and keep your grades up. And it’s kind of hard being a student-athlete.” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 188-192, 4/22/2004).

There was a feeling, and the quotes bore those out, that there was really a concerted effort by the student-athletes to succeed in the courses they were taking, and their grades and academic well-being was a priority. This perception is in direct contrast to the critics’ and skeptics’ belief that student-athletes are looking for a hand out and do not feel the need for school. To assist with the balance between academics and athletics, the athletes try to take a lighter schedule during the academic term that coincides with their season, in an effort to do well in both areas.

The way it works is, usually for (our) team…as you get older and you see, you start playing more, so what you try and do is in (that term) you take the classes that you need, but you don’t take your hardest classes in (that term) because you know you’re not going to have that much time to study. So you take maybe one hard course, and two, a lighter schedule. (Tom, Focus Group 8, 199-203, 4/22/2004).

Some academic corruption. The final area of discussion started around an overview of the issues that have occurred recently at other schools, and moved to inquire about the student-athletes’ perception of these issues, the ramifications they felt, and the tendency for those behaviors to occur at the University of Pachay. There seemed to be
mixed reactions to the news at Georgia, Minnesota, Fresno State and Ohio State, as some of the student-athletes’ seemed to believe that none of that happened at the University of Pachay, others were not so sure. Some had specific stories, while others believed their professors were understanding of their athletic responsibilities, but did not allow them to skate through school.

Here is a sample of some of their thoughts: “I don’t think it happens all the time, if the teacher is stupid enough to write 400 papers that’s on her.” (Jane, Focus Group 8, 315-316, 4/22/2004). An opposite view was this, “…there was a lady named Priscilla and she would help a lot with writing papers and stuff. I think especially papers are the biggest thing. Because you can sit there and write and they can be telling you stuff but it doesn’t look like they’re writing the paper for you, but they really are. I think that happens a lot.” (Laney, Focus Group 8, 319-323, 4/19/2004). A third opinion on the issue went like this, “I think it does happen a lot. Just no one finds out. I think every teacher tries to help out the student. It’s just basically helping out the programs together. We have to have winning programs; it’s helping out the coaches and athletics. I think it’s the athlete and teachers…” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 325-327, 4/22/2004).

Summary

Revenue athletes demonstrated different opinions than those of the other stakeholder groups examined. They exhibited a stronger opinion on the need for the payment of student-athletes, as well as unveiling the possibility of wider-spread academic issues. This group’s mentality, Oscar in particular, was that athletics is a business, and the desire for revenue generation outweighed the focus on opportunity. It was the group that fit the profile of an outlier group, with views that went in opposition to the others.
Focus Group/Individual Interview Three: Non-Revenue Sport Coaches

In an effort to give this study a well-rounded view of the perceptions of athletic department stakeholders, the researcher organized and met with student-athletes and administrators, as well as with the coaches who bridge the gap between the policy makers and student-athletes who are impacted by those policies and trends. In this meeting, the non-revenue coaches were contacted and responded with better than average interest. The interest of the head coaches of non-revenue, or Olympic sports, gave an early indication to the researcher that they embraced the idea of this forum to voice their thoughts and views on the idea of reform and the issues being addressed. In this meeting there were four coaches present. As stated above, all of them were head coaches and came from diverse areas of the athletic department. Two men and two women attended the meeting and were very candid and open in their responses.

Payment of Student-Athletes

All of the coaches were former athletes, and their athletic experiences in the previous decade or two appeared to mold their perceptions of today’s student-athletes and the situations they find themselves in. Comparative assessments of the current landscape of intercollegiate athletics to the setting of their athletic participation days prevailed and drove the discussion as it pertained to the payment of student-athletes and other financial inquiries. The constant contact with the student-athletes gave a close second-hand account of what it is like to be an athlete.

Solid financial situation of student-athletes. As stated above, these coaches’ feelings on the student-athletes’ financial situation stems from their own experiences as student-athletes and comparisons to the perks and advantages received by student-athletes
at Pachay. “There is no question in my mind that our athletes have way more money than when I did when I was a collegiate athlete. None… these kids have way more money to do a lot more things than I ever could have done when I was an athlete and I came from a middle-class, an upper-middle class, suburban family.” (Bill, Focus Group 4, 15-16; 18-20, 4/8/2004). “Well, I am always surprised that anybody worries whether an athlete has any money. I remember back to when I was in school and I didn’t have a dime. I had to pay for my own education, and I had to get two jobs.” (Silver, Individual Interview 5, 10-12, 4/22/2004).

The coaches were admittedly responsible for sports that do not generally lend themselves to lower-income athletes, however, they extended their experience beyond their own sports and generalized to the opportunities presented on all athletic teams. “I have some that are from extremely wealthy families and others that are struggling a little bit, but I wouldn’t say they are starving by any means. They may work in the summer, and do what they can, but they seem to have anything they want.” (Silver, Focus Group 4, 54-56, 4/8/2004). Another view echoed this view, “…they’re driving a new car, they’re going out to the movies, and they are going out to dinner to places that I don’t go to every night.” (Kim, Focus Group 4, 50-51, 4/8/2004). It is readily apparent from these quotes and others that dominated this section of the discussion that the non-revenue coaches discount the calls that student-athletes struggle to survive and may need additional aid to support themselves while they pursue their degree and athletic goals.

*Opportunities presented to athletes exceed grant-in-aid.* One area that the coaches seemed to think was being overlooked by student-athletes, and those people who support
the proposals of payment, was the litany of additional services that are available to athletes, but not to the student body without a fee.

If you add everything up for somebody that is on scholarship from out of state, it is like $25,000, so you are getting paid like $25,000, plus you think of all of the SASSO help, so all the tutoring help that is paid for at how much an hour… so you add that up, the health benefits, even the training, the traveling where these kids get to go to places they may never get a chance to go. It is like personal training that these kids get… (Kim, Focus Group 4, 252-254; 258-260, 4/8/2004).

A similar comment on this issue speaks to the overall value of grants-in-aid, “At what point do we finally decide that you are actually getting something extremely valuable that you would never be able to get if it weren’t for this scholarship and that is enough.” (Bill, Focus Group 4, 246-248, 4/8/2004).

The services being referred to by these coaches are not the same as money in the pocket of the student-athletes, but they do offer assistance that was most likely paid for by parents in the past, and would have had to be paid for while in school if that athlete wanted to continue on in the same manner as before.

And these kids usually pay, I don’t know about football and basketball, but I think that anything outside of high school, you pay for a trainer to train you, you pay to join an outside club. In (my sport), these kids are used to paying $300 every two months, just to be on a team, to pay a coach, and they still had to pay to travel, so you are right, it is upwards to $40,000 if you really want to look at it. It is $30-40,000 that we are paying these kids if they are on full rides… (Sam, Focus Group 4, 267-271, 4/8/2004).
Entitlement mentality of today’s student-athletes. Following the discussion on the intangible benefits received by student-athletes was a discussion regarding the mentality of entitlement demonstrated by many of the student-athletes compared to the mentality of the coaches themselves while they were student-athletes. The following quote offers a clear view into the change in perceptions of student-athletes,

I have a really unique perspective, because I started (our) program here. When I started the program, we took all of the kids from the club and they were our first team. When we started the (athletic) program here, we were way under-funded compared to what we have now…I had all of the kids that were paying to (play) in college, that had no coaching, no financial support at all, and spring break rolled around. We have spring break, and we are keeping the kids on, and all of these athletic policies to abide by, and you have to pay for meals, and we didn’t have much money in the budget. So we had enough to give each kid $20 for the week for meals. This is no lie, so I handed everybody two 10-dollar bills, and I heard this story from a girl on the team. One girl goes home and calls her friend and says ‘You won’t believe what Bill gave us at practice today. He handed me a 10-dollar bill, and then do you know what he did, he handed me another one’. These kids, they got a pair of Diaz Sports shorts and they were like pigs in heaven, and that was year one. Now, nine years later, they ask why we don’t have sunglasses in our Nike Apparel contract. (Bill, Focus Group 4, 499-511, 4/8/2004).

Silver added to the conversation, “To me, if we guarantee financial security when an individual is going to college, we are sending the wrong message. There isn’t a guarantee of financial security anywhere, you earn it that is what school is for, at least that is my impression of it.” (Silver, Individual Interview 5, 43-45, 4/22/2004). Another example of this aversion to sacrifice and perceived entitlement professed by the coaches was, “We all are very similar in age, and I mean I had a loan in college and my parents
were pretty wealthy. But, you’re right, most of those kids don’t like taking out loans. They want their grants, they want that kind of stuff, and if they don’t get those, they don’t do it.” (Sam, Focus Group 4, 72-74, 4/22/2004).

It was obvious from the focus group and individual interview sessions that the size of the athletic department, and the financial security it enjoys, has allowed for the athletes to be given opportunities that they do not seem to truly understand until it is broken down for them, or until they graduate or leave and have to pay for the services on their own. “No, we did that one time for them, to break down what we were giving to them and they were like, ‘OK, I didn’t realize it was that much.’ You can’t get a job off-campus and make that type of money, they are getting more than my assistant coaches.” (Kim, Focus Group 4, 279-281, 4/8/2004).

*Legislation ideas spell the end for non-revenue sports.* As coaches of sports that are not high profile, or popular with the general public and media, they are all under constant worry that the financial situation in intercollegiate athletics may spell the end of their programs. When the topic of proposed state legislations was broached the participants quickly dismissed them, saying that implementation of the facets of these legislative pieces would be the end of non-revenue sports in intercollegiate athletics. There simply is not enough money in the budget to cover the current situation, let alone additional financial burdens. Once financial burdens are increased, the least popular programs will be cut, and a few of the most popular candidates for elimination were in attendance.
There isn’t an athletic department in America that can come close to generating enough money to pay wages to athletes while they are training. We have 1000 (athletes), how would you pay them? Where would that money come from, and where would other institutions get it? Would it be taxpayer money, would there be a government grant? They say, well look at what they are making at the gate, well, we are making the gate now, we are one of the most prolific programs in America, but we would not have the money to do that. The first thing that would come down the pike, I guarantee it, if they said that football and basketball players, we have decided that because some former football player who is now a Congressman decides to pass legislation, we would cut sports at Pachay because we wouldn’t have enough money to do it for everybody. (Silver, Individual Interview 5, 53-62, 4/8/2004).

In support of Silver’s assessment, Sam saw the same thing occurring,

The other big thing with that full scholarship is that we are having enough problems keeping sports in athletic departments, if you put that in there, men’s swimming, gymnastics and wrestling will be gone, there will be no more of any of these sports in this country, it will be gone. Because, to keep up with the Joneses, a mid-major school has to do, they can’t afford to do a regular scholarship now. (Focus Group 4, 656-660, 4/8/2004).

Both of these coaches saw a different possible solution to the financial problems of the athletic department. These coaches believe, however, that tuition waivers, instead of the full grant-in-aid, would be useful in offering more people financial assistance, but would take away from the financial support offered to those currently on scholarship.
“I’m sorry, in my way of thinking, I would rather have tuition waivers and that is it. Everyone gets tuition waivers, but no room and board, nobody gets room and board, books anything else, tuition waiver and that is it.” (Sam, Focus Group 4, 660-662, 4/8/2004). Silver’s assessment of the situation, included a similar conclusion about the viability of tuition waivers,

All of the things that I have pushed for the past 20 years are not going to happen. See, I think that athletics should have tuition waivers, only the tuition is waived for two and a half times the varsity spots, so any kid in any sport, anywhere in America can go to any college for the same cost, room and board. The decision shouldn’t be made on which school to attend based on the extra $500 a coach can give to a kid, instead you have a tuition waiver and everyone is equal. (Silver, Individual Interview 5, 402-406, 4/22/2004).

Whether or not this idea is implemented remains to be seen, but the clear feeling taken from these meetings is that even in a stable financial situation like that enjoyed in Pachay’s athletic department, there is still a defensive, almost militant, feeling that these individuals have taken on. These coaches’ livelihoods, and the future of the sport they love are on the line. Without serious reform to the current situation, the lack of financial stability in athletics, and in higher education as a whole, has the potential to eliminate entire sports that have had a place in the college athletics landscape for a century or more.

My take on this whole movement of the student rights is to do away with the non-revenue sports. If you follow the money, it is costing the NCAA a lot of money to run non-revenue sports, the Olympic sports, and they are a little upset because the Olympic committee won’t give them (NCAA) a seat on the committee, I think
they are upset over that. If you follow the money, I think the whole idea is to get rid of non-revenue sports, is to get more money for the rich. (Lapua, Focus Group 4, 761-766, 4/8/2004).

Commercialization and Over-Commercialization of Intercollegiate Athletics

In their discussion of the payment of student-athletes, the non-revenue coaches were very cohesive in their views of the current landscape and the potholes and pitfalls that laid ahead for their sports. When the topic of commercialization was discussed, the collective was still in agreement on the vast majority of the issues; only the passion was not as evident. The coaches displayed strong opinions, but the negative connotations of commercialization were drowned out by the positives, so there was very little interest in changing the current situation.

Commercialization is gaining an advantage. Prior to entering this discussion, a definition of commercialization is needed as a starting point for the other points to be made. “Commercialization is where someone wants to gain an advertising advantage by using what someone else has that somebody recognizes as being meaningful. I want to be associated with a great athlete; they are associated with being strong and powerful, like Lance Armstrong to sell bikes.” (Silver, Individual Interview 5, 232-235, 4/22/2004).

Commercialization varies with goals of athletic departments. Before being able to address the various facets of commercialization, the discussion revolved around the athletic department and the decisions that comprised the policies that ran the department.

Here is the thing, a university has to decide. What function does it want its athletic department to have? Harvard has made a decision, and so has Pachay. Pachay’s decision is that they want to have a comprehensive program, 36 sports,
they want to be nationally competitive and they want it to be self-supporting. Now, talk about asking of the moon. If the universities are going to make the decision to have a comprehensive program for its student-athletes, they want that athletic department to be nationally-competitive and they want that athletic department to be self-supporting, then they are going to have to commercialize the revenue aspects that they have. (Bill, Focus Group 4, 1027-1034, 4/8/2004).

Bill continued with his statement, touching on the missions of various institutions and how those missions will be fulfilled,

Really, it becomes about what the universities want from their athletic departments, if the universities want the notoriety from a football national championship, or a basketball national championship, the ability to service 1000 student-athletes through a myriad of different sports and to not have to burdened with the financial responsibility of either of those things, then you are going to have to let your athletic department go out and use all of those resources, including the commercialization, signage, the Blimp, whatever, in order to accommodate all three of those things. (Bill, Focus Group 4, 1041-1047, 4/8/2004).

Competing views on trends in commercialization. All of the participants for this group were former athletes and they were able to look back to their competitive days and examine the trend of commercialization, and its influence on college sports. The responses were more varied for this discussion than any other throughout the discussion and were very interesting to listen to. On one hand, there is this view of the current environment against the past,
I don’t know where restaurants get this stuff, but there is this Parker Pen ad from the 1940’s and it has all of the great college football coaches talking about how great Parker Pens were. Pop Warner, Knute Rockne, and all of the great names from back then. Are sports really more commercialized now than they were back then, or is it that information bombards us so much more now than it did back then? Before, you didn’t log on to the internet and have ads pop up on your screen, or turn on ESPN, but every media outlet was filled with advertisements covering college football. (Bill, Focus Group 4, 894-900, 4/8/2004).

In opposition to this view is one held by a coach that sees a conflict in the relationship between athletic departments and commercial entities.

But it is the way we have gone about giving more opportunities to more athletes, and it is by being more commercialized. Our own athletic department has had to commercialize, by selling space everywhere… That is commercialization that is what it has done for us. It has changed the entire picture in an interesting way. I am in the system, and I will play the game like everyone else, but what is occurring is fairly realistic, but commercialization creates conflict, it really does. (Silver, Individual Interview 5, 261-262; 271-274, 4/22/2004).

Other views looked at the impact that commercialization and the media have on the long-term success of the sport. The atmosphere in these discussions was one of survival, and the coaches were willing to go any route they could to ensure the survival of their sport. “I don’t think that commercialization has hit my sport, yes we change products, we changed the NCAA championships so we could break records and get on
television and make news, but we did that so we could try to save our sport, and in (my sport) that is the biggest concern, saving the (men’s side of the) sport.” (Sam, Focus Group 4, 869-873).

*Media has an influence on everything.* This focus group took to examining the proliferation of sport consumption in America, especially in the college ranks, and the impact that media has on different entities, including the university. “Look at St. Joseph’s this year, I am telling you what, their applications will skyrocket because of their basketball team. They don’t even know where St. Joe’s is, but they know about the school now and they would not have that opportunity to thrive without the exposure they received from their basketball program. I think that is the greatest thing.” (Kim, Focus Group 4, 982-985, 4/22/2004).

The following story was related by one of the coaches to an international athlete, it refers to the far reaching impact of the media, college sports on student life on campus and athletic commercialization. It wraps up the topic well, and offers insight into the positive impact that intercollegiate athletics can have on the greater university.

I just think it is so much more beneficial than just athletics and people don’t understand that, and I understand that because I have kids from all over the world on my team, and I have a girl go home to Turkey, and she was stopped by two people because she had an Pachay T-shirt on, in Istanbul. These two people went to school at Pachay, and while they weren’t athletes, they wanted to talk about what a great experience they had. That is a great thing for the school, you can’t
tell me that having people from all over the world recognize Pachay isn’t a good thing for Pachay, and these two people were not athletes. (Sam, Focus Group 4, 992-998, 4/22/2004).

Academic Improprieties and Difficulties

As part of the group commonly looked at as the culprit for academic scandals, non-revenue coaches were asked for their insights into the amount of responsibilities facing the student-athletes, the quality of student that is coming onto their team, and the rigor of the admission process for entry into college for those stellar individuals. Finally, the attention turned to the academic scandals that have occurred across the country. The coaches commented on the impact those distant problems had on their programs, and the athletic department as a whole.

Amount of Responsibilities

Athletes can handle the burdens they are given. One of the most vital skills that student-athletes must develop is the ability to balance their athletic and academic lives, while keeping a personal or social life that allows them balance. When asked about the different “burdens” that are pulling at the athletes, the coaches questioned the term “burdens” and then, unanimously, said that they are busy, but they can handle what is thrown their way and more if needed. “I think if you are going to consider practice a burden, you have to wonder why they are doing the sport.” (Bill, Focus Group 4, 299-300, 4/8/2004). A second member of the group getting back to the benefits received by the student-athletes, said “I don’t see SASSO as being part of the 20 hours a week, and it should never be because that is a benefit, and no other student has that. They have tutors, they have people that are going to keep an eye on their academics, and their grades are better because of it.” (Kim, Focus Group 7, 312-314, 4/8/2004).
In the following quote, student-athletes are compared to other students on campus who are focused on preparing for a field in performance arts, but, because of the lack of media attention, and resulting public scrutiny, there are no calls for extra help or limiting the time they put into their work.

Any performance artist, performance major, whether it is dance or art or music, is practicing their craft, particularly if they are on a school of music or a dance school scholarship, is practicing their craft, they are in concerts, symphonies, and doing performances, and whatnot, I would compare their hours to an athletes’, and nobody seems to feel that that is unreasonable. They are asking too much of the students, yet for some reason, student-athletes are looked at, and the school of music doesn’t have an academic support service, yet people look at the athletes and they are like ‘look at all they have to do’. (Bill, Focus Group 4, 350-357, 4/8/2004).

A harsher appraisal of the situation came from Silver, who said,

We guarantee him study tables, and I make my guys go to study tables, but why do we believe that by giving him more is going to guarantee him more success? And their answer is that he is an athlete, and he is putting all his time in athletics that he doesn’t have enough time for his academics, so we have to be sure to give him another source to ensure his success…I hear my guys complaining about not having enough time to get through everything, with practice and everything else. I ask them how many hours they spent playing video games or watching television. (Individual Interview 5, 336-340; 349-350, 4/22/2004).
Twenty hours a week rule is bogus. Seemingly the biggest qualm these coaches had with the NCAA and its rules was in their governing of the amount of time a student-athlete could spend practicing and participating in his or her chosen sport. Currently, the NCAA limits participation to 20 hours per week for practice within the playing season. The philosophical differences lie in the desires and intent of the student-athletes. This rule, coaches say, does not permit a student-athlete who wants extra assistance to receive it.

I don’t sit here and have the problem with the 20 hour a week rule that Sam has, but there is a reality here, and the reality is that the people that are willing to work harder, or smarter or better, are going to be able to perform at a higher level. I don’t have a problem with there being a limit on things, what I have a problem with is the idea that we have to restrict those that are interested in doing more.


Sam also clearly expressed disdain for the 20 hour rule,

…we go way over the 20 hours a week with one part of my team, and it is voluntary…but if they didn’t (volunteer), we would still be last in the (conference)...I have a hard time with 20 hours a week, and I will fight anybody on it, I think it is a ridiculous, arbitrary number. If you are a flutist (flautist?), or a cellist, or somebody studying here in music, let me tell you, they are doing a lot more than 20 hours a week to be the best. An engineering person, if they want to be a 4.0 student, they work way more than 20 hours a week, and they are doing it because they want to do it, and these athletes are doing it because they want to do
it, and if they don’t want to do it, then they should not be on the team. If they
don’t want to practice and be that good, they are not going to do it. (Sam, Focus

Sam supported this statement with an example of athletes taking control of a
situation on the team without Sam’s knowledge. The actions of the student-athletes were
proof that some of them are truly interested in going beyond the mandates, but are not
allowed to with supervision or coaching.

My team had a meeting last year, we had some problems in the spring and it was
because half of the team wanted to be better, and the other half wanted to stay the
same, so they didn’t want to do spring training, they didn’t want to work hard, but
they didn’t want to be left out. These girls finally stood up and it was the
difference in our team this year, because they stood up and said, ‘If you don’t
want to do it, then get out, because we don’t want you on our team, because we
want to get better, and we don’t want people who don’t want to get better on our
team’. This didn’t come from me, or any of the other coaches, but they were
dragging the rest of the team down, and a couple of the girls got out, and the rest
went with the team. (Sam, Focus Group 7, 444-451, 4/8/2004).

While Sam was the most vocal against the rule, Kim, Lapua, Bill and Silver were
all in agreement that the rule is like being handcuffed and limits those student-athletes
that would like to further develop themselves. The following is a quote from a coach that
discusses the unwritten reward system critics say would arise from increased practice,
Academic council last year had a meeting and they said that you can’t reward them for doing voluntary workouts. I said ‘that is like a student coming in asking for extra help, saying they want to do better in the class and you are not able to give them help’. You are naturally going to reward them because they get better for coming in and doing extra work, so it is going to look to the other kids like they received preferential treatment for coming in, but it is just that they came in and practiced. (Kim, Focus Group 4, 456-461, 4/8/2004).

The other side of this issue gets at the responsibilities already placed on the student-athletes shoulders, and those athletes who are not interested in spending so much time feeling they must go and ending up unhappy with the experience.

*Higher admissions standards and academic success of student-athletes.* Just as the 20 hour per week rule was one of great interest to the coaches, the academic successes of their student-athletes was a topic that really brought out the proud parent side of the coaches.

My girls last quarter had a 3.4 GPA and I only had two kids under a 3.0 on my team. All while we were in-season, practicing, traveling and all of the other supposed negative pressures on their academics. My girls are amazing, they work hard, are conscientious and very good in the classroom, I couldn’t be prouder of them. (Sam, Focus Group 4, 1266-1268, 4/8/2004).

While they are so impressed with their current student-athletes, the coaches are equally awed by the requirements set in place by admissions that the student-athletes must meet for enrollment in school. “Women’s hockey had a kid tossed back from admissions, she had to write an explanation to get her admitted and the kid said that she
already had her Princeton acceptance; she was wondering why she had to go through the process.” (Bill, Focus Group 4, 1096-1098, 4/8/2004). This thought was supported by another,

It is so much more difficult to get athletes into school. Today I was looking through the girls that have said yes, and the girls that have said we are still working on getting through admissions. This one girl had an 1140 on her SAT…five years ago, I would have never seen an 1140 pass my desk to get into school. I love the fact that in the five years I have been here that the school is so much better, and I can sell it so much better than I could five years ago, academic-wise. (Sam, Focus Group 4, 1073-1075; 1082-1084, 4/8/2004).

This increased effort for academic excellence helps the coaches on the recruiting trail, as they can now go into a prospect’s home and pitch to the family the academic facilities and reputation of the school. The academic to athletic relationship is balanced by the impact that high profile athletic success has had on the academic community,

But I think we are trying to become a better academic institution, what is helping that is our athletic notoriety, things like winning a football national championship. When that happens, applications to the university go up naturally, so I think that academia has benefited from the athletic success, a lot of them just don’t realize it. (Kim, Focus Group 4, 1068-1071, 4/8/2004).

Impact of other scandals – chasm between coaches and faculty. From a discussion on the synergistic relationship between athletics and academics comes a topic that is nearly opposite of the previous one. Academic scandals have hit from Fresno, California to Minneapolis, Minnesota to Athens, Georgia and many spots in between. The final true
theme in this focus group revolved around the impact those seemingly distant problems had on these coaches and their efforts to run successful and clean programs. The coaches did not believe it was a very large problem in sport, but is reported on because of its negative nature,

Here is the thing, look at it in a little different context. Crime occurs, people get robbed, murdered, assaulted in (this city). Is (this) an unsafe town? Academic improprieties occur, given the overall scope of student-athletes and athletic programs out there, how big of a percentage of it is really going on? (Bill, Focus Group 4, 1136-1139, 4/8/2004).

Coaches also iterated their belief that the impact of other scandals did have an impact on their programs, as the public perception of athletic departments was influenced. This made it harder for the coaches to pitch their program to cynical parents and perhaps steered away possible donors from the athletic department. In the end, the most influence came from controversial issues on the campus, even if it was not their program.

I think it hurts a little more when it is your school, because you have questions on the integrity of the program and you address it. I don’t know if we have lost some people because of it, I can’t be certain on that, but it definitely hurts a little bit when you cite the academics and how well you are doing and that we are picking better students and that news hits you on the backside. (Kim, Focus Group 4, 1164-1168, 4/8/2004).

All of the talk of academic scandals quickly moved in a different direction to a conversation of the relationship of coaches and faculty members, and the chasm that
exists between the two. The coaches say this gap squelches all communication and
hinders the actions of both parties. The coaches struggle to inform the faculty of their
role and desire for their athletes to be successful in the classroom, and the faculty
members get a bad name with the coaches for being only interested in their research and
academic business.

Academic wise, I will be interested to see what the academic side has to say about
all of these issues, but they don’t know it. It would be like me telling them how to
teach and how their dean enforces the rules in the college of education, but you
are asking people to observe something they don’t know about. (Sam, Focus

An example of this gap comes in this skeptical look at the views of professors,
“No, you’re wrong, and here is the faculty perspective. My class is terribly important,
and missing my class is a horrible thing. A professor doesn’t want to think that a kid can
learn whatever they need from a book because what is their utility?” (Bill, Focus Group
4, 1275-1277, 4/8/2004). In the end though, there is some interest in bridging the current
gap from the coaches’ end. Perhaps in the future this attitude will prevail and a lot of the
lack of understanding between the two factions can dissolve.

I want to know the faculty, I think it is awesome, and it is sad that I can’t talk to
them, and I would guess that these professors would agree with us that it has
gotten so far removed that it is really sad. We have no relationships with the
professors on campus, not because we don’t want to, some may not want to, but
because we shouldn’t. (Sam, Focus Group 4, 1232-1236).
Summary

Non-revenue coaches were a very responsive group, not only to the invitation for participation in the study, but in their candid answers and insights on the impact of the issues on their sports. Much of their opinion was formed from a comparison of today’s situation to the conditions they faced as student-athletes. In contrast to the views of the student-athletes, there was a strong feeling that the responsibilities faced by student-athletes were more than adequately rewarded via a grant-in-aid and/or all of the other perks received. Members of this group listed top-notch training facilities, academic assistance, apparel and future employment opportunities granted for student-athletes of the University of Pachay as examples of those services that are not accounted for in the listed cost of a grant-in-aid. The impact of commercialization is vital in the eyes of these coaches toward the continuation of their programs and sports across the country. Limiting revenue generation limits the opportunities, which spells the end in their eyes, for non-revenue sports. An interesting revelation that arose from this group surrounded the communication gap that had developed between the athletic department and academia on college campuses. It was their interest to form better relationships with faculty members, in hopes that both sides will be able to see the other does, and to dispel the myths and negative connotations that surround both sides.
Focus Group/Individual Interview Four: Revenue Sport Coaches

Pressure, money, influence; each of these is a term used to describe the causes of problems within intercollegiate athletics. Due to the media’s influence in molding the public’s perception of intercollegiate athletics, revenue sports such as football, men’s and women’s basketball, and hockey at some schools are looked to as aiding the aforementioned causes. It is only fitting then that a sample of this group of individuals be organized and allowed to give their views on the situations that arise in their programs and the impact policies have on the ability to succeed in their jobs. This group of stakeholders at University of Pachay is very small, only about 15 total. For this study two of them, a male and a female, were able to meet, while the others were unable to meet due to scheduling conflicts. While this number is smaller than the researcher would have liked, the coaches’ overall candidness and insight in both meetings was significant in permitting a complete picture of perceptions to be painted.

Payment of Student-Athletes

Interaction is a key to clearly understanding the overall picture of these issues. Each day these coaches deal with, and see the problems; physical, mental, financial and personal; faced by their student-athletes giving them a solid look into their current situation and a feel for what reform is needed. Also, in the recruitment of these athletes, the coaches gain a feel for the financial background they are from, and the wherewithal and willingness of the parents of these student-athletes to provide money for day-to-day expenses. Based on these experiences, combined with their knowledge of the functioning athletic department and up-to-date nature on the current topics facing college coaches and intercollegiate athletics, this group provided valuable insight into the proposed need for
payment of student-athletes and the impact any decision would have on the athletic departments that house revenue sport programs nationwide. An indication of the coaches view on their level of familiarity with the student-athletes’ situation and thoughts on the NCAA rules that were addressed in the following pages was given by one of the coaches in the focus group,

I would say that when we talk about rules and legislation and the possibility of paying athletes, when you look at the NCAA book, how thick it is, I look at what is in the spirit of the best interest of the kid, and I think that is something that as you go on down the line, and yes it is sports and entertainment, but we are coaches and teachers, we educate. We have a chance to work a heck of a lot closer with kids on a regular basis that might have relationships with different professors and they build their network, but we get to see them a lot and I think if it is something that is in the best interest of the kid, that has to be taken under serious consideration. (Joe, Focus Group 3, 227-233, 4/7/2004).

Restraints on athletes to work. Due to the low cost of participation in some, and the excessive amount of money possible at the professional level of revenue sports, the athletes that participate in these activities are more apt to come from inner-city, or poorer backgrounds than the non-revenue sports such as golf or field hockey. This underprivileged background lends itself to less financial support from home, but more pressure to succeed on the court, and perhaps fewer opportunities to work and generate extra income to be used for spending money to live.
…an athlete comes in and prior to this year we have had some real restrictions on athletes in two ways: First, it is hard to get a job outside of what we are doing, and the second was legislation that used to say that you are an athlete that has a college scholarship and you can’t work. Maybe a third one is that our kids, because they have to under load at times due to some of the constraints of the sport. (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 17-22, 4/7/2004).

This trend creates a difficult situation for all parties involved, but Ralph included “prior to this year” in his statement, perhaps because of the efforts made to permit student-athletes to work more during the school year. NCAA has made strides in accommodating student-athletes’ financial situation, but the increased (commercialization) money in athletics has driven up the pressure on the coaches to win, which has filtered down to the student-athletes who are now asked to practice and train more than ever before. So it is cyclical, and those burdens and responsibilities, looked at through the eyes of the revenue coaches, were addressed later in this focus group section.

An example of student-athletes’ responsibilities is provided by Ralph,

Now, the kids are allowed to work, so I would venture to say that in some programs there are unwritten regulations and thoughts that the athletes need to spend more time than this, spend more time with the weight lifting and running and staying in good shape and everything else that is expected of these kids, and expected of these kids to take care of on their own time. For example, we want our kids to play in pick-up games, as well as do their weight training in the off-season, as well as their studies and community service and other things. (Focus Group 3, 31-37, 4/7/2004).
For the most part, the jobs that are worked by the student-athletes are camps from their sport, mostly for a period of one or two weeks, perhaps a couple of times over the summer, “They all do to a degree, be it camps or other kinds of jobs, but they also are going to school…so when I say camps, I mean (sport) camps and other camps around the area.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 74; 95, 4/7/2004). This thought was supported by a view on steady, outside employment, “For a steady job, I would say that is very difficult. For example, we have kids who want to do that, but things keep them from doing that, perhaps a summer trip for example.” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 4/7/2004). As illustrated above, the need for money to live, and the responsibilities of the grant-in-aid compete for supremacy within the student-athlete. However, the situation perhaps is not as dire as the worst estimates indicate, as evidenced by the next section.

Some student-athletes struggle financially, but most do fine. Stereotypically, revenue athletes are looked at as the most apt to be from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the eyes of their coaches, the landscape is not as bleak as is sometimes portrayed. “I guess there are around 1000 student-athletes, and I agree with Ralph that as varied as the student population here at Pachay is, that some kids are fine, and others need help.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 51-53, 4/7/2004). “I would say that how many kids, out of (all of them) that go here are not in that situation, eating Oodles of Noodles? Hitting up the 7-Eleven for the two hot dogs for a dollar deal? I think that it is out there, but is it every kid? Absolutely not, but what is the minority and majority out of those 1000 kids you are looking at out of the rest of the general population? I don’t know.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 143—147, 4/7/2004).
Ralph feels like the grant-in-aid is a wonderful opportunity for the student-athlete and their family, and there is an expectation that support will be given in the current system. However, he believes, if the student-athlete does not have the funding to live adequately, they will turn to other, illegal forms of payment.

But if you are going to college anyway, it is a heck of a financial burden that your parents don’t have, but on the other hand, we have kids that play for us that would not be able to go to college if it weren’t for a scholarship to college for basketball…and some parents are willing to send their parents money to help out, and we have had kids that are from single-parent, large families and broken homes who would find it very difficult…if they (student-athlete) don’t get it one way, we found that kids sell tickets, kids sell sneakers, and it leads to a variant of other problems because we are all on this earth to survive. (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 108-112; 119-121; 41-43, 4/7/2004)

The perception of the current situation within an athletic department is dependent upon the dissemination of information, and as is the case in any area, the farther you are away from the problem or issue, the more your perception is skewed and reliant upon second and third-hand information. This is a problem area that these coaches see, that sometimes the loudest charges are coming from those who are receiving information from distant channels, and are making those decisions don’t have an accurate picture of the situation.

Well, I think if you were sitting in here with a group of parents who are paying for their kids to go to school, I am not sure if they would have a great deal of empathy for someone who is on a full-ride. Yeah, right, they need more money,
well; we are paying for our kid to go to school. So I think that the general public is probably mixed on it, I am not sure if they are apathetic. (Joe, Focus Group 3, 181-185, 4/7/2004)

Resistance to proposed legislation. Parts of these changes are already cropping up around the country, from Nebraska and Texas to California. The coaches present had some opinions on these proposed pieces of legislation and the impact they will have on intercollegiate athletics as we know it. They looked at the individual plans within the pieces of legislation and talked briefly about a few of them.

On multi-year scholarships: “My thing is that this (multi-year scholarships) isn’t how the world works. You don’t get on tenure when you pick up the job. Very few coaches are on multiple year contracts.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 342-344, 4/7/2004).

On easing transfer rules: “It is the same way I feel about the changes about transfer rules for the student-athletes. You come to the school, and as unfortunate as it may be if a person leaves, and the kids wouldn’t understand the rules, and I think that it just opens up a can of worms.” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 348-351, 4/7/2004).

On increasing ability to gain outside employment: “Not necessarily no limit on outside employment, but they should be able to work, there should be times when you can work. Now, I wouldn’t want to worry about holding a practice 10 minutes longer than planned and I have to worry about a kid not showering because they have to run out quickly because they have to get to a job. So, there are things that are not practical…” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 353-356, 4/7/2004).
These views were supported non-verbally by the other member in the focus group in field notes taken throughout the meeting. They give a good indication as to how the revenue coaches perceive college athletics as they are now, and the impact these pieces of legislation will have on college sports.

Commercialization and Over-Commercialization of Intercollegiate Athletics

Revenue sports are the athletic department’s meal ticket, as the funds they generate and the fervor they cultivate among supporters support the activities of the rest of the department. One way to accomplish the fundraising that is needed to support a program the size of Pachay’s is to enter into commercial agreements, and receive money from broadcast rights. The relationships that are forged with private organizations and media companies are focused on the revenue sports, specifically football and men’s basketball at most schools, so the views of this group toward commercialization were interesting, as they are a first-hand description or opinion of the impact commercialization has on their programs, those which are affected most.

Education is the main goal of the athletic department. The goal or mission of the athletic department is an important piece to the overall puzzle, as the direction it points will influence many of the decisions that are made on a day-to-day basis. As viewed by the revenue coaches, “We (the athletic department) are in the business of people, and the goal is to educate student-athletes to the best of our ability, to make them upstanding citizens and students. I think that is the goal of any arm of the university with the exception of development whose goal it is to clearly make money.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 465-467, 4/7/2004). Following in this line of thinking, the multi-million dollar athletic budget is that large because of the opportunities that are afforded for the student-athlete,
to assist in the education of student-athletes to be upstanding citizens, as noted in the goal statement. “I think the number one goal has to be the kids, because without the kids none of us would be here, and that has to be first in my opinion. And, to pay for all of this, you have to earn money and raise revenue because you want to be able to pay for kids to go to school.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 474-476, 4/8/2004).

Commercialization provides opportunities for student-athletes. Athletics are commonly viewed as the leader in commercialization, but the revenue coaches were pointed in their argument that commercialization is everywhere on campus. As the funding in higher education diminishes, departments and sections are forced to look to the private sector for money to support their programs. However, athletics is the highest profile entity on campus and everyone sees the agreements reached by the athletic department, and can somewhat track the flow of the money accrued. “The university is commercialized, the brand name, the hospital, I would say that the biggest thing is that there are not 105,000 people watching a doctor perform surgery.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 408-409, 4/7/2004). “It seems like everybody’s little league fields are looking like it, and NASCAR, and arenas having to change their names after mergers or bankruptcies.” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 546-547, 4/8/2004).

Building off the idea that everyone is commercializing themselves, as the demand for funds increases, the coaches felt like those agreements offer opportunities for them to do their job, and for their athletes to attend school and enjoy all of the perks that come with that chance. They iterated, though, that the relationships with various companies have no influence on them when they get inside the lines and are competing. “You know, I suppose there is, but when you are trying to win a game, all of that stuff in the
background goes away.” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 551-552, 4/8/2004). More importantly, the money garnered from these agreements provides opportunities on a college campus for cultural enrichment, an opportunity that many do not get to realize because of various restraints like socio-economic restrictions, location, and perhaps lack of familial interest in such activities. Money gained from a sponsorship contract offers student-athletes exposure to a litany of events that occur on campus. Ralph, in particular, embraced those possibilities and spoke of the importance placed on them in the team he coaches.

People in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and others watch what we are doing and there is a whole other segment of the university that has trouble reaching people two towns away. That is the best thing about living in a university community, that you can expose yourself to so much culture and it is not just in the sports, and there are just so many things that go on here on campus, but sports is where the largest number supports and that is where the companies will want to put their dollars in their search for exposure. (Focus Group 3, 557-562, 4/8/2004).

Media coverage provides opportunities. The reach and impact athletics has is a result of the vast public support for sports, whether participatory or spectator. The conduit of consumption is often the media. Various forms of media permit the dissemination of information pertaining to sports, which raises the awareness for individual people, their actions, accomplishments and failures. Over time the media’s influence has grown. Society’s involvement and athletics’ reliance on the dollars that are being produced have allowed the media to forge its own niche within the landscape of college athletics. The media is now working to expand that niche. The revenue coaches, always wary of the media, spoke to the positive impact it has on exposure, but also the
flexibility it demands, with changing schedules and altered plans. “I think both here and at (the last school we worked for), we have moved a game because the men had an opportunity to be on TV, and they moved a game for us to be on TV…I think it is a big deal, exposure for the university, exposure for the team, I think it is an opportunity.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 584-585, 587-588, 4/8/2004). That word, opportunity, continued to stand out throughout the discussion of commercialization and the brief focus on the media. “I think it is very important for the program to be on television. I don’t want to sacrifice my team, but it is still important for the program to be on TV.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 611-613, 4/7/2004).

Academic Improprieties and Difficulties

One of the loudest complaints against revenue coaches is their seeming disinterest in the academic progress of their student-athletes. These coaches had heard the calls before and went back to the earlier discussion about how distance from the issue, or epicenter of activity (in this case, coaches interest in student-athletes’ academics), propagated a knowledge gap. The disparity between belief and reality eventually grew to immense sizes. During the discussion on academics, the coaches covered a lot of ground, but honed in on the balancing act needed between winning and preparing the student-athletes academically, the time constraints placed on their players, the effect that scandals had on their higher profile positions, and areas that needed changes if the current system of intercollegiate athletics was to remain strong, and grow stronger.

Pressure to win affects the academic mindset. Coaches in this area did not deny there was, and is, a great amount of pressure placed on their shoulders to be successful on the court or field or ice. The money they help to generate is the lifeblood of the athletic
department, and if they falter on the field, the interest wanes, as do ticket and merchandise sales. Eventually media companies turn their back, taking with them millions of dollars. “…and I think that sometimes you just don’t think about it, but obviously there is an awful lot more money involved for the elite programs…especially when you see how ostentatious some of the people become with money, I don’t know” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 247-248; 251, 4/7/2004).

…I think there is a hell of a lot of responsibility that people have as far as being public figures… I think there are greater stakes, and the ability to make more money. With that comes responsibilities, be it TV shows or being an upstanding person in the community or philanthropic things that people do, either publicized or unpublicized, I think that the job is there are so many more responsibilities that go along with being a coach. (Joe, Focus Group 3, 258-262, 4/7/2004).

A final thought on the idea of pressure infuses the relationship of pressure and corruption and the personal decisions that must arise for that linkage to occur,

…the coverage of sports and TV dollars and revenues are so much more now than they were… so I think there are greater stakes, and with that comes greater responsibility and people are compensated more because of that added responsibility. Is it more pressure, or more corruption, I think that gets to the ethics of each individual person.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 266-269, 4/7/2004).

Teaching time management skills to manage burdens. Moving from the pressures on college coaches, to a look at their perceptions of the pressures that face their subjects, the student-athletes they work with, and upon whom they place a percentage of the pressure, everyday. The researcher did not find their responses surprising, perhaps due to
understanding the mindset of a coach. If a coach were to believe his or her student-athlete had too much on their plate, and could not complete the needed tasks; mentally, physically and emotionally; one would believe they would not place many additional burdens onto the shoulders of those athletes. “No (there are not too many burdens). It is discipline, it is life. Are there too many responsibilities with being married, having a family, having two jobs, being part of the car pool, they are getting ready for life because that is how it is in the real world.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 275-277, 4/7/2004).

While the burdens and responsibilities may not be too numerous, or difficult for the student-athletes to overcome in the minds of the coaches, they did realize the importance of teaching their student-athletes lessons in managing the responsibilities they do have, on keeping a balance in their lives and keeping in perspective the amount of work they are undertaking. All of these were seemingly concerted efforts to provide the student-athlete with all the support they could possibly need, assisting their development. “It is (as) important to us to teach time management skills to a freshman as it is to teach (fundamental) skills. Once we do the time management thing, it is much easier to get to the (sport details).” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 289-291, 4/7/2004).

One effort the coaching staffs wanted to make in the development of their student-athletes was to inform them of the great opportunity they have at Pachay. Imploring them to take advantage of all of the services available to them was important to the coaches, as they wanted to shift the focus away from the work and effort being put forth, and shift some of it to the developmental possibilities on campus. “I think with so
many life lessons and reality, and (our head coach) is very good at giving a life story and putting things into a perspective, and they need to grow up and be seasoned.” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 313-315, 4/7/2004).

*Scandals perpetuate stereotypes of student-athletes.* In a complete shift of direction, another area that drew some keen interest was the academic and moral scandals that have occurred at various institutions. Some of the coaches were upset that the individuals who were responsible for the problems were giving their profession a black eye and creating more bad press from which they had to attempt to dig out from underneath. “But these stories only perpetuate the stereotype that athletes are just dumb jocks, and the more these things go on, the more people believe the stereotype and it is bad for everyone in the industry.” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 656-658, 4/7/2004).

Other reactions to the misdeeds ranged from empathy to frustration to no feeling at all. The feelings seemed to cover the gamut of emotions and were interesting to observe.

To a small part, I feel sorry because these people feel that they have to do this type of stuff to get your kids eligible and to get them into your program, or to motivate them by cajoling them and living a lie and some of the other things. The vast majority of people are working hard to do things in the right way, whichever way they choose to work at it, it is the right way. (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 662-666, 4/7/2004).
“We have all had great professors and lousy professors and in any other industry, and clearly the occurrences at Georgia are outrageous and in any other industry nobody would care what somebody’s course was like, no matter how ludicrous the quizzes were.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 674-676, 4/7/2004).

A final quote demonstrated that each program has to focus on their business and can not spend any time or energy focusing on the misgivings of other teams at other schools.

In the end, we have to manage our own little world and focus on having our kids carry themselves in a mature way, we can only have our kids do so much community service and work to control ourselves in our own little world and understand that in any walk of life, there are idiots that will do things that are not in line with our ethics. (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 658-662, 4/7/2004).

*Tracking of graduation rates needs to be changed.* Finally, the coaches turned the conversation to look at the NCAA and its rules which govern the current system and really honed in on one major change they felt was important for the continued growth of their individual sport and college athletics as a whole. “I think they need to look at how they do their graduation rates. Because right now, if the three of us are coaches at different universities and we have two kids that transfer and you have one kid, it all appears that we have those kids who didn’t graduate.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 755-757, 4/7/2004). “They have to set some type of standards, you just have to, there is no other way to measure, so it is a mammoth task, but I think they are doing the best they can, but again I would need to look more into it.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 764-766, 4/7/2004). With recent NCAA legislation making the impact of graduation rates reverberate even stronger
within the coaching community, the sense of urgency to find a fair and adequate graduation rate measurement tool permeated from this portion of the discussion.

**Summary**

Revenue coaches are often the athletic department faces seen most often by the public. Pressures they face to succeed on the field are results of large contracts, and their view on the issues addressed in this study is pertinent in discussions on the eventual conclusion of the aforementioned reform topics. In a limited sample, the focus mainly surrounded the welfare of the student-athlete, both as the ultimate goal of the athletic department and as the premise that guides their actions and decisions. Feelings on payment of athletes were varied, with the thought that those facing financial need should be helped. Again, commercialization was seen by this group as a vital cog in the operation of an athletic department and academics are stressed in their programs. In the eyes of these coaches, scandals and other negative news are limited to a few programs that are ethically and morally bankrupt, and the number of total issues is very small.
Focus Group/Individual Interview Five: Athletic Administrators

With any discussion of this nature, one focusing on possible reform measures within intercollegiate athletics, a discussion is warranted with the gate-keepers who work every day to better the athletic department and work to support its mission. Decisions by these individuals, the athletic administrators, have, as a group, partly assisted to create a situation of dissenting views on the future of athletics. Some of the issues being discussed now have created reactionary decisions to be made, but their views on the topics being investigated are vital to creating a complete puzzle. Four members of the athletic department made up this focus group. The two men and two women were each from different departments within the athletic organizational structure, creating a diverse view of the landscape. The administrator that was individually interviewed was a male from yet another section of the department, offering the researcher desired richness to the data.

Payment of Student-Athletes

Throughout the focus group and individual interview sessions the researcher felt that the administrators were all asked to accomplish tasks while keeping an eye on two ultimate goals or premises that, at time, conflict with each other. The mission of the athletic department, as the administrators saw it, was to offer opportunities to the student-athletes, both athletically and academically. In order to accomplish this difficult task the department had to seek revenue streams and operate like a business. “I think it (goal of the athletic department) is providing opportunity. You’re providing opportunities for
almost 1000 kids to participate in intercollegiate sports while attending university and working towards a degree. And those things have to be intertwined.” (Dick, Focus Group 7, 849-851, 4/13/2004).

Athletes and non-athletes have similar financial situation. One area of their jobs each of the administrators wished they could change was the level of contact they had with the student-athlete. “Unfortunately most of us, perhaps Madison is the exception, but our exposure is limited. I think part of that is due to the size of our department, and unless there are issues with financial aid, I don’t have too much contact with the athletes.” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 74-76, 4/13/2004). As with any organization, the larger it gets, the more specialized the jobs become, and more often than not, those who are making the decisions are somewhat removed from those who are being influenced by those decisions. At Pachay, however, there is an effort to connect administrators, at least senior administrators with the teams and athletes they represent. “I have just started having contact with the hockey teams in the last two months. It is very different than being all administrative which I was before. You have some, but not a lot in the administrative offices until you start taking over some sports.” (Dick, Focus Group 7, 78-80, 4/14/2004).

However, some of the members of the athletic department hold positions where they are in a position of constant contact with the student-athletes, and can see and hear daily issues that arise, “…I spend my life with them, with hockey, and I work with (other sports), and I know them, but it is not like traveling with them and the interaction with the team gained from the travel and being over there every day.” (Madison, Focus Group 7, 88-90, 4/13/2004). Although their contact is limited with the student-athletes; as, other
than Madison, there is no day-to-day interaction; the administrators get the feeling that
the troubles faced financially by student-athletes are no different than those faced by their
student counterparts who do not participate in a collegiate sport. “My opinion is that the
population of student-athletes struggle just as the population of students struggle.” (Paul,
Focus Group 7, 12-13, 4/13/2004). “Yes, I think that they tend to be fine with what they
do. In fact, with some situations I know that when they get per diem money for meals and
stuff, there are cheaper places to eat so there can be some extra money if you’re smart
about how you spend it.” (Michelle, Individual Interview 6, 17-19, 4/22/2004).

These distant perceptions from those members of the athletic department that are
not closely affiliated with the student-athletes were supported by Madison who is in
constant contact with the teams she interacts with. “Yeah, I feel like I don’t really hear
those guys complain about money a lot, but not a lot of them come from the worst
backgrounds because they play hockey and it is expensive to play the game.” (Madison,

*No off-season for athletes driven by competition and specialization.* A constant
area of discussion that surrounds intercollegiate athletics is the time spent, throughout the
calendar year, by student-athletes on their chosen activity. The administrators had an
interesting look at the history of the student-athlete as well as the trends of the industry,
and offered reasons why they thought this was occurring. This interesting brief dialogue
between Paul and Dick demonstrates the movement of the NCAA and intercollegiate
athletics.

Paul: Gosh, I don’t know, see that (student-athlete employment) is all done
through compliance and they would have all of that information. I am not sure
how many of them take advantage of that. Through the school year, I would
doubt that there is very many of them because of their schedules. Anymore, in my opinion, unfortunately we have turned this into a year-round regiment, with all of the off-season training and off-season competition. When I started in this business in 1982 it was basically the playing season and you lifted weights twice a week in the off-season, and now…

Dick: They don’t even have an off-season.

Paul: Yeah, there isn’t an off-season for most sports. It has gotten to the point that teams that don’t even come in the fall show up in the summer to begin to train for their season, and I think that is one area where the NCAA has gotten out of hand, with what they have allowed in the off-season. (Focus Group 7, 136-148, 4/13/2004)

In responding to why the trend has moved in this direction, each of the administrators gave one simple word. “Competition” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 152, 4/13/2004). One team or program extended the time their athletes trained and was successful with it, and the money and pressure to succeed is so great that the others in the same sport, or across sports, began requiring their student-athletes to adopt the lengthened training regimens. However, the administrators noted, there are a number student-athletes that really enjoy the schedule they keep, “I think a lot of them want to compete, every Friday they get to play pick up, and they are all there, and they want to come in early, or stay here all summer to workout to prepare for the next year. I remember the past few years, they all stayed here during the summer to get ready for the next year, and it wasn’t even a question.” (Madison, Focus Group 7, 171-174, 4/13/2004).

The competitiveness extends within each individual team, where student-athletes realize that if they take time off from their sport, or its training, there are others on their
team who are bettering themselves and those that work the hardest and develop are the ones who are playing in the games. The importance of success on the field is quantified in the form of grant-in-aids and other financial opportunities that are available. In this time of skyrocketing costs of education, especially higher education, the specialization has moved from the professional and college ranks to the high school and youth sport fields, a trend that was looked at with the wary eye by the participants of this study.

“What is unfortunate too is that you see that trickling down into the high schools and even into the middle schools now. The coaches are telling the kids they need to specialize in soccer or baseball, and you have travel leagues in the non-traditional season, and it is all trickling down from the college-level.” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 210-213, 4/13/2004). This sentiment was echoed by Sean who stated, “There are no more three-sport athletes in high school. If you are going to college, you were a one-sport athlete and plus all the ways they are getting the kids into school early with early admissions in football and basketball.” (Focus Group 7, 215-216, 4/13/2004).

**Legislation ideas may lead to financial failure of athletic departments.** In the face of these perceived negative issues facing athletic departments, the discussion shifted to legislative efforts in various states to increase the set of rights afforded to student-athletes. This was a topic that was obviously very important to the long-term success of Pachay’s athletic department, as well as intercollegiate athletics as a whole.

Financially, very few athletic departments are self-supporting at this point, and as years keep going on, schools are getting rid of teams for financial reasons, and it is usually men’s teams. Because if you are going to get rid of them for financial reasons, you had better not throw your gender equity numbers off anymore, so you have probably already heard that nonsense. And schools, a lot of schools are
less willing, and less able to subsidize intercollegiate athletics than they have in
the past. So as you put these kinds of expectations on these programs, you make
their financial situation a lot more dire than they already are. If a school cannot
support its athletic program on its earnings already, and then you add to the costs
associated with its operation, that money is going to come from student fees, or
from general funds of the university, and I think you are going to see a lot of

Dick’s perception was shared by all of the others who were present, and by the
administrator who agreed to the individual interview. The perception of the
administrators was that the frailty of the financial situation in college athletics is being
jeopardized by the proposals in California, Nebraska and Texas, and while it will impact
Pachay less than other schools in more dire financial straits, it was clear that the ideas are
dismal or ominous for college athletics as a whole.

We have 36 varsity sports, and we haven’t dropped a sport yet under Brett’s
(Pace) guidance. We’ve even added sports. What’s the purpose of college
athletics? It’s to give the student-athlete an experience that you wouldn’t be able
to get playing rec sports or playing with your buddies. It’s competition. The
money’s got to come from somewhere, and where do you draw the line? Next
thing you know you’ve got sports that are cut. You have rosters that are scaled
back. (Michelle, Individual Interview 6, 80-84, 4/22/2004).

However, the administrators iterated that steps could be taken to help alleviate the
current fiscal problems, but they must come from the national level,

There are a lot of things the NCAA could do to reduce the cost of football and
basketball and some other high-expense sports, but they don’t seem to have the
will to do it. Like cutting the number of scholarships in football, or not letting people stay over night in a hotel for a home game, or training table could be reduced. There are a number of ways to cut money without cutting sports, but there is no way that a school would unilaterally make those decisions, because that makes you non-competitive with the schools you are competing against.

(Dick, Focus Group 7, 551-556, 4/13/2004).

Commercialization and Over-Commercialization of Intercollegiate Athletics

As part of the group that was the source of many efforts made in commercializing intercollegiate athletics, it was expected that the athletic administrators would hold strong views of the purpose of intercollegiate athletics, as well as the first-hand knowledge to openly discuss the necessity for commercial interests in college sports, and the participants did not disappoint.

To offer a working definition, Paul thought of commercialization as,

“Advertising, or agreements with commercial entities. Whether it is an agreement for apparel, or an agreement for the name on an arena, relationships exist between two or more organizations. I think that the influence of media needs to be included in there as well.” (Focus Group 7, 596; 598-599, 4/13/2004).

Commercialization is controlled at the University of Pachay. Influences of the aforementioned commercial relationships are viewed differently through different eyes, and the athletic administrators had their own view of the importance of these agreements.

I don’t have a problem with it, and maybe because I’m trying to balance the budget I have a different perspective. But it doesn’t bother me to see names on the scoreboard and it doesn’t bother me to see swooshes on the clothing because
the names on the scoreboard are paying for a bunch of sports and logos on the clothing are having Nike supply every single sport we have with the equipment and the clothing they need to compete and more than they need to compete actually. Our kids get all kinds of clothes and shoes and that’s millions of dollars that we’re not spending. And if we had to come up with that cash, then we’d be cutting. (Dick, Focus Group 7, 615-621, 4/13/2004).

This perception partly gets to the next theme that apparel contracts offer opportunities, but it demonstrates the importance of those dollars to the fiscal stability of the athletic department, and partly shows the path that money takes.

Steps are in place that restricts the revenue generation potential of the athletic department and they are certain not to violate the laws that are in place. “Well as a non-profit we are constrained by unrelated business income tax law. So once you cross the line between what can be considered a sponsorship and what then becomes an advertisement, income from that becomes taxable. So that is really kind of the line as far as that signage, that’s the line that we walk pretty carefully.” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 894-897, 4/13/2004).

As one of the largest programs in the country, the athletic administrators acknowledged the large amount of money that comprised their budget and discussed it openly. However, they were very quick, and unanimous in their defense of the fiscal policies of the athletic director, Brett Pace and the amount of money given by the athletic department to the university. The following quote is indicative of the athletic department’s interest in providing the best for the student-athletes while staying
cognizant of their financial restraints and the public perception of big time college athletics.

But you need to take that with a grain of salt because our athletic budget includes 100% of all of our revenues and expenditures including revenues and expenditures for capital debt. And it also includes all of the expense of grant-in-aid and other schools may not be paying all the cost of their grant-in-aid. So even though that’s an expense to the college, it’s not showing up on the athletic department budget. And a lot of them do not include capital in their budget. So there’s no uniformity in how people report budget across the NCAA, so you have to be careful thinking that you’re making a good, straight up comparison, because most cases you’re just not. (Dick, Focus Group 7, 832-838, 4/13/2004).

*Apparel contracts offer opportunities.* These two quotes speak volumes about the importance that apparel contracts have in the ability for athletic departments to provide athletic opportunities for student-athletes. “I think before with the Champion agreement that existed before we signed with Nike may have covered like 5 or 6 sports and the other ones basically had to buy all their equipment or clothing, jackets, shoes.” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 812-814, 4/13/2004). “And that’s all, that would not be possible if were not for that contract. Before we had that contract for the equipment budget for each team, you know that’s cash out of the pocket and they were nowhere near the amount of free stuff that they now get in addition to the equipment budget of purchased items. It’s just an amazing increase in available money that we had spent before.” (Dick, Focus Group 7, 807-810, 4/13/2004). Many critics of the athletic department look at the multi-million dollar compensation packages that coaches receive in revenue sports, and part of that
funding comes from these agreements. However, as the administrators pointed out, there is no coverage of all of the positive aspects that those relationships have for hundreds of student-athletes. “If not for these contracts, a lot of our sports would still be under-funded, and a lot of those kids we talked about earlier that may struggle even with a scholarship may not be able to attend college because they can’t afford it, but that is not talked about by the media.” (Madison, Focus Group 7, 802-804, 4/13/2004).

While media contracts pay the bills, they also exert undue influence. Speaking of the media, while the money that is accrued from contracts with apparel companies is substantial, the monetary influence media companies hold over intercollegiate athletics is astounding. But with that money comes influence and pressure to accommodate their time demands. With those demands comes exposure, the crown jewel to a number of sports and a number of athletic departments. “The fact that University of Pachay, for the last three years has been on TV every Saturday, every game, that’s huge.” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 894-895, 4/13/2004). “It’s a big part of the budget. TV contract and revenue sharing with the Deuce Conference and revenue sharing with the NCAA it’s a large part of the budget. For some schools it’s a huge component of their athletic department budgets.” (Dick, Focus Group 7, 900-902, 4/13/2004).

Current conference rules call for equal distribution of media revenues, money that assists smaller, poorer athletic departments to maintain themselves and remain part of the Deuce Conference. Smaller conferences, however, do not have the amount of money coming in, even for those schools that are the best, or most powerful in the mid-major leagues. In order to pay for the operations of its athletic department schools are agreeing
to play on weeknights and other available times for the television networks. “…every night of the week you can watch college football on ESPN now. Because some conferences, that’s the only night that they’re ever going to get a game on TV so sign up (mid-major conferences) for Wednesday’s on ESPN because they’ll jump right in and do it.” (Sean, Focus Group 7, 920-923, 4/13/2004).

The consequences of these decisions are far reaching, encompassing the welfare of student-athletes in intercollegiate and interscholastic athletics. “But the Friday night think really bothers me because it totally destroys high school football to do that. That’s a decision dictated by money, by the media, wanting to, you’ve got all these stations dedicated to showing sports. Now they’ve go to get out there and have sports to fill time.” (Dick, Focus Group 7, 925-928, 4/13/2004).

Finally, Sean offered a view that was universally accepted by members of this group, “But if you think for the money that they’re paying for that they’re not pulling a lot of strings, I mean they’re already having a huge influence on all other things that happen. They determine when games happen. Sometimes you get 6 days notice on when a football game’s going to happen. I mean they already are a huge player in a lot of the things that we do.” (Focus Group 7, 932-936, 4/13/2004).

Academic Improprieties and Difficulties

Importance of academics on the grander scope of the athletic department has been discussed briefly in the other two reform issues, but when the focus of the discussion was centered on the student portion of student-athlete, the athletic administrators were adamant about their focus and desire to ensure the best for the pupils that suit up in their uniforms. Topics ranged from the relationship between the athletic and academic
factions on campus to the compliance and SASSO staff that work to ensure that student-athletes receive all of the attention they could possibly need.

*Eligibility determined by progress toward degree.* There is a premonition among cynics that the athletic department constantly compromises the well-being of its student-athletes in an effort to win on the field and generate more revenue. As part of these calls, the thought prevailed that student-athletes were being kept eligible by taking a litany of courses that did not match a particular degree program, but were easy and got the job done. However, the mindset of the athletic department at University of Pachay changed years ago to take into account the student-athletes’ degree program, and in addition to grade-point average, progress toward that degree was considered as part of the eligibility confirmation progress.

I think there was a long history in the athletic department of thinking that eligibility was the key to what happened on the court. As long as you were eligible that was ok. And there had to be this mindset change about progress towards degree, which was a good change. It makes no sense to keep somebody eligible for 5 years and get 200 credit hours, and not be any nearer to graduating with a degree, so it’s a good change. (Dick, Focus Group 7, 1034-1038, 4/13/2004).

Michelle, in the individual interview, did not believe that it was as easy as changing the mindset of the athletic department, but rather the culture that enveloped all of its members must be altered to one of academic achievement. The understanding though, was that they are dealing with human beings, who have a range of differing
reactions to pressures and new situations, and the adaptability of the athletic department to those needs would prove to be most important in retaining successful student-athletes.

When you come to college there is the type of student that says they are free and acts irresponsible and doesn’t take care of business; and there are others who come to college and are free, but still are responsible about things… and that is because they have a reason and people helping them out along the way. So, I think that with the resources and everything else, I think that it (being a student-athlete) is better. (Michelle, Individual Interview 6, 193-196; 198-200, 4/22/2004).

*Pressure to win while following the rules and developing the student-athlete.* As there is pressure and responsibility on the shoulders of the student-athletes, the athletic department is demanding of its coaches and department staff. Their expectations are to win and be successful on the field, but also to encourage development of their student-athletes.

Make no mistake about it. We expect our coaches to win… we expect our teams to be in the top half of the Deuce Conference. We really expect them to perform in the top third of their conference at a minimum…that does not mean that they have to go out and get athletes that are not necessarily able to manage as students. There are, you make that decision when you’re in the recruiting process. You bring in somebody, they better be able to be successful academically as well as athletically. (Dick, Focus Group 7, 1056-1058; 1062-1065, 4/13/2004).
This thought was complemented by, “. I think there’s a balance and there’s the expectation that you’ve got to do both and it’s not acceptable just to be good at one or the other.” (Sean, Focus Group 7, 1076-1077, 4/13/2004).

In addition to there being a supreme interest in winning, there is the expectation from the athletic director, the alumni, supporters and nearly everyone who supports University of Pachay that things must be done first-class, and with honor and dignity.

Brett (Pace), I think since Brett’s been here, he wants to hire quality coaches and he’s not looking for someone that is only interested in winning and taking all the shortcuts and finding how many rules they can bend in order to succeed at Pachay. He doesn’t want that because he takes all of that very personally. And I think all of us can appreciate that because I don’t think any of us want to be associated with a team that’s winning championships year in, year out, but yet the kids are being arrested every weekend, they’re not graduating, they don’t represent the school well. (Paul, Focus Group 7, 1090-1096, 4/13/2004).

When the bar is set as high as this athletic department sets it, and is the size of a department like Pachay’s is, there tends to be a level of nervousness and paranoia about the dealings of athletic interests like boosters and others who are not directly affiliated with the athletic department.

I think the expectations come down from the top and go all the way through the organization. If you’re going to do things, you’re going to do them the right way. Every time you see somebody in the news get hit with a major violation, or some major scandal breaks, it’s like there for but the grace of gods because you can’t
possibly control every single factor of a department this big. (Dick, Focus Group 7, 1106-1110, 4/13/2004).

These problems are just a few that the athletic administrators face, but their interest in the supreme success of their athletes drives the policy decisions and calls for additional support staff members to assist in the administration of teams and development of student-athletes.

*Importance of a knowledgeable faculty.* Organizations such as the Knight Commission routinely chastise athletic departments for drawing themselves away from the academic portion of the university, creating a divide that limits communication and causes public perception problems. Members of the athletic department seemed to agree with the communication divide that occurs, but seems to have an understanding, or a belief as to why some opponents in academia feel the way they do. “I think across campus you have some people who bring, everyone brings their own prejudice to what they’re looking at and there are a lot of people across campus and in this town that just automatically assume that all large athletic departments are corrupt and evil and we don’t really care about academics.” (Dick, Focus Group 7, 1138-1141, 4/13/2004). A similar view was, “I think you’ve got a spectrum. I think some people, and it’s interesting, even on our own campus, when we had new members of the athletic council that are appointed each year that come in and don’t have an understanding of everything that we do. After they are on athletic council for a year, really are in awe…” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 1131-1134, 4/13/2004).
As with everything that is high profile, there are competing viewpoints and opinions on the actions of that entity. In this case, it is a high profile athletic department, and that intensifies the scrutiny.

I think across campus you have some people who bring, everyone brings their own prejudice to what they’re looking at and there are a lot of people across campus and in this town that just automatically assume that all large athletic departments are corrupt and evil and we don’t really care about academics. And then you’ll have people that, because it’s Pachay and they’re die hard Pachay fans, think that we can do no wrong in that way. We must be good, we’re their alma mater and they love going to those football games. And then you got a bunch of people in between. We get letters from all of them. (Dick, Focus Group 7, 1138-1144, 4/13/2004).

This is the dilemma faced by the athletic department, where only the successes on the field are noted by the public. Annually, the department holds a scholar-athlete banquet that honors those student-athletes that excel in the classroom, and annually there is nearly no media support for this outing, a way to show off the other side of the athletic department goes by the boards. “We’ve been buying that ad for six or seven years because we couldn’t get them to write any articles on the scholar athlete banquet. We can’t even get them to show up which is kind of amazing because you can usually get the press in with a free meal.” (Dick, Focus Group 7, 1152-1154, 4/13/2004).

Summary

Athletic administrators are responsible for operation of the athletic department, and are likely to be most influenced by any changes that occur in regard to the payment
of athletes, alteration on the view of commercialization or changes to academic policies. For the most part, they were steadfast in their belief that the current grant-in-aid system was adequate, and other programs set up to assist student-athletes financially have eliminated many of the stories of impoverished athletes. According to the participants, commercial relationships are imperative to the financial stability of an athletic department; and finally, the academic programs set up are more than adequate and problems of improprieties are widespread.
Focus Group/Individual Interview Six: Student-Athlete Academic Support Officers

Recognizing the chasm that was developing between athletics and academics, athletic departments across the country formed arms of their organizations that work with student-athletes one-on-one to ensure they are keeping up to date with their academic work and are making satisfactory progress toward their degree. At University of Pachay, this group is called SASSO, or the Student-Athlete Support Services Organization. SASSO works as the intermediary between the student-athletes and the academic side of the university. For this focus group, five members of SASSO were present, four women and one man. Combined, they worked with the breadth of the athletic department’s sports, their coaches and especially the student-athletes.

Payment of Student-Athletes

For the most part, the academic counselors held the same perceptions about the workings of the athletic department and the situation that the student-athlete finds him or herself in while on campus. Due to their close contact with the student-athletes, members of SASSO have the ability to speak knowingly of the plight of their subjects, as well as the athletes’ responsibilities and the various pressures they face. In addition, their insight was valuable when drawing comparisons or relationships between the athletic department and the academic portion of the university.

*Athletes’ financial situation no different than students.* In discussions with these participants, it was clear that the members of SASSO felt that the student-athletes, and their financial situations, were similar to those students that do not have the responsibilities of participating on an athletic team.
Where they come from, and if they are in a revenue sport, they are on some kind of financial assistance, and given the scholarship money they get, in a head count sport, then in my opinion, they are in a position to live pretty well. In some cases, given some of the family backgrounds, the move toward cost of attendance assistance is more on the mark than some of the other stuff we have heard. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 24-30, 3/24/2004).

This point was supported both non-verbally and through spoken words by Jane’s peers who added, “It is all over the place… I think maybe for some sport populations, their financial backgrounds may be less, perhaps, than some students. (Nehemiah, Focus Group 1, 10; 18-19, 3/24/2004).

One point that was raised was that the athletes needed to spend time and effort into honing their money management skills. There are classes and seminars that are offered by SASSO that are voluntary, but focus on how to look at the money that is being brought in each month and organize a way to pay all of the necessary bills and to make sound decisions with that remuneration. “We see, I see, some students who complain about not having the money, not managing what they have very well, which is why we try, from an educational standpoint to do some interventions with regard to money management in our life skills program. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 30-33, 3/24/2004). “There is something in the Deuce Success Center every Wednesday that talks about financial issues where students can just go in. The Deuce Success Center is not just for student-athletes, it is for the whole university population, we benefit by having that there as well.” (Laura, Focus Group 1, 51-54, 3/24/2004).
There were two groups of student-athletes targeted by SASSO members that were in the most need of help. They were those student-athletes who resided on campus, and those who were not receiving full athletic grant-in-aids and were responsible for at least partial cost of their education. “And the group that it hits the hardest is the freshman, because they don’t have the room and board check, because they are living in the residence hall. So yeah, their tuition and fees are paid for…they have their food plan, but they don’t have the check. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 66-68; 72, 3/24/2004). Another viewpoint sounded like this, “I think a number of students that I see impacted are not on grant-in-aid, which are really the majority of our student-athletes, but are still expected and do put in the same amount of time, and travel as much and do not have the opportunity to earn the extra money.” (Ann, Focus Group 1, 89-92, 3/24/2004).

*More NCAA help to keep playing field balanced.* In the past few years, the NCAA has made a concerted effort to develop programs that can help assist the student-athlete in their quest for a college degree while they excel on the playing field. Included in these plans is the Student-Athlete Special Assistance Fund that is a program based on financial need that student-athletes can apply for in the event they have a need for some emergency funds to take care of a litany of situations. However, this group believed that the NCAA could do more from a national level to help the financial situations of student-athletes, and the athletic departments that provide the services that house those athletes. As a way to target more student-athletes, especially those in the non-revenue sport area, where the most opportunities are offered, Jane would like the NCAA to,
increase the number of scholarships or grants-in-aid they are allowed to give. That would be one way to do it, to put more people on grant-in-aid. When they did the whole work approval thing, they thought they were doing such a good thing, to allow student-athletes, whether they were on scholarship or not, to get a job, but it was horrible. We hear the complaints as it is about not having the time and now you are going to throw another 10-hour per week job on top of that, it just doesn’t make a lot of sense. If they were to increase the number of grant-in-aids, now that would help a bunch of kids out. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 103-110, 3/24/2004)

To this idea, some of the members of the group agreed while others were not so sure that is the right direction to go, mainly because of the effect it potentially has on creating a large discrepancy between the major college athletic departments that are able to produce a lot of revenue, and their mid-major counterparts who struggle under the current system. However, all of the counselors were interested in increasing the amount of direct financial assistance that the NCAA offers to its student-athletes. “If rather than allowing the universities to help student-athletes with financial assistance, the NCAA would be able to channel some of the monies from the NCAA to assist, that would make it more of a level playing field across the different universities. (Ann, Focus Group, 136-138, 3/24/2004). However, like a cloud that hovered over this entire discussion, the topic of the financial solvency of intercollegiate athletic departments kept germinating. This constant influence made it clear that anything that occurred to help the situation of the student-athlete was not going to be able to come from the athletic department, at least without the backing of the NCAA.
Difficulties faced by athletes working outside jobs. As has been discussed in the other groups, the NCAA passed a rule in the past five years that has allowed for student-athletes to earn up to $2000 in wages during the school year, and unlimited funds from outside agencies during breaks and throughout the summer. When this topic was broached in this focus group by the researcher, the members of SASSO made it very clear that their attention was squarely on the preparedness of those student-athletes who were looking to earn additional monies through outside employment:

Some student-athletes I have strongly dissuaded from working. If they are in a situation where they are struggling academically, I use that as a measuring stick… for some people, spreading them thinner is not the most appropriate strategy, it just depends on the person…. Now, I have had student-athletes that have done that, because they are the scholar-athletes, self-motivated, color-coded planner that can pull that off. But it comes down to, if they don’t have the money to pay rent, and how many people can we cram into an apartment, so we can split the rent ten ways.” (Jane, Focus Group 1, 247-248; 252-253; 256-260, 3/30/2004).

There was a linkage with the financial situation and the academics of the student-athletes on campus; and it was in a manner that was not originally clear to the researcher. The campus housing near University of Pachay is more expensive than if a student or student-athlete moved a few miles off-campus. This cheaper rent, when combined with the limited income of student-athletes has forced many of them to seek housing farther away from campus. Due to these alternative housing options so far away from campus, many student-athletes are easily dissuaded from coming to campus for class, negatively impacting their academic success,
The other thing that drives them to, and we had the issue with football and basketball, campus area housing is so expensive, the farther you get away the cheaper it tends to be, so in order to have more of that check in their pocket, they are willing to live out in the middle of nowhere, to save a few bucks, and then when they are out there, that raises an entirely different set of issues, when they live so far away from campus. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 262-267, 3/24/2004).

This issue of cars and distance led nicely into another theme that emerged from a discussion of public perception of the athletic department. A question was posed that revolved around the vehicles driven by these athletes, most of whom are 18-22 and from a background of limited employment, and perhaps poorer financial backgrounds.

…they (student-athletes) have to register the vehicle and our compliance director is extremely diligent with those car registrations. It is not just fill out your car registration and everything is fine. Things are checked, questions are asked, auto dealers are called, parents are called. (In) my opinion, I would find it hard to believe that it would not be as legitimate as it could possibly be, with all of the diligence that goes into the registration process. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 304-309, 3/24/2004).

However, the members of SASSO were aware of the impact those perceptions have on the public’s view of athletics and the work that must be done by the athletic department to make the public aware of the true stories and facts. “We are the ‘perception poster-children in academics’… constant goalie, that is our position, goalie, only without the pads.” (Jane, Focus Group 1, 322-323; 338, 3/24/2004).
**Student-athletes are not being exploited.** An interesting thematic discussion arose from the topic of exploitation of student-athletes and the idea that student-athletes perform on the field, assisting in the generation of millions of dollars, but are only privy to the cost of their grant-in-aid assistance and the services provided by the athletic department. Members of SASSO, who represent the athletic department’s academic arm, were very defensive of the mission of the athletic department, the opportunities it provides and the two-way nature of the relationship between the athletic department and the student-athletes.

Without a doubt some students will feel they deserve a piece of the pie, and their shirt or jersey is being sold for $42 at every store across the state, others will say they knew it going into Ohio State, so it is part of it. It is a used or be used mentality unfortunately, but I think that is an individual question. I don’t think we can accurately judge how all student-athletes would respond to that question.


Another view on this topic was, “They are marketing. We ask our students, and some of them have said to me they knew that going in. If an institution puts the welfare of an individual underneath the money making desires, then that is exploitation, but one of the things we try to educate our student-athletes on is on some levels you allow yourself to be exploited and don’t let them use you if you do not want to be used.”(Jane, Focus Group 1, 488-492, 3/24/2004).

**Commercialization and Over-Commercialization of Intercollegiate Athletics**

As has been the case in other focus groups, the interest in, or knowledge of, the commercial impacts on intercollegiate athletics was much less than it was in the other
two areas of reform. Perhaps that is a sign in itself that over-commercialization is not a big problem for the intercollegiate athletic department, but the academic counselors present at this meeting did a nice job looking at the wider scope of commercialization, taking into consideration the media, boosters and university influences causing and resulting from relationships help by the athletic department.

**Benefits of commercialization.** Everyone in the group had disparate views of what constitutes commercialization, but all of them touched on some of the same points,

Commercialization is selling the show or the story to the public, to the consumer. Commercialization is making it so the consumer pays back, consumes, pays back, the commercialization of a football Saturday at Pachay is not just the game. I think that commercialization is more the consuming of the entertainment value rather than the intrinsic values we see from sport. (Ann, Focus Group 1, 565-569, 3/24/2004).

Andrea offered an additional explanation of commercialization, “I think it’s when it’s more about how much money are we going to make from something and changing things or doing things to that end.” (Andrea, Individual Interview 4, 165-167, 4/20/2004).

While that definition focused mainly on the commercial relationships, others in the group chose the media influence on athletics,

It is not just college sports, but everything, major league baseball…you turn on ESPN and it is everywhere. I remember watching ESPN when it first started, I had a professor and she talked about how ESPN was, and it is just unbelievable now the coverage they have, they are not just focusing on the major leagues, they
even have high school games on now, so it is not just college sports, or professional sports. (Anna Nicole, Focus Group 1, 551-556, 3/24/2004).

With the breadth of the paradigm in place, further inspection into the perceptions of over-commercialization, where that invisible line exists between revenue generation and over-exuberance from marketing and development, was needed. Nearly all of the members of SASSO felt that the athletic department was still located on the positive side of the commercialization line, working to increase opportunities for the student-athletes, in terms of facilities, equipment and grant-in-aid dollars.

Is it over-commercialized...at Pachay? I want to see a 35-sport program, I want to see that, I don’t want to cut sports, so to maintain this level is to make sure that, as Laura stated, you keep student-athlete welfare in check, and not raise the money in spite of caring for the kids. I love the Division III model, that is what I grew up with, but that is not where we are. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 575-579, 3/24/2004).

Jane’s statement was supported by Andrea who was interviewed individually, “As you have to be self-supporting and you have to try and generate that additional revenue to pay expenses that forces you into being more commercial because you have to get that extra marketing dollar.” (Individual Interview 4, 207-209, 4/20/2004)

Another set of opponents to the current system of big-time division I-A athletics is that it too closely resembles the professional leagues, and that sole focus on revenue generation, they say, detracts from the sanctity of college sports and gets to the degradation of the university. To a person, these focus group members felt that was not the case and pointed to a number of examples as to why they felt the way they did. “I
think it resides in the consumer, there is something about college, because the players are not being paid, that adds to that intrinsic value of the game, and the tradition behind it.” (Laura, Focus Group 1, 612-614, 3/24/2004).

**Negative media impact on student-athletes’ academic success.** As academic counselors for the athletic department, the members of SASSO are focused on the welfare of the student-athlete, both athletically and, more importantly, academically. One major area they have to fight is the amount of academic time missed by student-athletes for travel. This time is influenced, in part, by broadcast media rights that dictate dates and times that contests are being held. Impact from these agreements is far reaching, and many members of this group spoke up about the negative impact the media has on the student portion of student-athlete,

Or the uncertainty of the NCAA Tournament or the NIT at the end of the basketball season. We have the Big Ten Tournament where our guys may be there from Thursday to Sunday and then they are in the finals and lose, therefore they are in the NIT instead of the NCAA...that is a total mess as far as it concerns the students ending the quarter or semester. It doesn’t matter. (Ann, Focus Group 1, 679-682; 685-686, 3/24/2004).

Further examination of the trends of commercialization uncovered the perception of continued media influence in the scheduling of major, revenue sport events such as football and basketball,

Well, I mean we are playing football games on Thursday night, whenever we can get a game in, we are going to get a game in. We can just yank kids out of school, and (athletic schedules have) slowly gotten worse and worse. And you are
damned if you do, and damned if you don’t. If you make a stand against this, and say we are not playing, they write about you, if you comply, you are impacting student-athlete welfare. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 706-710, 3/24/2004).

Another counselor saw the media’s influence to be stronger on those schools with fewer revenue generating options, and smaller athletic budgets,

The mid-majors don’t have much of a choice. An opportunity to play on ESPN on Wednesday or Thursday night versus declining it and playing on Saturday afternoon in Athens or Toledo, Ohio at a half-empty stadium. What would you do?...If they wish to get a piece of the pie, they have to comply. (Nehemiah, Focus Group 1, 712-715; 719, 3/24/2004)

*Academic Improprieties and Difficulties*

As those members of the athletic department in charge of helping to ensure the academic success of the student-athletes, members of SASSO are very aware of the public perception of student-athletes and the athletic department as a piece of the greater institution. In addition, they are well aware of the pressures as student-athletes to accommodate two people, whose agendas may not be congruent with one another. They also work to praise the NCAA for their development of certain rules that make their job easier and work to assist the student-athlete in their pursuit of a college degree while chastising them for the graduation rate measurement that is not practical.

*Misleading graduation rates and their calculation.* The prime area of discussion was the graduation rates of student-athletes, a quantitative measure of academic success, used by the media and athletic administrators to pinpoint problems and keep overall tabs
on the success of the student-athletes. However, the members of SASSO said the measurement formula is skewed, as is the effort to measure a qualitative issue quantitatively,

First of all I think that graduation rate numbers, how they evaluate that, needs to be looked at. I don’t think it’s as reflective a number of what’s really happening as it could be. In and of itself it could lead to punishments to schools. If you really look behind the numbers you could reasonably say that’s beyond the control of the institution. You can’t force kids to graduate. (Andrea, Individual Interview 4, 304-308, 3/24/2004).

The mission of SASSO, and the direction of its leadership is illustrated in this quote,

…and this is what we fight all the time. We seem to be the only area in the whole department that is qualitative in nature. When you look at our mission, it is very similar to the universities’. It is to develop the student-athletes, provide them with opportunities and resources, give them an experience that takes into account their welfare, and so on. How people measure us is quantitatively… (Jane, Focus Group 1, 811-816, 3/24/2004).

The current system of measurement examines the rate of graduation of student-athletes over a six-year period. This means that an incoming student-athlete must graduate from that institution within six years in order to count as a graduate for this measure. Flaws in the system arise from the emphasis placed on graduation from the original institution of enrollment. If an athlete transfers, he or she does not count as a
graduate for either school of attendance. Should a student-athlete leave school early for the professional ranks, they count against the athletic department, and their individual team’s graduation percentage.

SASSO participants cite these flaws, and the lack of knowledge of various media outlets who report on the deflated graduation numbers and create negative publicity for an athletic department that may be doing an outstanding job with its student-athletes.

Efforts are made to continue contact with those that leave to gain a better understanding as to why, so as to begin corrective action.

But if you were to look at us holistically the impact that we have, which is why we look at those people that didn’t finish and contact those people that didn’t finish to try to get them back in before the six year deadline, or invite them back through the outreach program anyway, or to get a handle on why they didn’t finish, that adds to a much bigger picture. That is how we were able to come up with the two things that impact graduation rates, the quality of the individual you are recruiting, and the other is the quality of the environment you provide. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 822-829, 3/24/2004)

All of the group members were very proud of their efforts as a collective, both with the grade point average of their student-athletes, and the graduation rates excluding those who transferred or entered the professional ranks. “As a whole, we are better. If you were to look at a multi-year snapshot it would be better. We have had a couple of weaker years, but on the whole, better…Yes. This past year our graduation rate was 67%, the (graduation rate of the) general student population was 62%. (Jane, Focus Group 1. 787-788; 792, 3/24/2004).
Student-athletes’ resilience and ability to adapt to burdens placed upon them.

Academic counselors are one of the most influential groups a student-athlete has access to during their stay on campus. Therefore, they should be able to speak knowledgably about the various responsibilities and burdens that face their student-athlete subjects. With that being said, the counselors believe that the general student body face the same burdens as student-athletes, “I am inclined to say that student-athletes are not the only students who face those burdens, non-student-athletes have them as well…it just depends on how the person handles it.” (Anna Nicole, Focus Group 1, 974-975; 978, 3/24/2004).

However, they are impressed at the resiliency of the student-athletes in overcoming the various obstacles placed in front of them.

I am amazed at the amount, the number of our students that handle successfully all of the burdens, and I think the burdens are enormous myself, and I have gone through college, and my two children are going through college and so forth, and there are burdens of the non-student-athlete, but the pressure, and I cannot imagine. (Ann, Focus Group 1, 987-991, 3/24/2004).

In discussion of the various responsibilities facing the student-athletes, the counselors seem to take a questioning view of the coaches’ adherence to the 20-hour per week rule governing student-athlete participation in athletic practice sessions,

…they look at the 20-hour a week rule, and it is a joke. In my opinion, as Jane Smith, it is a joke. Some student-athletes will tell you, ‘don’t tell me how much time I should train, I want to train more, and others will say they need two hours a
day to take a nap, you have no idea how important that nap is for them to rejuvenate’. So it is individual, but like Ann, I am amazed. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 1021-1025, 3/24/2004).

*Residual effects from problems at other schools.* Academic scandals are the worst nightmare for members of SASSO, and when they occur at other places, the residual effect on the operation of the academic arm of the athletic department is felt loud and clear at University of Pachay.

When stuff like that happens, I get a million calls, ‘what are we doing?’ you know, so it is kind of the check time, where we get checked, even in the situation that happened with us, as false as it all was, forced other athletic departments to look into what they were doing with their tutors, you know it was that type of thing, so when stuff like that happens I always get the ‘what are we doing?’ kind of questions. (Jane, Focus Group 1, 1075-1079, 3/24/2004).

However, it is the unanimous opinion of the members of SASSO that the offending athletic departments are in the minority, and academic scandals that occur are a result of poor organizational structure.

I think it was not typical, my judgment from my experiences not only at our place, but from around the country, it was not typical, even though there may have been pockets of those things here and there, it was not typical. And again, you are looking at the regular student body too, how many non student-athletes are doing similar academic misdeeds, and the notice isn’t there. (Ann, Focus Group 1, 1089-1093, 3/24/2004).
Summary

Student-athlete academic counselors hold positions vital to one area of this study, but their constant contact with student-athletes permits them valuable insight into their thoughts, feelings and situations faced. All of the members felt that the student-athletes financial situation was no different than that faced by any other student on campus, and they should not be afforded extra money to help subsidize their lifestyle. Their interest in the discussion on commercialization focused on the media, and its impact on the academic schedules of student-athletes. Those perceptions matched their feelings on academic difficulties faced by student-athletes, which was that the vast majority can handle the rigors of college life, and their jobs as counselors is to assist all that enter their offices, but provide more attention and assistance to those that are struggling.

Also, they felt the academic scandals that occur raise the awareness of the athletic department of the ills that are out there, and this arm of the athletic department is impacted by those negative occurrences more than any other segment of the organization. As the intermediary between athletics and academics, they felt their work is to ensure a healthy relationship and ensure the student-athletes are receiving adequate academic attention, a relationship that is impacted by nationwide news of academic improprieties.
Focus Group/Individual Interview Seven: Faculty Members –

Familiar with Sports and Activity

As stewards of the academic mission of the university, the faculty has an important stake in all other portions that comprise the higher education institution. A major area that is part of the university is the athletic department and the inclusion of the faculty in this study, was decided upon because of their interaction with student-athletes on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, faculty opinions were sought because many calls for reform have originated from faculty members and others who, in their words, are trying to protect the academic integrity of higher education. While the influence of athletics is great, it is not all encompassing, so this study examined the perceptions of those who do not have much knowledge of sports, the athletic department, and the culture that surrounds physical activity and competition at this level. That group was discussed in the next section. To offer a balanced and extensive view of the faculty stakeholder group, this part of the study examined the perception of those faculty members that have more insight, experience and fluency with sports, and more specifically, the athletic department. There were three faculty members present in this focus group, two females and a male, all of whom, had previous and current contact with physical activity and its place in education, considering physical activity and sports to be important aspects of individual development, and have familiarity with the operations of the athletic department.

Payment of Student-Athletes

For most other groups, the financial situation of the student-athlete was a prime topic of interest, as were the different calls for payment, and the effect those payment
plans would have on the NCAA and intercollegiate athletics. For this group of faculty members, there was more emphasis on the individual student-athlete, their financial background and the effect that history has had on their current financial situation as college students. A second area that sparked plenty of discussion was the various plans set forth by state legislatures to mandate the payment of student-athletes and/or the guarantee of a set of rights that supporters believe are needed by the student-athlete. The impact these legislative actions would have on athletic departments has been described in other focus group perceptual overviews, and the view from inside the university academic structure was interesting.

This group, while versed in the importance and role of sport and physical activity, and somewhat knowledgeable as to the undertakings of the athletic department, was still somewhat unclear on some of the operational details and recent NCAA additions to its by-laws. Again, the difficulty the researcher had clarifying the various operations of the athletic department is another indicator of the complexity of that department. It is also a sign that the disconnect between athletics and academics exists even in those faculty members in fields that are sport-related and lend themselves to more knowledge or insight into the actions of athletics.

Majority of student-athletes are financially viable. As mentioned above, the faculty members were keenly interested in the situation of all student-athletes, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

I suspect that it differs depending on the nature of the student athletes. So you have kids who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds for whom college
tuition fees in the way that Dominic described is a wondrous thing that they can
afford to go to school. But they have nothing else, absolutely nothing else.”

An indication of the faculty’s lack of knowledge of athletic department programs
came when Carmel was discussing the plight of the student-athlete from an under-
privileged background. “So when they have to dress (as in public meetings and
receptions or visiting another college for a game) to go outside when they have to travel
(from college to home) back and forth that’s something that has to be paid for by
somebody.” (Focus Group 5, 39-41, 4/8/2004). For cases such as the one Carmel
described above, the NCAA has developed a funding program call the Student-Athlete
Special Assistance Fund. The rationale behind this program is to provide a source of
funding for student-athletes in the case of an emergency or need where neither the athlete
nor his or her family have the financial wherewithal to purchase a plane ticket home for a
funeral of a family member, or purchase a sport coat or suit for an athlete who needs one
when their team is traveling.

In continuing her thought, Carmel touched on the group’s realism that the call for
paying athletes is only needed by the poorest few. Most student-athletes are from
middle- or upper-class families and the grant-in-aid the athlete received freed up money
that had been saved for college, creating a pool of money that can be, and is often, spent
on the day-to-day living expenses incurred by a college student of any nature.

And then I suspect you’ve got some student athletes who come from middle and
upper middle class families for whom this is just an added bonus. They could
really afford to pay for themselves to go to school, but in fact, now there’s sort of
extra discretionary income that they have. The question for me becomes the degree to which we are indeed paying for their talents and the degree to which their talents are recognized monetarily in an appropriate way. (Carmel, Focus Group 5, 42-46, 4/8/2004).

Other members of the group supported this argument, providing first hand accounts of the experiences they have gained from interaction with student-athletes.

My experience a lot of times, was sort of more middle class students, upper class students who have received a full ride, their parents had already planned to pay for college so they have quite a bit of discretionary income. They typically have cars, so their parents give them that money as extra superfluous to paying for school. But then there’s a lot of kids who come from backgrounds where they would never have made it to school from an income standpoint from their family unless it was for their collegiate scholarship and then it’s very limited, they have limited resources to do additional things and to do what Carmel talked about in terms of, I mean I know, in my experiences with athletes buying clothes to wear out in schools for teaching practicum that that’s just beyond where they have the resources to be able to do that. (Elizabeth, Focus Group 5, 58-67, 4/8/2004).

Other suggestions for student-athletes included taking out loans to help pay for school and its expenses, a method embraced by the vast majority of students who are not on full scholarship. Perhaps these funding avenues, it was believed by Dominic, should be pursued with more vigor by the struggling student-athlete, and permitted with more ease by the university’s financial aid wing.
Surprise at states’ move to enact legislation. The second theme that emerged from the discussion was the development and enactment of legislation in various states that hinged on the idea of paying student-athletes, and California’s organization of a bill of student rights. “It’s interesting that states have sort of stepped into that arena. I was not aware that this has happened at all, that they had stepped in and sort of legislated on top of the NCAA legislation.” (Elizabeth, Focus Group 5, 291-293, 4/8/2004). After coming to grips with the different facets in each bill, the group members started to question the eventual impact of the legislation.

I don’t know all the nuances of this so it’s hard for me to respond. I can imagine that there would be absolute chaos in athletic departments trying to sort out who’s doing what…so I could imagine that athletic directors would really worry about that chaotic situation. But on the other hand I think some of the rules of the NCAA, which may be for good purposes, are so ludicrously stupid… in the big picture of things I would understand where they’re trying to go and not focus on the institution having the right, but actually people having opportunities to take advantage of what they’re skills are academically or otherwise. (Carmel, Focus Group 5, 365-366; 369-371; 376-378, 4/8/2004).

This collection of quotes was echoed by another respondent, “From a functional perspective it will probably wreak havoc. Because you’re sort of having to bow to two monsters who aren’t really talking to each other or agreeing in principal or core principals in practice.” (Elizabeth, Focus Group 5, 382-384, 4/8/2004). There was some hesitation to make bold statements about the impact of the legislation, as with the paying of athletes, because of the lack of familiarity with the information. However, their insights
were relatively consistent with the truth as it exists within an athletic department, and the focus on the deprived student-athlete was something that was unique to this group.

*Commercialization and Over-Commercialization of Intercollegiate Athletics*

Another area where in-depth understanding of the athletic department is needed to fully grasp the impact of the relationships with media corporations and other commercial entities is commercialization of sport, in particular, intercollegiate athletics. While this information helps the flow of the discussion, and depth of the information being provided, commercialization is everywhere, and its special impact on athletics is not necessarily imperative if a grasp of the idea is realized, and the ability to translate those definitions or perceptions to college sports is evident.

*Commercialization is related to the core beliefs of the institution.* As has been the case in many of the other meetings, a working definition of commercialization is important, as it acts as a foundation for the other conversations to build off of.

Commercialization to me is receiving money for services. You know I have a service, if people view that as such…or an image…and so now (the way) colleges and universities are, there’s a market for that stuff. Commercialization is doing it through varied means, whether it’s advertisement, on radio, television, you receive some type of financial (return). (Dominic, Focus Group 5, 400-401; 405-408, 4/8/2004).

When asked if the level of commercialization can cross the line, an eloquent answer was provided, one that seems to define what the invisible line really is, “When the intensity or frequency of duration of that relationship gets in the way of what the higher principal might be.” (Carmel, Focus Group 5, 414-415, 4/8/2004). In another view of the
possible reasons why members of the university question the influence that athletics has on the university, this line was voiced, “In some ways commercialization gets in the way of some of the core founding beliefs of what universities are about.” (Elizabeth, Focus Group 5, 419-420, 4/8/2004). Perhaps this view gets to the idea that while there are parts of the university that commercialize themselves, the perceptions that paint the athletic department as the poster child for commercial relationships on campus creates a culture that supports the belief that athletics is a detriment to the integrity of the institution, generating negative reactions against athletics, and subsequent calls for reform.

Commercial money is needed to support programs. In the face of the thought that commercialization from any university entity may move against the mission of the institution, the faculty members contradicted themselves by espousing the need for that same commercialization in athletics.

And somebody like a Brett Pace (athletic director) is forced to find funds to support the athletic programs. He has a task which is to attract the best students. He’s clearly told that none of the funds to improve those athletic facilities can come from general university funds so go do it. Go find the money. So where is he going to go? He’s a smart man, and athletic directors have to be savvy business people as well and figure ways, how can they attract our alumni to support the program, that’s one source of funds. The other is commercial entities that will pay for the privilege of being associated with the university and its teams. The third is from the media who want to show these sports to a public that’s prepared to watch them who in turn will have a set of advertising sponsors. So it becomes a vicious circle. (Carmel, Focus Group 5, 422-430, 4/8/2004)
The monies that are generated through these agreements are used to construct top of the line facilities and attract the best coaches and other resources that result in more successes and the ability to direct money to the university. The knowledge of the financial situation of the athletic department by the members of this group demonstrated to the researcher a deeper understanding than a normal faculty member as to where revenue comes from, and what it is spent on, and ultimately the fiscal relationship between the athletic department and the university. “I think that the center, Deuce Center, I think that’s a very positive move to continue its alliance with academics. I think the idea that whatever funds are accumulated or brought in, that they do go back to academics whether it’s for the library or for a science building. That is sort of a positive. It’s a positive inclination.” (Dominic, Focus Group 5, 453-456, 4/8/2004).

*Commercial money has a positive effect on athletics.* There was a feeling in this meeting that there was, indeed, a move toward focusing on the “athlete” in student-athlete. That movement was created by the spike in revenue generated by athletic departments. The new money that created this conversation came from increased commercial relationships with a variety of organizations,

The athletes didn’t create their notoriety. The institutions along with commercialization developed their notoriety… and it’s because the universities have elected to seek income from radio, television, sportswear, and so while they’re going after that, for income, income comes back to the university, people get exposure, I mean we could have exposure for people who are in crew. (Dominic, Focus Group 5, 190-195, 4/8/2004).
Carmel agreed with Dominic, suggesting that athletic directors would be unwise to pass up the opportunity for commercial money to support their athletic programs,

If I was an athletic director at a Division I institution, I’d take advantage of the money, I’d take advantage of the fact that we could avail ourselves of Nike commercials and Nike sponsorship and we could avail ourselves of BCS money for bowl games…so we’re being smart by using our finances to distribute across a greater variety of persons and giving a greater number of people opportunities to do something they wouldn’t otherwise be able to do. (Carmel, Focus Group 5, 204-206; 208-210, 4/8/2004).

The linkage between the money being generated and the opportunities it provides for athletes in sports that do not get much attention, and are out of the thought process for many faculty members, demonstrates the increased awareness that exists for these faculty members. It is the purpose of this session to examine if the perceptions of the more informed differed from those with very little sport background. While that question will be answered in full later, this insightfulness seems to indicate that better understanding may equal more lenient feelings for the actions of athletics.

*Academic Improprieties and Difficulties*

Clearly, this is the area where faculty members have the most experience with relation to student-athletes. Because of the position they hold, these members have access to a larger set of the student-athlete population, as a number of student-athletes are attracted to majors in the departments these faculty members work in. Among the topics brought up in the group conversation was an examination of the pressures faced by student-athletes and how they adapt to the situation, pressures placed on the shoulders of
coaches and its impact on their decisions toward academics. Also, a look will be taken at the missions of the athletic department and the academic-side of the institution and possible cause and effect of the academic scandals that played a large role in the inclusion of this issue in this study.

*Student-athletes carry heavy burdens.* “I know that when I’ve worked with undergraduate students and student-athletes their comments to me have always been ‘I can’t work like other students. And the other reason I can’t work, particularly at a Division I institution, all of my energies are either devoted to A, my sport, pre-season, post season in preparation for that, or I’m studying’.” (Carmel, Focus Group 5, 119-122, 4/8/2004). This statement is an indictment towards the weight of the responsibilities facing each of these student-athletes while they are participating in intercollegiate athletics. The amount of tasks needed to be accomplished is numerous. Unless a student-athlete holds academics in high priority, is exceptional at managing his or her schedule, or both, the propensity for the academic portion of the load to falter is greater because there is not a full-time coach or coaching staff present to ensure that training or studying is completed.

My experience both here and at Michigan State and even at a small university like University of Houston, they struggle to get all their coursework done and be an athlete, between the training room time and the meetings and the lifting and practice schedule…I mean I know through gymnastics this is voluntary time, but there are clear expectations that if you’re going to be on the team and you’re
going to be put on a roster then you better be here at those voluntary times to lift
and do those things. I mean I don’t think they have time to do anything else.

Dominic brought up the difference between the views of those with a first-hand account
of the student-athlete’s litany of duties and the public’s perception of the life of a student-
athlete, “Sometimes the perception of the public is the opposite. It’s that student athletes
get too many breaks, athletes get too many, they get special classes, early registration, or
other perks that regular students don’t get, and they don’t necessarily work hard for it.”
(Focus Group 5, 613-614, 4/8/2004). This demonstrates the athletic department’s
continued battle waged on its reputation, the perception of its activities, and the actions of
those affiliated with it.

Athletic and academic missions are moving away from one another. In prior
pages, the opinions of this group of faculty were listed as to the goal of the athletic
department. In this section, and in this part of the discussion, the topic swung back to
that ultimate goal, and the mission that supports that goal. The athletic department’s
mission was compared and contrasted to that of the university mission, and while it
seemed that efforts were being made to draw them together, the loudest voices believed
that the structure guiding the decisions would not preclude a tight union between the two.

The thing I think would be very interesting which would really connect the two
missions more strongly would be for the folks who do supervision and monitoring
and support student services of student athletes, SASSO, that shop. If that shop
actually reported to the provost and not via the athletic director, so now you have
a unit who actually reports to an academic unit because they’re actually in support
of the students in terms of their academics. (Carmel, Focus Group 5, 460-465,
This statement, and the specialization of coaches’ contracts that do not call for time to be
spent teaching a university course or two a year, hinder the process aimed at mending
negative impressions of academic integrity in institutions that house big-time college
sports. Positives can come out of increasing the academic support for the student-
athletes, but if this group, SASSO, is reporting ultimately to the athletic director, there is
more likely to be a loyalty toward athletics, rather than academics.

Athletic scandals impact outside perceptions of the institution. Problems in the
academic/athletic structure at schools are often the cause for problems and abuses of the
system. For instance at Georgia, Jim Harrick Jr., the son of the head basketball coach and
assistant coach in his own right, taught a basketball principles class that was attended
partly by his players that must remain eligible in order to play. This lack of checks and
balances can lead to problems if a person is morally bankrupt or succumbs to the
pressures of being a coach in a big-time program. There have been plenty of examples to
support this foundation.

The impact of academic scandals in college athletics is widespread, across
campuses, within sports and throughout the NCAA. On college campuses, news of
allegations or problems at other schools can lead faculty members or others to look
introspectively and wonder what things look like within the University of Pachay athletic
department academic structure. These questions manifest themselves and create more
skepticism from opponents or critics of the system.
Well I think, people may, not so much people like us who have a better sense of what’s going on in athletics and that those things maybe are more about individual integrity vs. systematic abuse, but I think a lot of faculty from other areas who maybe don’t have so much insight question the whole integrity of the whole program. And question whether athletics should even be part of the university system when those kinds of things happen. (Elizabeth, Focus Group 5, 506-510, 4/8/2004).

It just builds into the basic stereotype that, in fact, athletes are not particularly intellectual. In fact there are standards and the whole notion of the university as an intellectual endeavor just sort of further reinforces the notion that physical activity can never be an intellectual endeavor and so the notion of giving credit hours for physical activity just gets more and more to be a joke, which is quite unfortunate. (Carmel, Focus Group 5, 517-521, 4/8/2004).

This is an area that these faculty members have in common with their athletic counterparts and, perhaps, is partially the reason for their forgiving attitude toward some of the otherwise perceived misgivings of the athletic department.

Summary

Those faculty members with a background in sport and physical activity, and have an understanding of its place in society were chosen to take part in this study, and were very insightful with their thoughts on the current state of intercollegiate athletics. Their interaction with student-athletes led them to believe that student-athletes did not need an across the board alteration in the current grant-in-aid, but felt that more could be done to
support those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Academic issues dominated the conversation, and the overall theme from these faculty members was that the student-athletes on the whole are very conscientious, and the stories of problems in the classroom are overblown.
Focus Group/Individual Interview Eight: Faculty Members –

Unfamiliar with Athletic Department

This focus group was comprised of faculty members who were unfamiliar, before the focus group meeting, with the daily operations and mission of the athletic department. As widespread as the influence of Pachay athletics is, especially on campus, there are still a number of faculty members who have no interest in, knowledge of, or desire for knowledge of the operations of the athletic department. Conversations with faculty members demonstrated not only the large disconnect between the athletic department and a number of faculty members, but also the enormous lack of communication and information being shared among athletics and this group of faculty members. For this very reason, faculty members with little or no connection to athletics or the athletic department were chosen to be an invitee, and eventually a participant in this study. In this focus group, three members of the faculty were present, two females and a male who, in initial discussion at the session, made it clear that they were familiar with the on-the-field outcomes of some of the teams, but had no understanding of the athletic department operation.

Payment of Student-Athletes

As an indication of the dearth of information held by this group, the researcher spent time at the beginning of the session, before questions were asked, providing a basic overview of the athletic department, the components of the grant-in-aid, and other pertinent information that would help the discussion provide a glimpse into their perceptions.
Athletic department’s scope and mission unclear to faculty. The clearest indication of the faculty’s lack of knowledge regarding the athletic department’s scope came in response to the initial question of the contact these faculty members had with student-athletes. “I just want to make sure I’m clear. When you say student athletes do you mean that they’re in intramural sports?” (Linda, Focus Group 6, 20-21, 4/19/2004). Linda’s lack of clarity of the athletic department and its connection with outside organizations continued, “Ok. So it has to be in connection with the university. I would say no then. I mean I do have some students who participate in leagues outside of the university, baseball leagues and things like that.” (Linda, Focus Group 6, 26-28, 4/19/2004). These quotes demonstrate the fact that there are members of the university community, working less than a mile from the athletic department, who are completely unaware of the full scope of the athletic department and what human and physical resources it involves, because their interests take them beyond the scope of the athletic department.

These are the individuals that are often pointed towards by the athletic department when accusations of improprieties are levied against the athletic department. One of these occurrences took place on the campus of The Ohio State University in the summer of 2003 when a teaching assistant accused revenue student-athletes of improprieties like cheating and receiving preferential treatment. No wrongdoing was found by an internal investigation, and it was believed by many that the teaching assistant had a prejudice against the athletic department. This topic was broached in the academic portion of this presentation, but in an indication of the lack of communication between the faculty and athletic department, which leads to a lack of understanding of the policies and programs
being run by the athletic department. Another indication of the lack of knowledge of
programs set up by the athletic department to assist student-athletes academically is, “I
wouldn’t know that the students were athletes had I not, there’s some form that gets
submitted to me as an instructor to see how they’re doing and requests what they need or
something like that.” (Donna, Focus Group 6, 69-71, 4/19/2004).

Financial situation of student-athletes similar to that of non-athletes. Faculty
members who participated in this focus group are not housed in departments that are
popular among student-athletes. However, these faculty members have had a few
student-athletes in their classes each quarter or throughout the year. “On average we
have four or five every year. Not people from big sports, but we have crew, don’t know
why, but we have girls’ crew team, and we have track and field and other sports like
lacrosse. Non-revenue producing sports in my classes.” (Sunny, Focus Group 6, 40-42,
4/19/2004). From this limited interaction, each of the focus group members, as well as
the faculty member interviewed believed that the financial situation appeared to be no
different for student-athletes as it was for the general student body. “…again I wouldn’t
be able to tell their financial circumstances apart from any other student. Everybody is
struggling. And everybody is struggling not only financially, but in terms of time with
my classes. So it’s certainly not specific to athletes, they don’t stand out in that way in
my classes.” (Donna, Focus Group 6, 72-75, 4/19/2004).

Reciprocal exploitation of student-athletes and athletic departments. Much of the
attention given to student-athletes and their supporters focuses around the multi-billion
dollar industry of college athletics and the multi-million dollar operating budgets that
athletic departments hold, while the student-athlete receives none of the money, except
for serves (what are serves?) and a grants-in-aid. However, this group of faculty saw the relationship of exploitation that has historically been considered one-way, as two-way in nature, where the student-athlete exploits that athletic department, and its components as regularly as the athletic department exploits the student-athlete. “That actually could be a good thing for them, especially if their goal is to go pro or even to get any position. Any company would likely hire a University of Pachay ex-football player. I think that your chances of getting any jobs would be increased.” (Linda, Focus Group 6, 315-317, 4/19/2004).

Others in this grouping felt that exploitation may be a strong term to use to describe the relationship held between the athletes and athletic department. “Exploitation is a pejorative term and implicit with that is unfair advantage to the detriment of the individual. So according to that definition I would say no.” (Donna, Focus Group 6, 310-311, 4/19/2004). Another view was, “It’s true for any students. Just because you are a graduate who was a student-athlete, you have a good chance of getting a job. So I think it’s maybe a strong term to use exploitation, than mutually cooperative, co-dependent relationship.” (Sunny, Focus Group 6, 319-321, 4/19/2004).

_No need for additional payment of student-athletes._ To extend the discussion of exploitation, supporters of the plight of student-athletes call for additional payment to be remitted in addition to the grant-in-aid and accompanying room and board monies. These faculty members agreed that participation in athletics is no different than the responsibilities faced by graduate students who are enrolled in any of their programs.

They know that coming in, that’s the way it’s going to be. When I look at our other students too, even those that are in our leadership training program, they’re
going full time and they get a stipend of maybe $900 a month, plus tuition and fees, and everything…but they’re doing it because they’re getting the preparation that will allow them to make more money, not just money – in fact they won’t make a lot of money afterwards, but to do well professionally in a career. (Donna, Focus Group 6, 338-340; 341-342, 4/19/2004).

The group’s consensus was that these student-athletes are receiving an opportunity to participate in an activity they truly enjoy, while being given the opportunity to either turn professional in their sport, open doors personally and professionally with the title of being a student-athlete at the school, or both. It is the decision of that student-athlete to participate, and he or she should abide by the rules as they are currently stated, or go somewhere else. “I guess that the university is not a place where somebody exercises their career as the main priority. It’s to prepare them or give them the opportunity for a future career. I wouldn’t say that the university owes them the revenues that a private company would when you’re employed. That’s not the function of the university.” (Linda, Focus Group 6, 395-398, 4/19/2004).

Commercialization and Over-Commercialization of Intercollegiate Athletics

The influence of commercial interests on the athletic department seem evident to those that are impacted, and/or see their influence on the athletic department. Other than a basic definition of the term commercialization, which came sporadically, there seemed to be difficulty in linking commercialization to the everyday happenings of the athletic department. Most of the discussion revolved around the periphery, where the athletic
department could be used as an example in gaining better understanding of the terms. However, the group did not identify any in-depth viewpoint of the impact of commercialization on athletics.

_No real understanding of the term commercialization._ “Making money off an asset…You have an asset and you produce revenues off of the asset, that’s commercialization. That’s how I see it.” (Sunny, Focus Group 6, 582; 586-587). Other than this, there was very little in the way of a working definition, and a member of the focus group simply asked for an accepted definition so as to clear up confusion faced by the question. Sunny, however, offered a great example of commercialization that drew superb correlations with the goal of the athletic department and the importance of the monies generated by the increased commercialized nature of intercollegiate athletics.

Based on the belief that somehow commercialization is negative, it’s bad for the college and bad for the system, I question that belief. That’s why I don’t follow the definition. The belief that somehow commercialization is negative or bad, they may start naming the buildings now. For example, we had issues with McDonald’s corporation. We talked to McDonald’s one time. Why don’t you put your name on the back of the golden arch and we’ll lower the text books. They are willing to do that. They are willing to put their golden arches so that we can lower the prices. McDonald’s was glad to do it. Is this commercialization? Is it bad? (Sunny, Focus Group 6, 616-622, 4/19/2004).

This example demonstrated the benefits of outside, commercial money that help to subsidize the cost of a good that may be too expensive for the population to regularly consume. This ties in with the athletic department defense that those revenue streams are
exploited in an effort to make enough money to cover the operating costs of the department. Without having the money from its sponsorships, Pachay’s athletic department may be forced to cut sports and eliminate opportunities for its student-athletes.

*Media influence escalates future employers’ awareness of student-athletes.* To continue the theme of relative ignorance of the overall athletic department, the discussion of commercialization shifted to the athletic budget and whether or not it was too large. Linda asked about the budget, its size, what types of things are included in it, and other questions that were indicative of the aforementioned disconnect. The only real discussion of the influence of the media focused on the ability for certain student-athletes to earn more money in the future, be it in their sport, or from outside groups who are interested in associating themselves with a former athlete. The escalation of the student-athlete in the mind’s eye of the consumer and employer was the primary benefit of the media on intercollegiate athletics.

**Academic Improprieties and Difficulties**

This area is the main rationale for the inclusion of faculty members in this study. The disconnect that has been the common theme throughout the previous two sections is the source of many discussions about the nemesis of higher education’s academic integrity by intercollegiate athletics. In this section the researcher examined the faculty’s thoughts of the athletic department, their emphasis on academics and the demonstrated ability of student-athletes in the classroom.

*Student-athletes’ academic interest is influenced by professional goals.* One interesting viewpoint was that a person’s view on, or interest in, education may be a
result of their ultimate prize, and motivation for attending school to begin with, “I am
wondering if it has to do with the outcomes. The outcomes of football could be the pros,
or going into the pros, whereas the outcomes for the other sports, for most of those
athletes I am assuming that they would want a major that would help their livelihood one
day. I don’t know if it has anything to do with that or not.” (Linda, Focus Group 6, 149-
152, 4/19/2004). Another opinion on this topic is,

I had a non-revenue producing sport athlete. She never thought of track and field
as anything like her livelihood. It was something she did for the passion, for the
joy, dealing with the kids. So for her I have to make school first. In contrast, I
have to make my sport something to hang my hat on to get a scholarship; for
them, sports are the way. So for revenue-producing sports, sports come first, and
academics come secondary…but revenue sports, they don’t dare do that. They
don’t dare drop the sport for the academics because they are here because of the
sport they are playing. (Sunny, Focus Group 6, 154-158; 162-164, 4/19/2004).

The student-athlete that was described in the previous quote was from a non-revenue
sport, and the focus of that perception was that the athletes from non-revenue sports are
very successful in the classroom because they understand the finality of their athletic
careers and are interested in, and conscientious of their studies and progress toward a
degree.

_Lack of promotion of academically successful non-revenue student-athletes._

Members of this group were aware of successful non-revenue student-athletes, and their
academic prowess, and were dismayed at the lack of perceived attention given to them by
the athletic department.
I think the university should be promoting something like that, not just depending on the media to do it. Although, I do think the media should do it as well. Every time you open your email and see campus news that should be right up there. It should be in the Lantern. It should be promoted internally everywhere, that’s something to celebrate. I think the university should be promoting something like that, not just depending on the media to do it. (Linda, Focus Group 6, 814-817, 4/19/2004).

Linda’s point was that the athletic department should make more of an effort to acknowledge and raise the public awareness of the academic successes of this group of young adults, but also placed a portion of the blame onto the shoulders of the media.

Supportive of enhanced communication between coaches and faculty members. To help reduce the chasm between athletics and academics, the faculty members were asked to discuss their willingness to increase communication with coaches or other administrators who often drive the academic policies for their respective teams. “For me, I feel like they are really distancing themselves from the community. They are part of the community. For me, coaches are just like faculty. They are hired to teach the skills they have. It’s hard for them to give up the celebrity status. We understand that.” (Sunny, Focus Group 6, 844-847, 4/13/2004). In addition to those thoughts Sunny made the following statement that was widely supported by the group, and the member who was individually interviewed, “It’s not the high profile coaches, other coaches can come and talk to us. Come to faculty meetings and share with us. They are part of us, we support them, so it seems there should be a healthy relationship there.” (Sunny, Focus Group 6, 856-858, 4/19/2004).
Student-athletes accept their burdens and take responsibility for their academic outcomes. Of those student-athletes these faculty members have had in class, there seemed to be a theme that ran through the experience each faculty member had in educating them. It was discussed that athletes were more accepting of the outcomes given to them; they were better able to overcome the problems they faced by internalizing the situation and accepting responsibility for the outcome. There are burdens and responsibilities faced by all members of the university. As faculty members who are partially responsible for adding to those burdens, and witnesses of student-athletes’ reaction to these stresses; this group was significantly knowledgeable for this question.

Of those student-athletes these faculty members have had in class, the theme that seemed to run through the experience each faculty member had in educating them was that athletes were more accepting of the outcomes given to them. They were more able to overcome the problems they faced by internalizing the situation and accepting responsibility for the earned outcome.

More interesting is that athletes, I don’t find them complaining too much, in contrast to their fellow students when I have five or six. They accept the outcomes easily. Whatever they got on the grade, they don’t complain too much because their goal is to do well in sports, do well academically. Most of them do reasonably well in school too. And just like in sports, when they fail they take responsibly for it. They transfer their skill to a classroom. They take responsibility. (Sunny, Focus Group 6, 90-95, 4/19/2004).
Summary

The final group discussed is those faculty members who are more removed from physical activity and sport. Their perceptions are based on limited contact with student-athletes, but are important in the overall effort to look at the rift that exists on college campuses between athletics and some members of academia. There was much more time spent defining the programs set up by the athletic department, as well as the parts of the grant-in-aid and other basic pieces of information that demonstrated a gap in their level of knowledge. In relation to the reform issues, they felt that student-athletes seemed to be facing situations financially that are no different than regular students and are not deserving of a stipend or additional payment. Faculty members in this group intimated that commercial relationships, such as apparel contracts and media affiliations are useful to the athletic department, as well as the university, as they raise awareness of the school and its programs. Just as they were not seen as a detriment to intercollegiate athletics, by these individuals, neither were problems around the country with the academic handlings of the university. Student-athletes excel in their classrooms, and the faculty felt it was a case of the media focusing on the bad stories more than those that portray a positive image.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of stakeholder groups toward three areas of reform inquiry within intercollegiate athletics. These issues include the payment of college athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization of intercollegiate athletics, and academic improprieties and difficulties of student-athletes, and are important toward gaining a clear view of the intercollegiate landscape. To examine these issues and gain a sense of the true voice of an athletic departments’ internal stakeholders, focus groups were organized and led that permitted open discussion and as a result, a wide scope of the various thoughts and emotions evoked by the participants. This chapter continues the presentation of findings from Chapter 4, but examines the perceptions across groups while answering the four research questions posed in the beginning of this study. Analysis of the findings is supplemented with the interactive literature base, as well as the implications of the study and recommendations for further research on this topic.

CROSS GROUP ANALYSIS

Now that the voices of each individual focus group have been illustrated, the similarities and differences between stakeholder groups, the essence of this study must be
portrayed. As an effort to clarify who is who, and which pseudonyms are connected to what focus group, table 5.1, a copy of the table included in the last chapter is once again included below.

Research Question One – Paying Student-Athletes

What perceptual similarities and differences exist between stakeholder groups as they relate to the payment of college student-athletes?

Discussion of Findings

Eight focus groups, six individual interview sessions and about 23 hours of discussions focused on intercollegiate athletic reform resulted in a vast collection of perceptions from those stakeholders of the University of Pachay’s athletic department. Of the three areas of reform focused on for this study, this research question, revolving around the payment of student-athletes and its many facets, drew the most attention. The attention to this question may be explained in the proximity of this topic to their everyday lives, or perhaps because it has received the most attention from the media, and is therefore in the conscious of the participant. Within this topic area, discussion migrated in each session toward a few topics where seemingly most of the interest laid. Those interest areas centered on questions focused on the current state of athletics compared to the situation those more mature participants faced when they were college-aged students or student-athletes. Also, the financial situation of student-athletes, thoughts on the athletic responsibilities, and legislative actions taken in a few states were areas that emerged as important to most or all of the groups.
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Table 5.1 - Stakeholder Pseudonym Table
In this area of chapter 5, the pictures painted by each individual focus group were transferred to a larger canvas, one that encompasses the breadth of the study. Those themes that emerged in each session were compared and contrasted to other meetings, offering a landscape view of the University of Pachay’s athletic department stakeholder views of the payment of student-athletes.

Different Landscape Now than Years Ago

One topic area that was not originally planned for by the researcher, but continued to rise to the top of the discussion, was the stark contrast older participants saw between the financial situation and expectations they faced as college students or athletes, and those held by today’s student-athletes. “…these kids have way more money to do a lot more things than I ever could have done when I was an athlete and I came from an upper-middle class suburban family.” (Bill, Focus Group 4, 18-20, 4/8/2004). As focus group after focus group met, the fact that the older participants had to work for the funds they received and took out loans to pay for school contrasted with today’s student-athletes that never seemed to taking out loans to subsidize their education. “It almost seems like nobody even thinks about taking out a loan for anything now. It’s not even a thought and it’s like growing up, all my friends, I was fortunate to have scholarships and not have to pay, but every friend I had had a student loan or some type of loan to go to school, and these kids, it’s not even a thought in their mind, or even the parent’s mind.” (Bill, Focus Group 4, 66-69, 4/8/2004). Here is a faculty member’s insight into this same topic, “I can only speak of my personal experience and that was years ago. Times have changed, I understand that. My family was dirt poor so I got all the loans that I could get, and
worked during summer. So it’s almost like, we don’t even want to talk about loans anymore.” (Dominic, Focus Group 5, 4/8/2004). None of the student-athletes that were included in the study received student loans of any kind.

Student-athletes iterated an entitlement mentality to the goods and services they were receiving as part of their athletic grant-in-aid and that attitude was picked up by coaches, administrators and others who made various comments regarding this state of mind, “…think there is an entitlement which has evolved over time from A gets this, and B wants it, and C should have it later, so there is a natural progression…The first question now is: How much money can I get? It is an entire atmosphere that is different than it used to be.” (Silver, Individual Interview 5, 157-158; 161-162, 4/22/2004).

Additionally, student-athletes expected to live a lifestyle that went beyond the scarcity often found in college students. Their belief was that owning a car, eating out at restaurants, living in nice apartments and owning a diverse wardrobe was an adequate way of life, one not fathomed by those that attended college in decades gone by.

We get like $850 or $860 a month, so you have your car and car insurance and for me that is $400, $400 where I stay plus utilities, $40, $50 or $60 for that, cable and then you have got food and clothing and it comes to way more than $860, so it is hard to decide what you are going to do with the money that you have…

Once you pay your bills, you don’t have any money left. So you’re thinking I’m going to get this and I’m going to get that, and you’re asking for money. (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 28-31; 136-137, 4/22/2004).
In order to address the possible need or desire for additional payment for student-athletes, the researcher examined the stakeholders’ views of the current financial situation of student-athletes. As a defense in their calls for additional payment for student-athletes, groups like the College Athletes Coalition (CAC) provide examples of athletes who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds with little familial financial support and no means by which to support him or herself. Citing issues like lack of ability to work, incredible burdens on time and physically-taxing expectations of coaches, these groups work to increase public awareness of the chasm between revenue developed by the athletic department, and that money that finds its way into the pockets of student-athletes.

When this topic was raised in these meetings, the participants acknowledged there may be a case or two where student-athletes are unable to support themselves, but overwhelmingly believed the difference between the financial situation of student-athletes and the general student body was negligible. This is exemplified by a couple of quotes, starting with a revenue sport athlete, “It might be the same as what regular students are like. But I know that for myself, there’s no time to have a job.” (Laney, Individual Interview 2, 10-11, 4/19/2004). Second and third opinions on this topic sounds a lot like the first, these two are from administrators, “My opinion, probably the population of student-athletes, struggle just as the population of students struggle.” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 10-11, 4/13/2004). “I think it reflects very similarly to the things you see in the general student population.” (Sean, Focus Group 7, 24-25, 4/13/2004).

One consistent rationale for these opinions seems to be that the vast majority of student-athletes were from middle- or upper-class backgrounds and their parents had
planned financially to send their child to school and when he or she received assistance via a grant-in-aid, the money that was saved was used to support their child through school. “As a parent, my son or daughter is on full scholarship at the school they had always wanted to (attend), they have all of these other things. I did not have to take out a loan to pay for tuition; therefore I will still take out a loan to provide them with spending money or whatever else.” (Ann, Focus Group 1, 325-328, 3/24/2004). A separate group member, from a faculty group held a similar view, “My experience a lot of times, was sort of more middle-class students, upper-class students who have received a full ride, their parents had already planned to pay for college so they have quite a bit of discretionary income. They typically have cars, so their parents give them that money as extra, superfluous to paying for school.” (Elizabeth, Focus Group 5, 58-61, 4/8/2004).

There were a few differing views, and they were voiced by student-athletes who were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and/or participated in revenue sports.

If I wasn’t on scholarship, we wanted to move out, but my mom wouldn’t be able to pay for the security deposit and help me out with the living… If they were not paying for everything we would be screwed…we wouldn’t be here right now that is for sure. I guess I can look at it both ways, because I can say that I am unpaid, but at the same time I am paid. So, I don’t know, but if I didn’t have the opportunity that I do have, I would be doing everything on my own, because my mom wouldn’t be able to support both of us at the same time. (Nate, Focus Group 2, 145-147; 190-195, 3/30/2004).

That statement, from a non-revenue athlete not on scholarship from the University of Pachay, but receiving assistance from home is compared to a revenue student-athletes
perspective on the situation, “I wouldn’t call it struggling, but it is real hard to budget everything, especially when you are doing things by yourself.” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 27-28, 4/22/2004).

Outside Employment Is Difficult Because of Athletic Responsibilities (Year-Round Activity)

Non-athlete students often work during the academic year to pay for school, or to provide themselves with enough money to buy books and spend on other incidentals needed to survive. Nearly all of them have the opportunity to work summer jobs, ranging from serving at restaurants to landscaping to retail sales positions. On the other hand, up until a couple of years ago, student-athletes were not allowed under NCAA guidelines to garner outside employment while school was in session. NCAA rules have since relaxed and student-athletes are permitted to earn up to $2000 during the academic year, and unlimited monies between academic sessions (Winter break) and during the summer (NCAA Manual, 2002).

While this rule change is a step in the right direction, most participants in this study felt that student-athletes were not able to take advantage of it, since the responsibilities they held toward their teams precluded them from being able to hold a steady position. “I would say 99% of my kids do not have a job during the year. We use every minute of the 20 hours a week that we’re allowed.” (Sam, Focus Group 4, 156-157, 4/8/2004). Other viewpoints included these, “With athletics however, there are so many more time demands that it may not be conducive to having a job during the season.”
(Ralph, Focus Group 3, 60-62, 4/7/2004). “There are other jobs out there for certain people. You still can’t work that much due to class and practice. So some guys don’t even work.” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 67-68, 4/22/2004).

Some of these duties were requirements directly tied to participation in their chosen sport. Others were related to the “voluntary” efforts like training and conditioning that cannot be monitored by the head coach or coaching staff, but an unwritten reward system is in place where those that volunteer play more.

20 hours a week, do we actually stick to that? It becomes voluntary after that, and we want to be out there working, we are an individual sport, not a team sport, it is not like the coach would require us to be here during this timeslot, but it would be a much larger time frame, and whenever we would be able to go out there to work, that was when we would meet. We pretty much stuck to it, it was not out of control, but again, we were a sport that had to be monitored for safety reasons. So in the summer we could get away with having a coach out there with us. It was voluntary, but we wanted to be out there, we wouldn’t get in trouble if we weren’t out there. (Nicole, Individual Interview 1, 222-229, 4/15/2004)

When the question was asked about the off-season for the student-athletes, a couple of groups laughed the question off as being five or ten years ago, about when the mindset of coaches shifted. For competitive reasons coaches began to expect more off-season work to be done by their student-athletes, even though they could not require such effort, taking time away from employment or other ways to accrue money that would be used throughout the school year, “…there isn’t an off-season for most sports. It has gotten to the point that teams that don’t even compete in the fall show up in the summer
to begin to train for their season, and I think that is one area where the NCAA has gotten out of hand, with what they have allowed in the off-season.” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 145-148, 4/13/2004). A coaches’ view of this issue came from the revenue coaches focus group, “…you may be playing on an all-star team in the summer or having some real tough courses where you just don’t have time because you may be missing days during the season to be taking care of the load of academic work so you don’t have the ability to go out and make money.” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 22-25, 4/7/2004).

Nearly Unanimous Opinions on Legislative Actions

In part driven by the efforts of the aforementioned CAC, state legislatures in Nebraska, Texas and California are all at different stages of passing legislation that will increase the rights of student-athletes and in some cases require the payment of athletes, in addition to their grant-in-aid, remuneration for services rendered on the field. This topic of legislative actions drew perhaps the most unanimous set of responses, which disapproved of the measures being proposed, citing a number of different rationales. The following three themes were the main areas that these arguments fell under:

Athletic departments would not be able to financially support these measures.

Focus groups such as the athletic administrators and coaches, who have responsibilities pertaining to and knowledge of the athletic department budget, all looked at the proposed pieces of legislation that called for increases in grant-in-aids to the cost of attendance and increased benefits as too costly to the athletic department. This spontaneous reaction statement immediately followed a question inquiring about the athletic administrators’ thoughts on the pieces of legislation, “They want to stop college athletics huh?” (Sean, Focus Group 7, 435, 4/13/2004). Their take on these ideas was that very few athletic
departments around the country are self-sufficient, and any increase in expenses would lower the number that can support themselves, and strain the colleges and universities that assist those that are already unable to balance their own budgets.

So as you put these kinds of expectations on these programs, you make their financial situation a lot more dire than they already are. If a school cannot support its athletic program on its earnings already, and then you add to the costs associated with its operation, that money is going to come from student fees, or from general funds of the university, and I think you are going to see a lot of backlash. (Paul, Focus Group 7, 442-446, 4/13/2004).

Legislative actions would spell the end of non-revenue sports. The possible elimination of athletic programs is seen as the result of the added financial stress placed on the shoulders of the athletic department by the pieces of legislation.

The other big thing with that full scholarship is that we are having enough problems keeping sports in athletic departments, if you put that in there, men’s swimming, gymnastics and wrestling will be gone, there will be no more of any of these sports in this country, it will be gone…There are some good things on here, but I am very worried about anything dealing with money because I coach a non-revenue sport and I used to coach men and women, and I do not want to see any more teams cut. Anything that we increase the scholarship value on a team, we are going to lose teams. (Sam, Focus Group 4, 655-658; 753-756, 4/8/2004)

Those programs that are going to be eliminated, or have their monies significantly reduced are going to be those that are the least popular with the general public. Sports like wrestling, gymnastics and swimming have already taken a hit from Title IX, and
some groups in this study viewed the aforementioned legislative ideas as having as significant, or perhaps more, of an impact on these programs. The numbers of these programs are already greatly reduced across the country, and any further cuts could spell the end of these sports being competed in at the college level. This move could eliminate the United States’ ability to compete at an elite international level in these activities, as well as eliminate opportunities for thousands of kids who would have received college scholarships in these sports.

…you look at what you are going to cost in academics, and if athletics is out there draining money from the academic programs of the university, then athletics is going to take some cuts. On top of that, you are talking about increasing the expenditures of the athletic department, and really the only way you are going to make that work is to cut opportunities, and that means cutting sports. (Paul, Focus Group 7, 480-484, 4/13/2004).

Results of the enacted pieces could eliminate amateurism and playing for the love of the game. The previous two areas have been mainly discussed by older participants in the study who have the experience to look at the wider picture and long-range impacts of today’s issues (like legislation). A point raised by the student-athletes focused on the result of some of the pieces of the legislations, mainly their effect on amateurism and the public perception toward college athletes. It was their belief that, if these pieces were passed, there would be no consideration of the fact that athletes still play for the love of the game. While their interest in competition drives their participation in college sports, if they were paid critics would point to the money received as their driving force. “I think you lose the innocence of sports if you pay athletes. We play because we love it, not for
the money. The competitiveness goes away.” (Lucy, Focus Group 2, 652-653, 3/30/2004). A second athlete, this one from a revenue sport took this stance on this issue, “My thing is if we start getting paid, would the love of the game, would it kind of be more of a business like the professional level you know? Most of the time, we’re coming here, we’re getting a free education, and that’s paying a lot.” (Laney, Individual Interview 2, 78-80, 4/19/2004).

Payment for Student-Athletes is Not a Viable Option

Pulling together all of the various views listed above, while taking into consideration some direct comments from the participants, a vast majority of the stakeholders who took part in this study do not believe that student-athletes should receive additional monies. Those feelings were tempered a bit by some who thought that perhaps an increase in the cost of attendance would be valuable to those who demonstrate a financial need. “Our scholarship reads tuition, room, board and books. What is wrong with tuition, room, board, books and cost of living stipend, for a couple of hundred dollars a month?” (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 188-189, 4/7/2004). For the most part however, the participants were steadfast in their belief that student-athletes are granted opportunities that their non-athlete student counterparts are not afforded.

If you add everything up for somebody that is on scholarship from out of state, it is like $25,000, so you are getting paid like $25,000, plus you think of all of the SASSO help, so all the tutoring help that is paid for at how much an hour…Right, so you add that up, the health benefits, even the training, the traveling where these kids get to go to places they may never get a chance to go. It is like personal training that these kids get… (Kim, Focus Group 4, 252-254; 258-260, 4/8/2004)
Also, while the requirements they face from their athletic programs are many, they are not significantly more than the stresses faced by the regular student body. To conclude the look at this issue, competing views are offered with their rationales for those feelings, “I think they should help us out. Like Oscar was saying, you have bills to pay. Then it would be nice to have a little extra money in your pocket since you’re working hard for it. It’s not like we are just sitting at home.” (Caroline, Focus Group 8, 121-123, 4/22/2004). In a view that dissented from the opinions of the rest of his non-revenue student-athletes counterparts, Joseph supported Caroline’s assertion with a statement of his own, “…student athletes should get paid because schools like that that don’t, well the NCAA’s making millions off of us basically. Like we’re non-revenue sports but the NCAA is making millions off of what we do every day and I don’t think that’s fair at all.” (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 681-684, 3/30/2004). Another non-revenue student-athlete had this take on the current state of student-athletes and the thought of additional remuneration, “Are they given enough money to go out and buy new cars? No, but I think they are given a reasonable amount of money and asked to live on an acceptable amount of money.” (Nicole, Individual Interview 1, 14-16, 4/15/2004).

Implications

As a result of the study design, the limitations of the scope of the study precluded the researcher from gaining a wide sample of voices outside the athletic department. This study was focused on the perceptions of internal stakeholders, those with close affiliations to or those impacted by the operation of an athletic department. By focusing on those stakeholders with the most vested interest, the researcher is also limited the negative views of the athletic department decisions and visions toward the payment of
student-athletes, since many of the people who attended the sessions and interviews made the choices that impact the ability of student-athletes to gain employment or accrue outside funds. Understanding the competing pressures faced by the participants is important when continuing through the remaining implications in this section and others.

Pervading the discussions with various stakeholder groups was the near-consensus feeling that student-athletes received enough aid for the efforts they put forth to the university. However, the group of individuals that saw the need for additional remuneration are part of the same stakeholder group (revenue athletes) that have organized groups like the Collegiate Athletes Coalition (CAC) who have been part of the impetus toward legislative action being taken in California.

Critics of the current system such as Sack and Staurowsky (1998) and Zimbalist (1999) cite the revenue gap between the athletic department and student-athlete, but those issues are not what seem to be driving the interests of revenue athletes. In discussions with these individuals, the loudest voices came from members from more disadvantaged backgrounds, who sought to be able to live, albeit comfortably, but still to be able to accrue adequate funds each month to survive on a college campus. Thornton (2003) wrote of the inability of the some student-athletes, especially in revenue sports, to meet his or her financial responsibilities, and the potential corruptive actions that could arise from this issue. Student-athletes and coaches supported this thought, saying that athletes have been known to sell tickets or apparel given to them, in order to have money to buy the goods they feel are necessary.

Legislatures from Nebraska to Texas to California have been working to provide student-athletes rights to more payment and better working conditions. Many who met
argued, in accordance with the views of Zimbalist (1999), that college athletic departments struggle financially under the current restraints, and should additional burdens be placed upon them, more money will have to be requested and paid by the university and its general fund, or sports and resulting opportunities will be cut. Sack and Staurowsky (1998) stated that in 1995, the average Division I-A athletic program operated at a deficit of $237,000 after institutional support, in the form of state aid and student fees were removed from the equation. Increasing the burden will only create more financial responsibility on the shoulders of the university, and in the face of reduced government funding for higher education, the strains already felt to pay for current academic programs will inevitably, the internal stakeholders say, end numerous non-revenue sports that are not revenue generators and lack the public appeal of football and basketball.

Research Question Two – Commercialization and Over-Commercialization of Athletics

What perceptual similarities and differences exist between stakeholder groups as they relate to the increased level of commercialization in intercollegiate athletics?

Discussion of Findings

While there was a unilateral interest in the issues surrounding the payment of student-athletes, the interest in commercialization, its trends and ultimate impact on intercollegiate athletics was limited. Reasons for this apathy are not known, although it can be surmised that the nature of commercialization is not as provocative or controversial as paying student-athletes, thus, it was not as interesting to discuss. Another rationale for this seeming lack of interest is that the construct commercialization, and its impacts, are farther removed from the personal experiences of the stakeholder
members than paying athletes. This forced participants to extend their thinking into an abstract realm, an exercise that is more taxing and not as comfortable for many. Lack of interest did not necessarily mean that commercialization was linked to negative views of the issue, quite the contrary. The themes that emerged from the discussions began with a disparate look at the goals of the athletic department, but moved to focus on the positive effects that commercialization has on the athletic department, as well as a look at the media influence on athletics, both positive and negative.

Two Different Goals of the Athletic Department

Prior to being able to gain a worthwhile understanding of the commercialization and the other issues that impact athletic departments, a precursory question centered on the ultimate goals of the athletic department is needed, and was asked of the study participants. For the most part, there was a level of agreement with what and for whom the athletic department works for. Following are two quotes, one from a student-athletes’ point of view, the second from the perspective of an administrator,

Probably to make sure everything is successful. Or as successful as they can be. To make sure the players are getting treated right. Some schools don’t have the opportunities like we have, like the training table, or the facilities we have to train in and study in, so probably just to make sure that their athletes are getting treated right. (Caroline, Focus Group 8, 267-270, 4/22/2004).

I think it’s providing opportunity. You’re providing opportunities for almost 1000 kids to participate in intercollegiate sports while attending university and working towards a degree. And those things have to be intertwined…that’s
providing a lot of financial aid to a lot of kids to come and attend Midwestern… I mean the competition that most of our teams experience is the top of the collegiate level. (Dick, Focus Group 7, 849-851; 856; 858, 4/13/2004).

Those viewpoints lay a solid foundation for the vast majority of definitions, but there were other areas that were seen as important to a successful athletic department. “The goal of the athletic department should be to create a well-rounded student-athlete, to develop someone who leaves your university as a graduate, and leaves with a positive, college experience.” (Nicole, Individual Interview 1, 145-147, 4/15/2004). A final definition came from the meeting of revenue coaches,

We are in the business of people, and the goal is to educate student-athletes to the best of our ability, to make them upstanding citizens and students. I think that is the goal of any arm of the university with the exception of development whose goal it is to clearly make money. And after the people, it is to be self-supporting, revenue-driven, being a part of the university community, through donating or whatever we can do. (Joe, Focus Group 3, 465-469, 4/7/2004).

With all of these relatively similar assessments, the outside voice of revenue student-athletes stood out as very different than the others.

It’s business. That’s all it is big business. Once you get out of high school it’s business. College, pros, it’s just a business and you got to, there’s always somebody above somebody above somebody who’s making the calls and is going to take care of everything. But the whole key to the athletic department I think is to be the mediator between the average student-body and the student-athletes, just trying to keep everybody happy. (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 273-277, 4/22/2004).
This variance is interesting when taking into consideration the source of the statement, especially as student-athletes playing revenue sports are stereotyped as being the group that is looking for the most monetary assistance from the athletic department. This perception results from their sport of choice, the fact that the money those sports provide are the lifeblood of the organization allowing for the implementation of numerous programs.

Not trying to go too far helping student-athletes, but just let them know that they are getting a little bit of help, they got some support. But just don’t do too much to make the average kid feel like they are getting totally too much. I think the biggest argument they have is how much money the sports bring in… (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 277-280, 4/22/2004).

Also to be taken into consideration is that these athletes are more apt to be from poorer socio-economic status than counterparts playing non-revenue sports or the general student body, and may see their athletic talents as a ticket to a more affluent lifestyle, heightening their awareness of money and finances. “I think for the system. Like students want to do well and graduate, so different sports can be supported. It mainly comes down to money for the school.” (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 944-945, 3/30/2004).

**Commercialization Has Positive Effects on Athletic Department**

One area where there was a large amount of coalescence between groups looked at the financial situation of higher education and intercollegiate athletics in combination with the desperate need for revenue generation. “But you are right, the opportunities that we get for crew, field hockey and swimming and rifle and pistol and everything, we wouldn’t have these teams if it weren’t for that commercial in there, we just wouldn’t
have them.” (Sam, Focus Group 4, 958-960, 4/8/2004). The overwhelming view across all groups was that the commercialization of intercollegiate athletics was imperative to reduce the amount of strain of the university’s general fund, while working to maintain, as well as develop opportunities for student-athletes. Commercialization, which they defined as,

…take advantage of the fact that we could avail ourselves of Nike commercials and Nike sponsorship and we could avail ourselves of BCS money for bowl games so we can put 35 or 34 different athletic teams out there most of which we couldn’t pay for if we didn’t make a certain amount of money from two or three sports. So we’re being smart by using our finances to distribute across a greater variety of persons and giving a greater number of people opportunities to do something they wouldn’t otherwise be able to do. So that’s one way to look at it. (Carmel, Focus Group 5, 205-210, 4/8/2004).

Athletic administrators, whose job it is to understand the importance of commercial relationships without jeopardizing the mission of intercollegiate athletics view commercialization as, “…agreements with commercial entities. Whether it’s an agreement for apparel or an agreement for the name on an arena.” (Paul, Focus Group 7, 598-599, 4/13/2004).

Members of the non-revenue coaches linked the increase in commercialization with the goals of the athletic department in a clear and succinct manner,

What function does it want its athletic department to have? Harvard has made a decision, and so has University of Pachay. University of Pachay’s decision is that they want to have a comprehensive program, 36 sports, they want to be nationally
competitive and they want it to be self-supporting. Now, talk about asking of the moon. If the universities are going to make the decision to have a comprehensive program for its student-athletes, they want that athletic department to be nationally-competitive and they want that athletic department to be self-supporting, then they are going to have to commercialize the revenue aspects that they have. (Bill, Focus Group 4, 1027-1034, 4/8/2004).

This view was not uncommon among other focus groups, with the opportunities being viewed as resulting from the commercialization covering a wide range from the importance of apparel contracts, “I think a lot of the coaches and stuff want the best equipment for their athletes. And if you do take away that sponsor in some way or another you’re not going to get as good stuff, so it’s hard to say. Because you don’t want to take away the Nike …” (Joseph, Focus Group 2, 1180-1183, 3/30/2004).

Another view of the importance of these relationships was formulated by an athletic administrator,

…it doesn’t bother me to see names on the scoreboard and it doesn’t bother me to see swooshes on the clothing because the names on the scoreboard are paying for a bunch of sports and logos on the clothing are having Nike supply every single sport we have with the equipment and the clothing they need to compete and more than they need to compete actually. Our kids get all kinds of clothes and shoes and that’s millions of dollars that we’re not spending. And if we had to come up with that cash, then we’d be cutting (sports). (Paul, Focus Group 7, 616-621, 4/13/2004).
Positive and Negative Views of the Impact of Media on Intercollegiate Athletics

More influential than relationships with commercial entities like banks and retail outlets that form sponsorship agreements for thousands of dollars are media contracts to broadcast intercollegiate athletic events, expanding the public awareness of college sports. These pacts infuse millions of dollars into the coffers of the NCAA, various conferences and individual athletic departments. The prime example of this is the 11-year, $6 billion television contract reached between the NCAA and CBS to televise the Division I-A Men’s Basketball Tournament over the month of March. Money from this event, and others like the Bowl Championship Series agreement with ABC and other smaller contracts has been used to fund new programs like the Student-Athlete Special Assistance Fund, used to help assist student-athletes from poorer backgrounds pay for one-time purchases that are needed. Flights to funerals, or the purchase of a sport coat, are the type of goods that can be purchased, and the money is a result of media agreements.

We have had some that are on full scholarships, whose parents are in such dire economic straits that the child really has nothing other than what they get in the grant, so only the tuition, the room and board and the books and that is it, so if they need to go home for an illness or a death in the family, they really don’t have the money to travel or the money for excess dental bills or anything that pops up like that, and the Special Assistance Fund has really worked to alleviate problems like that. (Dick, Focus Group 7, 33-38, 4/13/2004).

Money from the media is used at the conference and athletic department level to fund portions of the athletic department, pay coaches’ salaries, expand services provided
and offer more grant-in-aids to worthy student-athletes. Faculty members saw the media as a medium by which student-athletes, especially those in revenue sports, use to escalate awareness to future employers of their abilities on the field and possibly as an employee. “I think it is a big deal, exposure for the university, exposure for the team, I think it is an opportunity.” (Joe, Focus Group 3, 587-588, 4/7/2004).

As is the case with most issues or programs, there are two sides to the story. The positives espoused above are met with negative views of the influence media organizations have on intercollegiate athletics. For some, their problem surrounds the inconvenience that comes with not knowing what time a contest will be played until a week prior to that event,

But if you think for the money that they’re paying for that they’re not pulling a lot of strings, I mean they’re already having a huge influence on all other things that happen. They determine when games happen. Sometimes you get six days notice on when a football game’s going to happen. I mean they already are a huge player in a lot of the things that we do. (Sean, Focus Group 7, 931-935, 4/13/2004).

Others, such as the scheduling issues that arise, have farther reaching impacts affecting class-time missed by student-athletes, a problem that will be addressed further in the next section. “…the uncertainty of the NCAA Tournament or the NIT at the end of the basketball season… the students are at the end of the quarter and may have to come back for finals depending upon the arrangements. That is a total mess as far as it concerns the students ending the quarter or semester. It doesn’t matter.” (Ann, Focus Group 1, 679-680; 683-686, 3/24/2004).
Finally, the influence of the media dollars on the competitiveness of an athletic department drives an unquenchable thirst for exposure, and increases the willingness of schools to hold games on nights of the week that are not generally associated with that sport, like football,

Well, I mean we are playing football games on Thursday night, whenever we can get a game in, we are going to get a game in. We can just yank kids out of school, and slowly gotten worse and worse. And you are damned if you do, and damned if you don’t. If you make a stand against this, and say we are not playing, they write about you, if you comply, you are impacting student-athlete welfare.

(Nehemiah, Focus Group 1, 706-710, 3/24/2004).

Implications

Some sociologists, such as Sack (1987-1988) point to commercialization as having a profound negative influence on the current situation faced by student-athletes on college campuses. It is his opinion, and others like Chu (1988) and Frey (1988, 1994) that the increased influence of money on the sustainability of athletic departments increased pressure to succeed on the coaches who generated that needed revenue, and that pressure was, in turn, transferred to the student-athlete.

Baxter, Margavio and Lambert (1996) extended an earlier study from Stern (1979) that examined the athletic departments that were more apt to engage in illegal activity, and both studies found that those programs that are more successful, financially and athletically, were more likely to have been found guilty of NCAA violations. In their view, the pressure to continue the revenue generation methods was heightened as the
stakes got higher, creating the urge and impetus for illegal activity. Wenner (1994) wrote an unrelated piece with similar views that examined what he termed the “green movement”, one focused on money, greed and deviance.

None of these authors have indicated in their works the positive virtues of commercial enterprise by an intercollegiate athletic department, but those who took part in this study saw the relationships their athletic department entered into with multinational and media and local corporations as imperative to the fiscal wherewithal of their organization. Without those dollars, the field hockey team would not be able to purchase equipment and travel, the basketball player from a disadvantaged, out-of-state background would not be funded, and thus, given an opportunity to attend college. These examples and many others were seen as the result of those relationships, not the increased pressure and perpetuation of the myth that athletics detracts from the mission of the academic portion of that university.

Padilla and Baumer (1994) supported the views of the athletic department stakeholders who say the goals of the athletic department as being variable across institutions, but focused on the development of students and student-athletes. In an effort to become self-sustaining, athletic departments have entered into agreements with media companies and other commercial organizations. In their piece, the authors cited the enormous monetary increases in intercollegiate athletics, but viewed the reform measure taken to aid some of the ailments as important and successful. However, the authors did find a connection between the pressure to win, and the increased stress being placed on winning and revenue generation. Perhaps the findings of this study do not correlate with these views because of the stable financial situation of the University of Pachay athletic
department, and perhaps a limited influence that stability has on the pressure to win.

With that being said, administrators and others indicated there is an expectation to win and be competitive, but the student-athletes never indicated this relationship to be present.

Research Question Three – Academic Improprieties and Difficulties of Student-Athletes

What perceptual similarities and differences exist between stakeholder groups as they relate to the academic improprieties and difficulties faced by student-athletes?

Discussion of Findings

In the previous two research questions, there was a segment of this study’s participants that may have been a little ignorant to the latest information and overall connectedness of the issues to the survival and success of an intercollegiate athletic department. In contrast, this question is one in which each of the five stakeholder groups, and eight focus groups, have personal experience with the academic side of intercollegiate athletics, and all of them play a separate part in the current landscape of the relationship on a college campus between academics and athletics. In general, this was a topic area that drew a great amount of interest, and diverse views on the issues raised by the researcher.

More than the other two areas, point of perspective toward academics was apparent in this discussion. While academicians were understanding of the athletic responsibilities of the student-athlete, and the efforts taken by the athletic department to ensure their student-athletes had a strong foothold on their academic responsibilities, there was always a questioning tone to their statements and perceptions. On the other hand, members of the athletic department took the politically correct viewpoint that
student-athletes are on campus first as students, and second as athletes. However, their views on extending practice time and the attention given to student-athletes only when they are facing ineligibility due to poor grades gave a different impression.

This section attempted to draw lines between those groups that had similar interests, while offering a conflict that exists between the expectations of the professors providing the grades, and the coaches providing the playing time. Aspects of the broader question that will be explored are the burdens and responsibilities of student-athletes and their impact on their academic progress; a look at scandals and corruptive situations that have arisen at other schools and their impact on the academic preparedness at the University of Pachay; and finally, the relationship that exists at Pachay between the athletic department and their academic cohorts.

_Burdens on Student-Athletes Are Not Too Great_

In the first research question, the burdens and responsibilities of student-athletes were examined in relation to their wherewithal to obtain and hold gainful employment to help subsidize their education. In this section, the aforementioned duties were looked at in addition to the personal, professional and social responsibilities of a college student. They were then examined in relation to the academic stresses placed on the student-athletes shoulders in an effort to determine how much is too much.

One determination was made abundantly clear by the coaches from both sides. They did not believe that the problems espoused were a result of too many responsibilities, in fact, they felt the responsibilities helped with the academic work completed by their student-athletes. “My seniors’ worst quarter, all of my teams’ worst quarter is the spring. It is always our worst quarter in grades, because we don’t have to
practice the 20 hours a week. My seniors are already back (working out even though they have exhausted their eligibility) because they feel that if they don’t keep up a regimen, they don’t study as well.” (Sam, Focus Group 2, 318-321, 4/8/2004). Their argument, echoed by other groups was that the amount of things on their respective plates was not that much more than the duties being juggled by a member of the student body. Obligations for each side may be different, but whether someone is working two jobs to pay for school, or practicing and lifting weights, their time must still be managed properly to enjoy success. “In season, it is a little bit more hours than that, but otherwise, you have to travel, and you get there and have to go to the trainers and things, but they waste a lot of time too, they are not always using their time right.” (Kim, Focus 2, 306-309, 4/8/2004). Another coaches’ take on the issue of burdens on athletes’ time went like this, “I hear my guys complaining about not having enough time to get through everything, with practice and everything else. I ask them how many hours they spent playing video games or watching television.” (Silver, Individual Interview 5, 349-351, 4/22/2004).

Another area that rose from the focus groups and interviews related to the structure that the University of Pachay athletic department had set in place to assist the student-athletes in each and every manner possible. SASSO, an organization formed to aid student-athletes with their academic responsibilities have a set of seminars available and work to aid student-athletes with their time management skills that many sides feel are inadequate from student-athletes who complain about too much on their plates to handle.
…it is just one of those things where you will have to be able to forget about the
term time management, because you cannot manage time, you manage your tasks,
and how do you squeeze all of your responsibilities in the 168 hours allotted in
the week. You cannot slow it down, you cannot speed time up, you can’t stop it,
you can’t manage it, so forget about that, you need to be very, very planful. (Jane,
Focus Group 1, 1012-1017, 3/24/2004).

Also, their thoughts were largely that the services that are viewed by some to be
the culprits of the overburdening of student-athletes are those designed to assist them.
Programs like study tables, training tables (meals), and training room time to heal injuries
and illness are all services not available to students; many of whom, it is thought, would
be more than happy to have these services at their fingertips. However, opponents of the
athletic department point to them as burdens on the student-athletes.

If you add everything up for somebody that is on scholarship from out of state, it
is like $25,000, so you are getting paid like $25,000, plus you think of all of the
SASSO help, so all the tutoring help that is paid for at how much an hour…so you
add that up, the health benefits, even the training, the traveling where these kids
get to go to places they may never get a chance to go. It is like personal training
that these kids get… (Kim, Focus Group 4, 252-254; 258-260, 4/8/2004).

Some members of the focus groups see no difference between the work completed
by students and student-athletes, only a difference in the level of profile enjoyed by
student-athletes who are on television and in the newspaper for their athletic exploits.
There are a lot of students at this school who are putting themselves though school, who are working full time, who are doing all kinds of other stuff, and we are not sitting around tables like this worrying about it they are too burdened...So we just have this heightened scrutiny of student-athletes that sometimes skews our thinking. We all sit around and think that this is a big problem, and they are out here and are the only ones with these issues, but they aren’t. (Paul, Focus Group 7, 339-341; 348-350, 4/13/2004).

On the topic of responsibilities faced by student-athletes, a hot topic that resonated from multiple groups surrounded the topic of the NCAA’s 20-hour per week rule that governs the amount of time a student-athlete can spend practicing under the guidance of the coaching staff. There were coaches who admittedly did not adhere to the rule, “My name is Sam, and we go way over the 20 hours a week with one part of my team, and it is voluntary it is the (deleted for confidentiality reasons) group, and if they didn’t, we would still be last in the Deuce Conference.” (Sam, Focus Group 4, 321-323, 4/8/2004). Others compared the situation they were in to performance art majors, providing an example that placed the NCAA restrictions onto the performance artist situation.

Any performance artist, performance major, whether it is dance or art or music, is practicing their craft, particularly if they are on a school of music or a dance school scholarship, is practicing their craft, they are in concerts, symphonies, and doing performances, and whatnot. I would compare their hours to an athletes’, and nobody seems to feel that that is unreasonable, they are asking too much of the students, yet for some reason, student-athletes are looked at, and the school of
music doesn’t have an academic support service, yet people look at the athletes and they are like ‘look at all they have to do’. (Bill, Focus Group 4, 350-357, 4/8/2004).

Some groups went back to the voluntary time spent by athletes as a loophole to this rule, creating an unregulated practice situation in the name of competitive advantage.

Outside Scandals and Corruption Affect Perceptions of Academics

A real problem that threatens the already damaged reputation of intercollegiate athletics are repeated wrongdoings at schools across the country. From Minnesota to Georgia to Fresno State, scandals have been uncovered relating to academic improprieties, creating the public perception of a wider chasm between athletics and academics with the athletic department pulling away from academia. Members of the various stakeholder groups were asked the impact these scandals had on their jobs, and for the most part, the answer was it made everyone more cognizant of the issue and their role within the system devised at the University of Pachay. Coaches felt the impact a little bit in recruiting, while administrators believed it made their job a little more difficult, as they iterated their constant fear of unknown problems they have no control over,

Every time you see somebody in the news get hit with a major violation, or some major scandal breaks, it’s like there for but the grace of gods because you can’t possibly control every single factor of a department this big. Any alum is considered an athletic interest and could create a violation and then you have lost institutional control over those people so it’s just a lot of diligence on the part of everyone in the department to try and keep an eye on everything that’s going on
and know the rules, and question things that don’t look they’re at the rules, but it’s definitely not a sure thing. It’s never going to be a sure thing. (Dick, Focus Group 7, 1107-1114, 4/13/2004)

Others however, saw the distance between the occurrences on other campuses to be too great to have a measurable effect on their day-to-day operations.

As unified as they were in their answers of the impact of these scandals; the various focus groups, with one notable exception, felt that the University of Pachay’s athletic department was relatively clean and free of possible unlawful activity. A non-revenue student-athlete talked of the experience they had at the University of Pachay, “Very rarely are you every going to see that happen. When you travel you are not going to have tutors there to help you out, first of all you are not going to get a test when you are traveling, or anyone who is going to write a paper for you, I don’t know if you will ever see that.” (Tony, Focus Group 2, 1493-1496, 3/30/2004). A second view of the athletic department, this from a revenue sport coach, portrayed an internalized approach, where focus was placed only on that which one can control,

In the end, we have to manage our own little world and focus on having our kids carry themselves in a mature way, we can only have our kids do so much community service and work to control ourselves in our own little world and understand that in any walk of life, there are idiots that will do things that are not in line with our ethics. (Ralph, Focus Group 3, 658-662, 4/7/2004).

However, there was one group, the revenue student-athletes (perhaps the highest profile of those interviewed) that felt the number of transgressions was more than reported. “I think it does happen a lot. Just no one finds out. I think every teacher tries to help out
the student. It’s just basically helping out the programs together. We have to have winning programs; it’s helping out the coaches and athletics. I think it’s the athlete and teachers…” (Oscar, Focus Group 8, 327-329, 4/22/2004).

Relationship between Athletic Department and Academia

One main perceptual dilemma faced by members of the athletic department is that it is constantly tugging at the academic integrity of the higher education institution. Scandals such as the one at Georgia erode at the public confidence in the university’s ability to adequately educate the youth that walk through its halls. The impetus behind these diminishing opinions is the athletic department and the ever-present pressure to win, which results in more money, an always scarce commodity in intercollegiate athletics. This relationship between pressure and academics was discussed at numerous junctures throughout the various proceedings.

I don’t think they compete against each other, the kid has to be eligible and certainly our goal is not to have the bare minimum and (our head coach) has incorporated some pretty rigorous academic standards for kids, be it study hall or GPA and there are some people who have more study hall hours if they are not producing and the grades are first and foremost. If that is not happening… (Joe, Focus Group 3, 703-707, 4/7/2004).

A second area that was raised, and again was unexpected by the researcher, circled around interest demonstrated by coaches and faculty members to reduce the communication gap that exists between the two factions. First the coaches,
I want to know the faculty, I think it (college) is awesome, and it is sad that I can’t talk to them, and I would guess that these professors would agree with us that it has gotten so far removed that it is really sad…it hurts all of us. They don’t understand what we are doing, and they can’t questions what is unclear, so there is a lot of miscommunication. (Kim, Focus Group 4, 1233-1235; 1251-1252, 4/8/2004).

Here is the faculty’s take on this issue, “For me, I feel like they are really distancing themselves from the community. They are part of the community. For me, coaches are just like faculty… They are part of us, we support them, so it seems there should be a healthy relationship there.” (Sunny, Focus Group 6, 844-846; 857-858, 4/13/2004).

A serious problem is the fact that some academicians are somewhat naive as to the purpose and operations of the athletic department, while their athletic department counterparts do not understand the complexities of the professoriate, sometimes questioning their work ethic and acting very defensive in the face of accusations from groups such as the Knight Commission. The overall theme here was that intercollegiate athletics would not grow to be a widely-perceived benefit to the university until each side fully grasps the stresses and agendas of the other side. Until that occurs, there will be a constant tug of war for power on college campuses. All sides will face negative consequences as long as that continues.

Implications

Murray Sperber, a well-known critic of “big-time” athletic departments focused some attention on the efforts made by student-athletes to accomplish the expectations and responsibilities placed upon them. His 1990 book, cited a sociology professor, Harry
Edwards, who discussed the education process upon which Sperber used the many hours required in athletics to argue that athletes cannot also be students. “Education is activist. You have to be actively involved in your own education. When you are involved in sports fifty hours a week, you cannot be actively involved (in your education).” (p.303). Edwards views, as well as those of Sperber were refuted in most cases by those who participated in this study.

Again, before moving into a comparison of the findings and implications of those findings to these views, an understanding is needed that the voices garnered for this study are firmly planted in the positions calling on student-athletes to spend the time playing, practicing, training and improving their lot as athletes. With that being said, faculty members in the university were called to participate in the study, and only after 150 of them demonstrated little or no interest, the researcher was forced to turn their attention to gathering a group using convenience sampling.

This apathy towards reforming college athletics has been discussed in dozens of studies. From a review of the literature, there seem to be a pocket of activists, such as Professor Sperber, who are keenly interested in changing the system, but for the most part, members of the academic community are not interested in fighting the fight again athletics. In his 1991 article attempting to understand the issues faced by the faculty, Robert Atwell placed a lot of the blame on faculty-athletic representatives. From his experiences, most of these individuals hold significant power in the NCAA power structure “…faculty representatives are more powerful than presidents within the NCAA and in a diminishing number of conferences.” (p.10). However, he went on to say the
members of these groups are also apologists and supporters of the athletic department. Thus, faculty members have very little voice to the athletic department and NCAA, as their main conduit to those groups’ side with athletics.

From the results of this examination, it seemed that the faculty was not as focused on limiting the scope of the athletic requirements placed on the shoulders of student-athletes. It was the assumption of the researcher that those faculty members who were adamantly opposed to the existing athletic department would be touched by the initial random sampling and would be willing to voice those views. However, none stepped forward, and those that agreed to discuss their perceptions were supportive of the athletic department and student-athletes.

Two other areas that arose as important to various groups were the graduation rates, in particular, the use of graduation rates by the media and their faulty measurement methods; the other was the integration of coaches and administrators into the campus community. Sacken (1992) outlined this as a measure needed to oversee the role of athletics in academics. Members from the faculty and coaching ranks were interested in developing a relationship that cleared the air of poor information and mis-communication that has plagued the two sides for years. It was hoped that this opening of lines of communications could enhance relationships, and the athletic department could be seen as a party truly interested in the development of student-athletes educationally, while faculty members could squelch the notion of doing little work and not being accessible.

Back to the first common theme discussed above for a moment. Chu (1989), Frey (1982), Sperber (1990), Zimbalist (1999) and others have discussed graduation rates of student-athletes as a sign of corruption within the athletic department, and pointed to the
figures as indicating the increasing lack of interest in academics by the athletic
department. Members of the stakeholder groups, particularly those impacted by the
numbers that are outlined in numerous media outlets were quick to discuss the faulty
measurement methods of those graduation rates. In their eyes, the methods are rigid, not
taking into account the student-athlete that turned pro early, or transferred to another
school because he or she was unhappy. Recent NCAA legislation will tie these rates to
scholarships and funding, and that measure was met with strong resistance from some
groups who feel they are being held hostage by poor methods.

Research Question Four – Level of Heterogeneity within Stakeholder Groups

Is there a level of heterogeneity within stakeholder groups when viewing the
issues of payment of college student-athletes, commercialization in intercollegiate
athletics, and academic improprieties and difficulties of student-athletes?

Discussion of Findings

This fourth research question takes a different direction than its three
predecessors, examining the stakeholder groups themselves instead of the results from
those stakeholder group meetings. Literature (i.e. Wolfe & Putler, 1999) presented in
Chapter 2 indicated a commonly-held view that stakeholder groups are generally
homogeneous in nature, with perceptual similarities running within individual groupings.
The researcher believed that the diverse backgrounds that combine to create the athletic
department and larger university community would create a situation where opinions
would differ on topics that were relatively controversial and addressed issues that were
demographically sensitive.
Views on Topics Mainly Homogeneous, but Sporadic Differences in Opinion

After organizing and holding the various focus group and individual interview sessions, it was determined that there was a significant amount of homogeneity that existed within stakeholder groups. With that being said, there were differences that arose, mainly focused on the discussion of the payment of student-athletes. In the non-revenue student-athlete group, the perceptual heterogeneity that became apparent could be explained by the disparity of scholarship and non-scholarship athletes in attendance. One member was very opinionated that student-athletes should be paid, and he was absent an athletic grant-in-aid, while for the most part, the others in the session were on full scholarship. Other than this glaring example, the other differences in opinion could not be explained as variances in opinion, but rather a different take on the situation.

Implications

Entering into this study, the researcher felt that, contrary to conventional wisdom, that the priorities held within stakeholder groups were heterogeneous. This belief would have resulted in a diverse set of views on the issues raised within each focus group. Wolfe and Putler (2002) argued that within role-based stakeholder groups, the priorities held were heterogeneous, and the popular view that homogeneity existed clouded understanding of the relationships between organizations. In their piece, Wolfe and Putler discussed role-based stakeholder groups, and asserted that for this belief to be held true, self-interest within the individual stakeholder must not be the primary motivator of their priorities. Using that belief, the stakeholders were organized by their professional orientation (i.e. administrators and faculty), limiting the amount of personal bias each individual brought into the focus groups. Individual interviews were conducted in the
offices of each stakeholder member unable to attend the focus group, perhaps creating the professional viewpoint that helps hinder the individual priorities from impacting their views.

Stakeholder theory is extremely popular among organizational theorists and businessmen and women because of its utility. The framework permits an understanding of the influence each operational decision will have, and provides a logical system for examining the interests of each of those groups, a primary objective of any organization (Freeman, 1984). A problem arises with the nexus of relationships that arise with competing interests and various viewpoints on singular decisions (Allison, 1971).

This study offered a different view into this perceived organizational problem, with multiple views and interests clouding progress made. There were eight groups of individuals organized for the purposes of the study, each with differing backgrounds and viewpoints on the issues. However, when the questions were asked and the discussion entered into, there was a quite startling level of similarity in overall views on the goals of athletics and specifics as they relate to the reform issues presented. It is understood that the sample was restricted to internal stakeholders of a very, successful athletic department and more investigation is needed (see recommendations), the level of loyalty held within and athletic department, and the goal-setting and achievement nature that pervades sports may prove enough to overcome the detrimental nexus effect that restricts the usefulness of stakeholder theory in moving from a framework of understanding to a blueprint for policy making.
CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made by the researcher. First off, there was a great amount of agreement from the various stakeholder groups on nearly all of the issues discussed. Only a few dissenting opinions in regards to increasing the room and board stipend and the legality of some academic occurrences were heard, but across the board, the various groups viewed issues in similar manners and drew very similar opinions.

Second, the lot of the student-athlete, financially, time-wise and academically is not much different than the struggles of the regular student body. Perhaps this is due to a shift in today’s culture that surrounds higher education, as more students holding multiple jobs and holding more responsibilities to get the most out of the college experience, but there was nary a response that believed that student-athletes faced more obstacles in the daily grind of college.

Thirdly, the three reform issues, paying student-athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization in college sport, and academic improprieties and difficulties are all interconnected. As was evidenced above, the shift in mentality toward revenue generation impacted the disparity between the athletic department and students, creating calls for increased payment. At the same time, it worked to increase the pressure to win and continues to influence the priority system of coaches and student-athletes between athletics and academics. While the issues were addressed separately for the purposes of this discussion, conversations shifted between topics enough for the researcher to determine that any piece of reform enacted, will have far-reaching consequences on the other two sections. For instance, if the NCAA were to grant an increase in the living
stipend for student-athletes, athletic departments would have to exploit further the revenue streams they have currently and generate new ones (commercialization) and most likely, more effort and duties will be expected from the student-athletes, resulting in less time for academic work.

Lastly, there were nearly no issues with the academic preparedness and success of student-athletes. Repeated participants cited increased grade-point averages and graduation rates of student-athletes as compared to the student body. In fact, some group members said that the time management skills and structure provided by athletics worked to increase the academic capabilities of student-athletes. Calls of academic problems and news of scandals at various athletic departments typify a wide minority of athletic personnel and is not indicative of the care given to upholding the rules and by-laws of the NCAA.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following recommendations for future research were made as a result of the findings of this study:

The first suggestion is to replicate this study at a mid-size athletic department. University of Pachay’s athletic department is one of the largest in the country, and the financial restraints faced by the members are evident, but not overly excessive. At a mid-major program, housing an athletic department of adequate size is a financial undertaking that stretches the capabilities of all involved. It is of great interest to the researcher to see if these fiscal constraints impact the view of the student-athlete, calls for reform and the homogeneity found in the replies in this study.
Next is a proposal to extend the scope of this study beyond the internal stakeholder bounds that limited it. In this following work, the researcher will use the same focus group and interview methodology to examine the perceptions of fans, government officials, students and others who are not as insular to the operations of the athletic department. Perhaps this increased diversity will erode at the sameness of answers and maybe support the perception that ignorance as it pertains to the true operations breeds opinions based on fallacies and falsehoods.

Finally, a proposition is made to use the findings of this qualitative study, in addition to pertinent literature, to devise a quantitative instrument that can be used to survey a much wider sample of athletic departments. What this methods loses in solid perceptual voices, it will pick up in quantity of views. Initially, this grounded survey was expected to be used in this study, but the scope of the focus groups and individual interviews and other triangulation methods ensured the trustworthiness of the findings and opened the door for future quantitative inquiries.
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APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I consent to participating in research entitled:

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC REFORM: A FOCUS GROUP EXAMINATION

Dr. Donna Pastore or her authorized representative, Todd Harrison, has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I understand that I have the right to have my participation in this study remain confidential. Therefore, I give my consent to the researcher and her designee to use the following pseudonym/name for the purposes of data collection and publication ____________________.

I acknowledge that I have been informed that all of the focus group meetings and individual interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed for data collection. I give my permission to be audio-taped during the group and individual interviews by signing the consent form.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: __________________________      Signed: __________________________

Signed: __________________________      Signed: __________________________

Dr. Donna Pastore      Todd Harrison
Primary Investigator      Secondary Investigator

Witness: _________________________

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APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Payment of Student-Athletes:
1. What is the current financial state of student-athletes in intercollegiate athletics?

2. Do you believe student-athletes have enough money to pay for common living expenses such as laundry and food? Why or why not?

3. Student-athletes are currently permitted to earn $2000 during the school year and unlimited funds in the summer. However, many student-athletes are not able to work due to obligations to the team (training, practice, etc.). What plans should be implemented that will help student-athletes take advantage of the rules permitting them to make money?

4. What are the flaws, if any, in the current financial system of intercollegiate athletics?

5. What impact will legislative efforts in Nebraska, Texas and California focused on paying student-athletes have on NCAA or athletic department decisions regarding the payment of student-athletes?

7. Does the current system of grants-in-aid, and limited employment need to be altered? If yes, in what ways?

8. Are student-athletes exploited by intercollegiate athletic departments? Please expand on your thoughts.

Level of Commercialization in Intercollegiate Athletics:
1. In what ways are intercollegiate athletic departments dependent upon funds from outside agencies, such as corporate sponsors and boosters, which help subsidize various athletic programs?

2. Are intercollegiate athletics too commercialized? If so, in what ways?
3. What are the current goals of intercollegiate athletic departments?

4. What impact does media, in particular those types of media that pay broadcasting rights, have on intercollegiate athletics?

5. Are individual athletic budgets too large? Why or why not? How about at the NCAA-level?

6. What do you see as the trend in the level of commercialization of intercollegiate athletics?

7. How can athletic departments, student-athletes, and all associated with intercollegiate athletics work to minimize commercial influences on college sports?

Academic Improprieties and Difficulties:

1. Poor graduation rates and academic misdeeds have been cited by critics of intercollegiate athletic as signs of movement away from the core values of the university. How do you feel this negative attention has affected intercollegiate athletics?

2. How can the relationship between the need to win at all costs and generate revenue and the academic welfare of student-athletes be altered? Is there a need for it to be altered? Why or why not?

3. Is there too much burden placed upon the shoulders of student-athletes?
   a. If so, what steps can be taken to limit the stresses faced by student-athletes?
   b. If not, how do you respond to those who believe that student-athletes face too many pressures?
4. In recent years, schools have been reported to have broken NCAA by-laws pertaining to academics and extra benefits. One major example is the University of Minnesota, where former athletic director Mark Deinhart, and his program were found to have used a tutor to write over 400 papers for student-athletes. This case was very high profile with national media coverage, and has been followed by other infractions across the country. Taking into consideration the scope of intercollegiate athletics, do you feel these infractions are exceptions to the general rule-abiding behavior of athletic programs, or are these just a few of numerous problems faced by athletic programs?

5. Recent Knight Commission reports criticize intercollegiate athletics for ruining the academic integrity of higher education institutions. How do you respond to these condemnations?

6. Are student-athletes held to a lower academic standard than the rest of the student body by the faculty? Academic department? General public? What leads you to feel the way you do?

7. Another area where critics attack intercollegiate athletics is the recruitment of student-athletes who are not academically prepared for college. What is your reaction to these statements?

8. What steps can be taken by the NCAA and the individual athletic departments to curb academic problems? How about at the high-school level?
APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Payment of Student-Athletes:
1. What are your individual perceptions of the various proposals to pay student-athletes, (i.e. additional stipends, per hour rates)?

2. What is an estimated percentage of your peer group, those in the same stakeholder group as you, which hold the same feelings toward the payment of student-athletes?

3. How often is the topic of paying student-athletes discussed?

4. Are there any demographic traits that may cause another stakeholder group member to hold differing perceptions? (For example, age, race, gender, or year in school) If so, what traits would they be?

5. In your opinion, do the rules devised by the NCAA membership allow student-athletes to live a relatively normal student life financially? If not, what areas are in the most need of change? How would you change them?

6. What linkages, if any, exist between the financial situation of a student-athlete, and illegal activity such as dealings with agent runners, boosters, and other “friends of the program”?

Level of Commercialization in Intercollegiate Athletics:
1. Are intercollegiate athletics too commercialized?

2. In your opinion, what is the single-most important facet of the intercollegiate athletic department that contributes to the public perception of over-commercialized?
3. What strategies can be employed by athletic department officials to reduce the departments’ dependency on money from private corporations?

4. Athletic departments and the NCAA have relationships with private companies and boosters (i.e. television contracts), what impact do these affiliations have on the educational mission of the institution?

5. What trends do you see in the level of commercialization of intercollegiate athletic departments? How do you see those trends impacting intercollegiate athletics as we know it now?

**Academic Improprieties and Difficulties:**

1. Student-athletes face a lot of pressure in their pursuit of athletic excellence (time-wise, physically, mentally and emotionally), what impact does that pressure, and all of the preparations that exist to succeed on the field have on student-athletes performance in the classroom?

2. Are these stresses too much for 18-21 year-old student-athletes to handle?
   a. If so, what can be done to limit the stresses?
   b. If not, how can athletic departments, and universities address those opponents who believe the pressures are too great?

3. From your experiences, are the publicized reports of problems at schools such as Minnesota anomalies, or closer to the norm?

4. How warranted are the calls that athletic departments are ruining the academic integrity of higher education institutions?

5. What steps do you think the NCAA and individual athletic departments can take to curb academic problems?
APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE
DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

This demographic background questionnaire is being used to examine potential differences that arise in the views of members within a stakeholder group. Your responses to the items on this questionnaire will be compared to your views on the various issues discussed within the body of the focus group session, and then compared to other members of your stakeholder group only in an examination of possible heterogeneity evident within stakeholder groups. These responses will have no impact on how your statements are viewed or portrayed within the overall discussion and are for descriptive purposes only. Please answer each of these questions truthfully, but do not complete any item that you feel uncomfortable with.

Stakeholder Group Represented: ______________________________ 

Age: ________

Gender: Male Female

Race/Ethnicity: African-American/Black Asian-American
Caucasian/White Hispanic
Native-American Other:__________

Sport(s) Participated In: (currently or in the past) – Please list sport(s)

Revenue: (football, basketball)

__________________________________________
Olympic: (soccer, wrestling, golf)

Socio-economic background: (please give annual income when growing up, not currently)

- Under $15,000
- $15,001 - 25,000
- $25,001 – 40,000
- $40,001 – 75,000
- $75,001 – 100,000
- Over $100,000

Which best describes your hometown: RURAL URBAN SUBURBAN
Athlete Payment Legislation:

California Senate Bill 193-

- Proposes a set of rights for student athletes
  - No limit on outside employment
  - “full scholarship” – changed to fulfill cost of attendance
  - Multi-year scholarships
  - Health insurance for student-athletes – all year-round
  - Reverse NCAA ban on licensed representation – i.e. agents
  - Change in transfer rules for student-athletes – no penalty if coach leaves
  - Penalties for student-athletes in violation of NCAA rules – student-athletes should not be penalized for violations that he or she did not take part in

- If bill enacted, all California schools would be in violation of NCAA rules for upholding these “rights” and would not be permitted to participate in NCAA championships

Nebraska Legislative Bill 688-

- Passed on April 11, 2003 – signed into law by Gov. Mike Johanns
- Entitles any person competing in football at the university to receive a stipend, with the amount to be determined by the university
- Permits university to pay a stipend to athletes competing in other sports that participate in the Big XII Conference
- Allows university to limit the number of hours a student-athlete is required to participate in intercollegiate athletics to a number that:
  - Enables the student-athlete to graduate in four years
  - Provides adequate time to participate in the intellectual and cultural activities on campus
- Permits an average of at least 12 hours of work per week during the academic year

- *Important note: For law to take effect, four of the other six states with teams competing in the Big XII must follow suit and pass similar legislation*

**Texas Proposal**

- Similar to Nebraska but with one major change:
  - It would allow several Texas universities to administer grants established through the respective institution’s board, not to exceed $200 a month per student-athlete. Money for these stipends would come from a portion of the athletics receipts.
  - It also does not require adoption of similar legislation in other states in order to become effective
APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP HANDOUT – KNIGHT COMMISSION
Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics Principles


Upon review, we find these principles to be just as applicable today as they were 10 years ago. We commend them to campus administrators and boards of trustees for their consideration and support.

Preamble: This institution is committed to a philosophy of firm institutional control of athletics, to the unquestioned academic and financial integrity of our athletics program, and to the accountability of the athletics department to the values and goals befitting higher education.

In support of that commitment, the board, officers, faculty and staff of this institution have examined and agreed to the following general principles as a guide to our participation in intercollegiate athletics:

I. The educational values, practices and mission of this institution determine the standards by which we conduct our intercollegiate athletics program.

II. The responsibility and authority for the administration of the athletics department, including all basic policies, personnel and finances, are vested in the president.

III. The welfare, health and safety of student-athletes are primary concerns of athletics administration on this campus. This institution will provide student-athletes with the opportunity for academic experiences as close as possible to the experiences of their classmates.
IV. Every student athlete -- male and female, majority and minority, in all sports -
- will receive equitable and fair treatment.

V. The admission of student-athletes -- including junior college transfers -- will
be based on their showing reasonable promise of being successful in a course of
study leading to an academic degree. That judgment will be made by admissions
officials.

VI. Continuing eligibility to participate in intercollegiate athletics will be based
on students being able to demonstrate each academic term that they will graduate
within five years of their enrolling. Students who do not pass this test will not
play.

VII. Student-athletes, in each sport, will be graduated in at least the same
proportion as non-athletes who have spent comparable time as full-time students.

VIII. All funds raised and spent in connection with intercollegiate athletics
programs will be channeled through the institution's general treasury, not through
independent groups, whether internal or external. The athletics department budget
will be developed and monitored in accordance with general budgeting
procedures on campus.

IX. All athletics-related income from non-university sources for the coaches and
athletics administrators will be reviewed and approved by the university. In cases
where the income involves the university's functions, facilities or name, contracts
will be negotiated with the institution.

X. We will conduct annual academic and fiscal audits of the athletics program.
Moreover, we intend to seek NCAA certification that our athletics program
complies with the principles herein. We will promptly correct any deficiencies
and will conduct our athletics program in a manner worthy of this distinction.
APPENDIX G

COVER LETTER TO PANEL OF EXPERTS
December 28, 2003

Dear Expert:

To complete the requirements for my PhD, I am designing a study that will investigate the perceptions of intercollegiate athletic department stakeholders toward three intercollegiate athletic reform issues. These issues include: the payment of student-athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization, and academic difficulties and improprieties in intercollegiate athletics.

As members of the intercollegiate athletic community, your background experiences are of great importance to this study’s successful completion. I am asking for your assistance in maximizing the efficiency and utility of this study by reviewing the attached materials and make suggestions pertaining to how well each of the focus group and individual interview questions matches the current landscape of intercollegiate athletics and more specifically the three reform issues being addressed in this project.

When you have read through the information and made changes, please return the information in the form of an email attachment to harrison.199@osu.edu or harrisont19@hotmail.com. It is my hope and intention to begin pilot testing focus groups in early February, therefore, I would appreciate if you could return your responses no later than Friday, January 16, 2004. Thank you in advance for taking the time to review this study and making useful suggestions. Your contributions to the field of sport management, and the development of knowledge are very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Todd Harrison, ABD
The Ohio State University
APPENDIX H

COVER LETTER INVITING PARTICIPANTS
March 9, 2004

Dear Study Invitee:

My name is Todd Harrison, a 3rd Year PhD student in sport management at The Ohio State University. To complete the requirements for my PhD, I have worked with my advisor Dr. Donna Pastore to design a study that will investigate the perceptions of intercollegiate athletic department stakeholders toward three intercollegiate athletic reform issues. These issues include: the payment of student-athletes, commercialization and over-commercialization, and academic difficulties and improprieties in intercollegiate athletics.

These issues will be discussed in a group interview, or focus group setting, and your affiliation with one of the five groups with a direct, vested interest in the intercollegiate athletic department here at Ohio State that are being investigated has prompted this invitation. Your experiences and opinions are valuable, as they are a first-hand account of the issues and everyday pressures faced within an intercollegiate athletic department.

The following times have been selected as meeting periods to conduct the focus groups:

- Friday, April 9 – 10am-Noon
- Tuesday, April 13 – Noon-2pm
- Tuesday, April 13 – 6pm-8pm

If you free during one of these periods and are willing to support the project by serving on a focus group, please respond to this invitation by sending an email message to myself at harrison.199@osu.edu or Dr. Pastore at pastore.3@osu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns, they should also be forwarded to the above addresses. Thank you in advance for you attention to this study, and I look forward to working with you and providing a voice for you and your stakeholder group.

Sincerely,

Todd Harrison, ABD
The Ohio State University

Donna Pastore, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University