TRIMMING TEAMS:
AN EXAMINATION OF DECISION MAKING PROCESSES IN INTERCOLLEGIATE
ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS WHEN MULTIPLE VARSITY SPORT PROGRAMS ARE
ELIMINATED

Jordan Skolnick

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Approved by:

Barbara J. Osborne, J.D. (Advisor)

Edgar W. Shields, Jr., Ph.D. (Committee)

Coyte G. Cooper, Ph.D. (Committee)
ABSTRACT

JORDAN SKOLNICK: Trimming Teams: An Examination of Decision Making Processes in Intercollegiate Athletic Departments when Multiple Varsity Sport Programs are Eliminated (Under the direction of Barbara J. Osborne, J.D.)

The combination of an economic downturn and the excessive increase in operating costs in intercollegiate athletics has created large deficits in the annual budgets for many institutions (Knight Commission, 2010). As athletic departments struggle to balance their budgets, they are forced to make tough decisions on how to reduce expenses. One solution has been to eliminate multiple varsity sport programs. The purpose of this study is to determine the primary reasons why institutions eliminate varsity sports teams. Specifically, this study will examine the decision making process used to come to the conclusion of eliminating multiple teams at once. This study confirmed previous findings (Weight, 2006) that the primary reasons for eliminating varsity sport programs were Athletic Department Budget Shortages and Gender Equity Implications. This study also found that athletic departments should utilize a set of principles to guide their decision making process when contemplating the discontinuation of varsity sport programs.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The combination of the recent economic downturn and the excessive increase in operating costs in intercollegiate athletics has created large deficits in the annual budgets for many National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institutions (Knight Commission, 2010). As athletic departments struggle to balance their budgets, they are forced to make tough decisions on how to reduce their expenses. One solution to this dilemma has been to cut the number of participation opportunities by eliminating varsity sports teams. The Women’s Sports Foundation Research Report, “Who’s Playing College Sports?” authored by John Cheslock stated the following implication for decision makers:

When expenditures on existing sports grow rapidly, colleges and universities must choose some or all of the following strategies: rapidly increasing athletic revenues, increasing the subsidy provided to the athletic department, or discontinuing some of the existing athletic teams. These strategies may conflict with the goals of the athletics program and/or the mission of the university because they can easily lead to increased commercialization within athletics, fewer dollars available for educational activities and a smaller number of athletic participation opportunities (Cheslock, 2008, p.25).

Cheslock shows the magnitude of the institutional decision in this statement, and alludes to the complex nature of the decision making process. In addition to the complexity of the decision making process, there is incredible external pressure that influences the administrators before, during and after a determination is made.

Money is at the core of the decision making process for Division I institutions who need to cover expenditure growth, which is why Division I institutions were the only schools
to reduce the number of men’s participants from 1995-96 to 2004-05 (Cheslock, 2008). A recently released NCAA report shows that just 14 of the 120 Football Bowl Subdivision schools made money from athletics in the 2009 fiscal year (NCAA, 2010). NCAA interim president Jim Isch said, “Football and men’s basketball are the only two sports you have a chance of making money, if you start splitting that up between 30 and 40 sports, you start losing money” (ESPN, 2010). As true as Isch’s quote may be, the questions become: Is revenue generation more important than participation opportunities? Are all varsity programs spending too much money, or is it only football and basketball? What are the institutions options when faced with these dilemmas?

Even Stanford University, the institution that won the previous 15 Directors’ Cup trophies, as the country’s top performing athletic department, considered cutting sports (ESPN, 2009). Stanford sponsors 35 varsity sports and has won at least one national championship for 33 consecutive years. Their large university endowments and rich tradition of broad based participation opportunities found itself in similarly difficult economic times to almost every other school across the country. Stanford eliminated 21 staff positions in their athletic department, cut funding to their fencing teams, and still has to reduce their athletic budget by $7 million over the next two years. Stanford’s athletic director stated that cutting sports is their “last resort” (ESPN, 2009), however, they will have to evaluate whether or not they can continue to sponsor all 35 of their varsity programs. Stanford is far from alone: in 2009 the University of Maryland announced as part of a strategic plan entitled, “Transforming Maryland Athletics: 2009-14” that eliminating sports would be considered to safeguard the athletic program’s economic health (Baltimore Sun, 2009). In 2010, the
University of California at Berkeley cut five sports, and the University of California at Davis, Seton Hall University and Duquesne University all cut four sports each.

Every institution takes a different approach to their decision making processes, and when cuts are made, there are inevitably people who are going to be negatively impacted. After the University of California at Berkeley cut men’s rugby, the head coach Jack Clark said:

Yesterday was the worst day of my life. I’ve woken up every morning for 30 years and tried to bring credit to this University. To have my university demote my sport and then aggressively defend the decision…it rips my heart out (Oakland Tribune, 2010, p.1).

Clark even proposed to the athletic director and Vice-Chancellor that rugby could sustain a women’s varsity equivalent, and increase women’s participation opportunities, therefore fulfilling the spirit and intent of Title IX.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and has increased women’s participation opportunities tremendously over the years. Prior to Title IX, in 1970, there were only 2.5 women’s teams per institution; this increased to 8.64 women’s teams per institution, or 9087 total women’s teams in 2010 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010). Although the number of female participation opportunities is still not equal to that of men’s participation opportunities, the trends are moving in the right direction towards equality. Title IX can be attributed to this leveling of the playing field, and even though this amendment has led to more women’s opportunities added than men’s opportunities eliminated, it has become the focal point of many institutional announcements as a factor in their decision to eliminate sports. When teams are being eliminated, it is the University’s responsibility to abide by the legal requirements under Title IX to provide intercollegiate athletic participation opportunities equally for both men and women. Title IX
compliance is a boundary in which a program elimination decision must operate within, along with the NCAA’s regulations of minimum numbers of sports being sponsored for both men and women (Emerita, 1997). These guidelines along with institutional decision making processes and financial, social and political factors, give each program elimination case study a unique set of data.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to determine the primary reasons why institutions eliminate varsity sports teams, and specifically look to examine the decision making process used to come to the conclusion of eliminating multiple teams at once.

**Research Questions**

1. Who were the people involved in the decision making process to eliminate teams?
2. What were the guidelines regarding the structure of the decision making process?
3. What were the institutions reasons for eliminating teams?
4. What other options were reasonably explored as an alternative to eliminating teams?

**Definitions of Terms**

- **NCAA** – The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a voluntary organization that governs the nation's institutional athletic programs. It is comprised of institutions, conferences, organizations and individuals committed to the best interests, education and athletics participation of student-athletes

- **Division I** – The subdivision of the NCAA consisting of 335 active members institutions

- **Discontinued Program** – An intercollegiate varsity team that an institution decides to no longer sponsor to participate in NCAA competition
• Participation Opportunity – The ability to compete for an intercollegiate varsity team that is sponsored by the institution

• Non-programmed Decision – New and unique decisions that lack principles, and therefore have a less certain outcome

• Athletic Department Senior Staff – Staff members appointed by the Athletic Director that regularly meet together to consult on decisions for a university athletic department

Assumptions

• It is assumed that all subjects answered the questions honestly and completely

• The completion of the study is voluntary for all subjects asked to participate

Limitations

• The study is limited to Division I institutions that eliminated three or more varsity programs in a one year period between 2000 and 2010

Delimitations

This study is limited to Division I institutions that have eliminated varsity sport programs, which means the results may not be generalized to Division II and III institutions. Additionally, this study is delimited to institutions that have eliminated varsity sport programs and not to reductions in other educational areas. This is because of the unique expenditure growth in athletics and the external stakeholders that have athletic interests cannot be equated fairly to other academic areas.

Significance of the Study

Athletic administrators can utilize this study to understand the decision making process institutions go through when contemplating the discontinuation of varsity programs.
It is essential for managers to know the guidelines surrounding program elimination and also to be aware of common factors that can be linked to institutions who underwent these reductions. This research will allow administrators to better understand the processes by which decision makers operate within the business of Division I college athletics. The overall scope of this study will encompass all of the areas which decision makers will encounter when facing the opportunity for a restructuring of the participation opportunities provided by an institution.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Intercollegiate athletics has a history of over 100 years, with its core mission to provide students the opportunity to participate as an avocation, balancing their academic, social and athletics experiences (NCAA, 2009). As the NCAA, the governing body of intercollegiate athletics, and all of its member institutions have evolved, participation opportunities have increased to over 400,000 student-athletes in 2007-08 (NCAA, 2009). As opportunities have increased, so has the overall cost of running an athletic department. In the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics most recent report, Restoring the Balance: Dollars, Values and the Future of College Sports, the Co-Chairmen of the Commission stated, “The costs of competing in big-time intercollegiate sports have soared. Rates of spending growth are breathtaking. This financial arms race threatens the continued viability of athletics programs and the integrity of our universities. It cannot be maintained” (Knight Commission, 2010, p.1). The unsustainable spending, in particular with high profile sports, creates tension between the core mission of universities and commercial values. Athletic departments who make the decision to prioritize generating revenue, in turn, de-emphasize participation opportunities (Knight Commission, 2010).

Decision Making Framework

Many layers and factors are involved in a decision to eliminate sports, and can be studied through an extensive review of decision-making theoretical framework. The earliest work that viewed decision making as more than just a clear, concise process was that of
“rational choice” theory (Simon, 1955). Simon provided a theory of behavior for those making decisions in an organizational context. The author’s research looked at whether a rational man used assumed knowledge of the aspects of his environment to make decisions (Simon, 1955). Rational choice can exist in computational capacities, but humans are in much more fluid environments with external factors, which Simon uses to explain the uncertainty of outcomes in a decision making process (Simon, 1955).

Athletic administrators have to make decisions constantly, which can be defined as “a judgment with a choice between alternatives” (Drucker, 1966, p. 143). Simon (1960) contends that the choice, or the final decision is not where the decision making process starts. Decision making, according to Simon (1960), has three principal phases: finding occasions for making a decision; finding possible courses of actions; and choosing among courses of action. In the first phase, which Simon calls ‘Intelligence Activity’, executives spend their time analyzing the environment to identify what existing conditions will factor into whether or not a strategic plan is needed. In collegiate athletics, the environment can be a combination of financial, political, or social factors. Once the conditions within the environment are seen to necessitate change, then the second phase of action, or ‘Design Activity’ – inventing, developing, and analyzing possible courses of action can begin. The third and final phase is the task of carrying out the decision, or ‘Choice Activity’. The first two phases are where executives spend the majority of their time. Each phase has many complex layers and factors that complicate the arrival of the choice activity, because the majority of organizational decisions are not made by an individual, but a collective group that is guided by a manager (Simon, 1960).

Furthermore, Simon states that managers can make two different types of decisions:
programmed and non-programmed (Simon, 1960). Though there are plenty of decisions made that fall in a shade of grey between the two, they can describe two polar opposite ends of the spectrum when examining the type of decision a manager is making. Programmed decisions are repetitive and routine. They are clearly defined procedures that are easily solved and can be determined based upon previously defined decisions. Non-programmed decisions are new and unique, and therefore have a less certain outcome. There is a lack of guidelines and principles to direct the decision, so the decision maker must instead rely on their experience, professional opinion and knowledge of the stakeholders it will most deeply affect. A manager making a non-programmed decision utilizes a general capacity of intelligence, adaptive nature, and problem solving capabilities (Simon, 1960).

There is no formula that creates a specific solution to a non-programmed decision made by an executive because each case is unique with its own factors and details. Instead, all decisions require individuals to exercise judgment, which is dependent upon their experience, insight and intuition (Simon, 1960). In addition to the unscripted nature of non-programmed decisions, Simon also states that decision making is restricted by the limited capacity of individuals to assess information and determine outcomes, as well as a lack of time to consider all the options (Simon, 1955). This limited capacity of an individual can be compounded by the complexity of the decision, which is one of three key concepts that have been derived from the Bradford Studies (Hickson, Butler, Cray, Mallory, & Wilson, 1986).

The Bradford Studies study the strategic decision making process by separating it from decision implementation and decision outcome. One hundred and thirty six cases were studied by Professor David Hickson and his research team at the University of Bradford, and three distinct decision making processes were found: sporadic, fluid, and constructed
The authors of the Bradford Studies examined how to apply these processes to a wide range of contexts in organizational study (Cray, Mallory, Butler, Hickson, & Wilson, 1988). Sporadic decision making processes encounter more delays, impediments, and sources of information. These decisions have a great deal of variability in information, which lengthens the amount of time taken to reach a decision. Fluid processes have fewer delays and fewer obstructions to making a decision, so they take less time. The interactions are usually more formal and have less variability. Both sporadic and fluid processes are discussed and decided at the highest levels of management. Finally, constricted processes are narrowly focused with little scope for negotiation and less effort to acquire all the facts before a decision is made. Constricted processes are often made at lower levels in management and are less formal of an interaction (Cray et al., 1988).

All types of decisions, whether they are sporadic, fluid or constricted, and whether they are made at lower or higher levels of management, have intricacies that complicate the process. Decision making processes become increasingly difficult to comprehend when the amount of variety in the process is augmented (Cray et al., 1988). The different sources of information, the groups involved, and the possible disruptions all combine to create a convoluted process. The process can become even more complicated as elements repeat themselves at different stages of the sequence. The task of constructing a linear decision making process for any issue is formidable, and researchers have argued that decision-making processes must have a limited scope of investigation in order to understand its intricacies. For that reason, many researchers limit their scope to a few cases, and concentrate on only a few aspects of the decision making process (Cray et al., 1988). This type of focused...
research will be performed in this study, so that the institutional decision making processes when eliminating multiple varsity programs at once can be better understood.

Decision makers often take their time to discuss all of the ramifications of all possible outcomes, which can be a very extensive list (Cray et al., 1988). In order to ensure the best outcome for all parties involved, the decision making process can be prolonged. In measuring the duration of the process, Cray breaks up the time it takes to make a decision into two parts: gestation time and process time. In the article, gestation time is, “the interval from the first mention of the issue by someone in the organization until the beginning of specific action taken toward making a decision” and process time is, “the interval from the initiation of specific action towards a decision to the moment when the final decision is authorized for implementation” (Cray et al., 1988, p.16). These two time periods simplify the lengthy decision making process to help show that complicated decisions aren’t made on a whim, or overnight. In addition to the lengthiness of a decision making process, there are also many aspects that can add to or take way from the amount of time it takes to come to the final decision. Aspects that will add to the amount of time it takes to reach a decision are the level of scrutiny that decision makers take, as well as the expertise and the externality of those involved in the process. On the opposite side, a lack of effort, minimal disparity and informal interactions can help expedite the decision making process (Cray et al., 1988).

The amount of time that it takes to reach a major decision depends on a variety of factors; however Hickson’s research in “Decision-Making at the Top of Organizations” suggests most big choices are made in two years or less. The mean period is about a year and the modal point for such decisions is usually around six months (Hickson, 1987). The trajectory of the process or the movement of time towards a decision is unsteady. The reason
for an unsteady trajectory can include many factors, one being the political bureaucracy.

Each political interest exerts influence, and the more powerful the influence, the more likely it is that the views it offers will be acted upon. Hickson looks at the political interests as boxers, claiming there are “heavyweights and lightweights” in terms of the influence they exert and the number of decisions they become involved with (Hickson, 1987). The ability for an interest group to negotiate and/or bargain can also provide heavy influence into the decision making process. Organizations are comprised of individuals with different goals, interests and values that can be conflicting. An individual or interest group with a powerful influence over a disagreement can sway an organization one way or the other (Hickson, 1987).

The complexity of the decision process is another key component in Hickson’s research (Hickson, 1987). Much of Hickson’s research on the complexity of decision making processes has been discussed earlier in this review. The amount of time, people and effort that goes into a decision can complicate the ability to reach an outcome. Additionally, a high level of familiarity with a common issue can create a greater level of involvement for more decision makers. Conversely, the guidelines and established procedures in place could have made the issue uncomplicated. Strategic or non-programmed decisions however, have a higher level of uncertainty and a higher potential to elicit confusion and complications (Hickson, 1987).

As decision makers decipher through the complexities and political bureaucracies that exist in an organization, they must keep within a structure - a set of guidelines that acts as the rules of the game (Hickson, 1987). The structure of the organization making the decision can have one set of rules, and the broader environment in which the decision is being made can
have another set. Decision makers can frame their intentions on what should and should not be done according to these rules. Rules can be both written policies and unwritten guidelines that create boundaries for the process. Decisions must then move within the framework of what is acceptable and what is a reasonable alternative. Unwritten rules are understood to exist as part of the social norm of the organization. Word of mouth or informal interactions spread unwritten rules, such as two decision makers deciding that they would vote the same way on a particular issue (Hill & Kikulis, 1999). Individuals can learn ways that an organization operates that are not in a manual or policy handbook, and pass that information along to future employees as well. These patterns of organizational dynamics can reinforce actual written rules as a supplementary guideline (Hickson, 1987).

Decision Making Guidelines and Legal Requirements

Written rules that are formal can be seen as official elements of the decision making process (Hickson, 1987). These rules can be bylaws, procedure manuals, constitutions or written policies (Hill & Kikulis, 1999). Formal rules can also come from external organizations, such as governmental entities, conference restrictions, or in the case of gender discrimination, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

The University has an obligation under legal requirements of Title IX to provide intercollegiate athletic participation opportunities equally for both men and women. Title IX states, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (20 USCS § 1681). Since Title IX was enacted under the spending clause, there is a threat that federal funding will be revoked if the institution is not compliant.
In order for an issue to fall under the regulation of Title IX, there must be three elements: gender discrimination, the offending institution must be a recipient of federal funding, and the offense must involve an educational program. The third element involving an educational program is due to the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in *Grove City College v. Bell* (465 U.S. 555). In that case, the word program was defined as a subunit, and a subunit was not required to abide by Title IX if it did not directly receive federal funding. This interpretation was not consistent with the intent of Title IX, because any subunit of an institution, athletics included, would not be subject to punishment when discriminating based on gender. In response, Congress passed the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, which established an institution wide approach, as opposed to a program specific approach. The Act mandated that if any single department or program within a college or university receives federal funding, then the entire institution must comply with the legal requirements of Title IX (Civil Rights Restoration Act, 1987).

In 1975, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare implemented Regulations to inform educational institutions what would be required to comply with Title IX. The Code of Federal Regulations of 1975 spoke directly to athletic programs in Title 34, Subpart D, stating:

> No person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, be treated differently from another person or otherwise be discriminated against in any interscholastic, intercollegiate, club or intramural athletics offered by a recipient, and no recipient shall provide any such athletics separately on such basis (34 CFR 106.41).

The Code of Federal Regulations also stated that athletic scholarships must be proportional to participation opportunities, and men and women must have equal opportunity in program factors, including: equipment, scheduling of games and practice times, travel, availability of
coaches, locker rooms, facilities, medical services, publicity, support services, recruiting services, and tutors. These equal opportunity factors are viewed as an overall comparison of the men’s athletics program and the women’s athletics program at a university, not on an individual case by case or sport by sport basis. The institution must also effectively accommodate both men and women’s interests and abilities (34 CFR 106.41).

The 1979 Policy Interpretations for Title IX by the Office of Civil Rights clarified the previous regulations for athletic departments, and introduced a formula which is commonly referred to as the Three Prong Test, or Three Part Effective Accommodation test (Federal Register, 1979). In order to be deemed compliant, an institution had to merely comply with one of the following tests: substantial proportionality, a history and continuing practice of program expansion, or effectively accommodating the interest and abilities of the underrepresented sex. Substantial proportionality is measured by comparing the percentage of male and female undergraduates enrolled in the institution by the percentage of male and female student-athletes. A history of continuing practice of program expansion can be achieved if an institution increases participation opportunities on each of its teams or by increasing the overall number of teams. The effective accommodation of student interests and abilities must be met to the extent necessary to provide equal opportunity in the selection of sports and levels of competition available to both sexes. The interests and abilities are to be met fully and effectively accommodated by the present athletics programs for both men and women (Federal Register, 1979).

Title IX has increased opportunities for both men and women, as well as increased the number of females in college through scholarships that were only available to men back in 1972. However, there are numerous Title IX cases that have been litigated in which teams
have sued over being eliminated. Successful cases such as *Cohen v. Brown University* in 1992, *Favia v. Indiana University of Pennsylvania* in 1992, and *Roberts v. Colorado State University* in 1993 all involved the elimination of women’s programs, which were the underrepresented sex. Unsuccessful cases such as *Gonyo v. Drake University* in 1993, *Kelley v. Board of Trustees* in 1993, and *Chalenor v. The University of North Dakota* in 2002 all involved the elimination of men’s programs. Although Title IX protects against sex discrimination, the courts’ held that men’s teams were not protected by Title IX because they were not the historically underrepresented gender. Even though the Office of Civil Rights released a Clarification Letter in 2003 stating that the elimination of men’s teams to achieve Title IX compliance was a disfavored practice, institutions may still cut men’s sports to decrease overall expenses, to redistribute funding to other teams.

Educational institutions that receive federal funding are required to comply with Title IX. However, the decision to eliminate opportunities is an ethical predicament that institutions must weigh when considering their fiscal options. As athletic administrators strive to comply with Title IX along with their organizational decision making process, how much is the ethical judgment to eliminate teams considered in the final outcome?

**Ethical Decision Making**

In order to discuss a possible ethical dilemma associated with eliminating sports, it is first necessary to define the term ethics, and examine ethical bases from which such decisions are made. Ethics are “a branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2009). Making a judgment regarding the correctness of an action (i.e. whether an actions is right or
wrong) can be based upon multiple factors, mindsets and cultural differences. One ethical framework often utilized is Deontology - behavior based upon what is right (Malloy, Ross, Zakus, 2000). In the context of sport, right or wrong can involve various situations, from conduct on the field, to drug use off the field and can even go as far as to say winning sometimes may not always be right. “The notion of ‘winning at all costs’ has taken over the so-called ‘sport spirit’. Playing by the rules seems to be no longer the top priority in sporting actions at the top level” (Volkwein, 1995, p.2). An overemphasis on success can develop ethical and moral dilemmas in sport, much like the tension between providing participation opportunities and having selective excellence in the sports provided. The tension stems from the shift towards intercollegiate athletics as a business, and at its top levels commercialization has become a major characteristic. An important branch of modern industry, college athletics is determined by extrinsic motivations, including high coaching salaries, media contracts, and high levels of publicity (Volkwein, 1995).

Even within a more commercialized landscape in college athletics, athletic administrators are responsible for the well-being of the student-athletes at their institution. College athletics would not exist if not for student-athletes, and as Dean Smith, former head men’s basketball coach at The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill said in his book *The Carolina Way*, “They were the most important people in our program, no exceptions” (Smith, 2004). *The Carolina Way* talks about how to do things the right way in Smith’s philosophy – with effort, intelligence and camaraderie. Smith’s leadership style was effective because he instilled a belief in his players to do things a certain way which he deemed as the ‘right way’ (Smith, 2004).
Striving to do things the right way is a deep seeded human characteristic which guides the moves and decision-makings (Malloy, Ross, & Zakus, 2000). This ethical dimension of human behavior and group behaviors is apparent through human interaction. Many virtues are taken into consideration when developing this overarching set of ethical characteristics, such as fairness, reasonableness, compassion, loyalty, cooperativeness and thoughtfulness (Rachels, 1999). These virtuous characteristics are nothing more than empty traits if they don’t lead human actions. Since the result of an action has consequences, it behooves the decision maker to strive to make the right choice as the surrounding culture will see it (Malloy et al., 2000). The decision maker should therefore have internal steps to follow in order to make ethically correct decisions.

Malloy states five steps for rendering ethical judgment. The first step is to “obtain and clarify all the pertinent facts of the case or incident” (Malloy et al., 2000, p.54). Much like at a trial at court, where judgment is made by unbiased peers, all the relevant facts must be stated for everyone to hear to ensure the deliberation is going to be fairly based utilizing the same information. This is particularly crucial in a University setting, because there are an incredible amount of stakeholders whose opinions are valued. Stakeholders in a University include the students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and surrounding community, so the communication of all of the information must be present and accurate to formulate the ethical maxim.

The second step is to “identify and enunciate the ethical maxim(s) used” (Malloy et al., 2000, p.55). By identifying the moral principles, one can effectively measure both sides to the decision. From the deontological perspective, there are questions that need to be addressed: “Are the any specific rules that apply? Are there any ‘unwritten’ but generally
accepted procedures which are pertinent? Do any of the policies of the institution cover the issue at hand?” (Malloy et al., 2000, p.55). As previously mentioned, this step is covered thoroughly in Hickson’s research of the rules of the game within decision making (Hickson, 1987).

In the third step, Time, the decision making process is broken up into, “1) the time before the incident, 2) the time of the incident, 3) and the consequences that resulted because of the incident” (Malloy et al., 2000, p.56). Time, as described previously by Cray (1988), can also be split up into gestation and process time to describe different intervals throughout the decision making process. The ethical process of eliminating sports teams speaks directly to the consequences that resulted because of the incident, as the student-athlete must then choose to transfer schools to play his or her sport, or remain at the institution and no longer play the sport they love.

Special circumstances are explained in the next stage, “Step Four: Identify and discuss extenuating or special circumstances” (Malloy et al., 2000, p. 57). If an extenuating circumstance helps give explanation to a situation, then the outstanding factors present must be taken into consideration when rendering a decision (Malloy et al., 2000).

The organizational values of an institution will help take into account any mitigating factors of the issue at hand. The values of an organization are fluid, ever evolving ethical principles that are determined by those in leadership positions and executed by the entire organization. In order to disseminate these values, the organization must be set in a strong frame that can be built on: “The world simply can’t be made sense of…unless you have a mental model to begin with. That theory does not have to be the right one… But you can’t begin to learn without some concept that gives you expectations” (Bolman & Deal, 1997,
The final step is to “Render Judgment” (Malloy et al., 2000, p.57). An organization can rely on their framework’s values in order to reach sound ethical reasoning when implementing policy or making decisions. Through following the aforementioned progression thoroughly, a consensus should be able to be reached in the best interest of all it will affect, which more times than not will involve a compromise of many different contributions in order to be representative of all the stakeholders involved (Malloy et al., 2000).

In order to make an ethical decision, and the ‘right’ decision, “the decision maker is to refer to his or her intuitive and rational sense of what is universally right. This perspective represents a cognitive logic by which truth and rightness become self-evident for all rational people” (Malloy et al., 2000, p.70). With this deontological framework as another reference for making decisions ethically, an institution must rely on its staff to combine their ethics with the organizations values.

**Related Studies**

The decision making process, and the ethics of making the right decision have both been extensively researched outside of the scope of college athletics. However, there have only been a few studies that have researched the reasons for varsity sport program eliminations at universities. The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) performed a study that examined how institutions developed and implemented strategic decisions to eliminate teams (General Accounting Office, 2001). This study surveyed athletic directors at all NCAA divisions. Three key elements to the discontinuation of men’s teams were found: insufficient student interest, gender equity requirements, and resources needed to be allocated
to other sports. The researchers also used case studies to examine the decision making process more in depth. The strategic decisions used as an alternative to cutting sports is also a crucial finding in this study, as there were many schools that added teams, cut costs or increased revenues as a way to avoid program elimination (General Accounting Office, 2001).

Alternatives such as cutting costs or increasing revenues speak to the financial pressures that athletic departments are currently under amidst the Arms Race in the college athletics landscape. Marburger (2003) used economic theory to show men’s program elimination is due to profit motivated athletic departments. The research found that Division I institutions cut men’s nonrevenue sports, because the institutional emphasis is to put money into profit generating sports instead. The study compared profits, expenses, and program eliminations from all three divisions and found the number of Division I men’s sport programs offered decreased in the time sample studied. Another conclusion made was that Division I athletic departments were more likely to have revenues exceed expenses than the other two divisions (Marburger, 2003).

Further research in nonrevenue program discontinuation was done through surveying athletic directors to identify the criteria they found important when deciding whether or not to eliminate their wrestling program (Weight, 2006). Athletic directors were asked to rate the level of importance that 19 factors had on the decision making process surrounding program discontinuation using a 5-point Likert Scale. The study found that athletic directors felt that budget shortage due to budget cuts was the most important factor in their decision, with financial strain of the individual program, gender equity implications, and a continued history of success in the program also playing an important role. One athletic director’s response
was, “Hopefully we make decisions for the right reasons. I know whenever you make harmful decisions that negatively impact student-athletes’ programs, there is always a strict analysis” (Weight, 2006). Although this study focused narrowly on wrestling program elimination, the methodology provides great insight into the decision making factors that universities consider when eliminating any varsity sport program (Weight, 2006).

As previously mentioned, there has been little research done in the area of institutional decision making processes among athletic departments that have eliminated varsity sport programs. However, two researchers in Canada, Larena Hill and Lisa Kikulis examined universities who were contemplating restructuring through case studies of strategic decision making processes in athletic conferences (Hill & Kikulis, 1999). Although this study was conducted within the Western Canadian university athletic system, three key elements of the decision making process can be applied to college sport in America - complexity, politicality, and rules of the game - that shape the analysis of the decision process when eliminating varsity teams. This study is an excellent example of top decision makers, in this case athletic directors, finding solutions to financial difficulties while being pressured by a multitude of factors and circumstances. Cost cutting measures such as reducing staff, limiting travel, seeking alternative funding and the elimination of programs were all issues that decision makers in the Canadian West University Athletic Association (CWUAA) and Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) dealt with, and were subsequently examined in this case study. The researchers used a combination of methods to ascertain data - interviews with top decision makers, a thorough examination of constitutional bylaws, motions to pass league rules, and documentations, agendas and minutes gathered from meetings.
The specific areas discussed during interviewing were: (a) the nature of the restructuring issue (i.e. What were the reasons for discussing the possibility of restructuring the two conferences?); (b) the people who are involved in the decision making process for the restructuring issue; and (c) the rules regarding the structure of the decision making process (Hill & Kikulis, 1999).

The diversity of interests and issues in the restructuring process can become more clarified with well-constructed interview questions. The framework of this interview process can also be applied in a survey that can be sent out to decision makers in regards to their decision making process when eliminating varsity sport programs.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to determine the primary reasons why institutions eliminate varsity sports teams, and specifically look to examine the decision making process used to come to the conclusion of eliminating multiple teams at once. The method chosen for this study was to conduct a survey of a sample of Division I athletic administrators who were in decision making positions at their respective schools when their institution eliminated multiple varsity sport teams.

Instrumentation

The data for this study was collected through surveys e-mailed to athletic administrators at 48 NCAA Division I institutions. Previous studies were used as a guide to develop the survey questions. The specific areas of the decision making process that were examined came from Hickson (1986) and Cray (1988). The three key concepts of complexity, politicality, and rules of the game shaped the survey questions (Hickson, 1986). The restructuring process the athletic department underwent when eliminating teams was a theme throughout the survey questions as well (Hill & Kukulis, 1999). The importance of the different criteria used in the decision making process was evaluated through a 5-point Likert scale similar to that as used by Weight (2006).

In order address the validity of the survey instrument, which was a total of fifteen questions, a panel including athletic administrators, sport administration faculty, and survey specialists reviewed the content. To improve truthfulness in responses, the subjects were
given anonymity and were assured that all of their answers would only be used in the aggregate for the purpose of this study.

Subjects

The population (N=48) was determined by identifying every institution in a 2010 NCAA report that eliminated three or more varsity programs in a one year period between the years of 2000 and 2010 (NCAA 2010). The subjects of this study are athletic administrators from Division I institutions that were involved in the decision to eliminate three or more varsity sport programs in a one year period between the years of 2000 and 2010. The administrator with the highest ranking job title who was at the institution when the cuts were made was emailed first. If no response was given within one week, the next highest ranking member of the senior staff administration who was at the institution when the cuts were made was emailed next. If neither administrator responded within two weeks, then a phone call was placed to the first individual who was emailed.

Survey Distribution and Collection Procedures

The survey questions were entered into an online survey service provider through the Odom Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a link was assigned to the survey (Appendix A). Subjects’ e-mail addresses were collected through athletic department websites, and an introductory email (Appendix B) was sent to these subjects containing a brief overview of the study and its purpose. Participants were e-mailed a link to the online survey questionnaire asking them to respond to questions designed to measure the decision making processes the institution utilized when eliminating varsity sport programs. Follow up reminders were sent by email at one week intervals.
Data Analysis

After the data was collected, means and percentages that were appropriate to the research questions were computed. The data was then analyzed empirically by looking at the difference between means in the responses to questions that included a Likert scale. The figures that are illustrated identify trends in the data. Likert scale ratings were used to describe the differences between means in the responses. ‘Not Influential, Slightly Influential, Moderately Influential, Very Influential and Extremely Influential’ represent the response on the 5-point Likert Scale for research question three. Additionally, ‘Not Important, Slightly Important, Moderately Important, Very Important and Extremely Important’ represent the response on the 5-point Likert Scale for research question two. Statistical hypothesis testing was not possible due to the low sample size.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The survey (Appendix A) was distributed to 48 Division I institutions where three or more sports had been eliminated between the years of 2000 and 2010. Thirteen responses of the forty eight schools contacted give this research a 27% response rate. Participants were directed to a link at www.qualtrics.com to provide their responses. The raw data was then downloaded and imported into Microsoft Excel. The fifteen questions asked in the survey corresponded to specific research questions and were analyzed through descriptive statistics.

Description of the Sample

Of the thirteen responding institutions, which will remain anonymous, there is a balanced representation of the population. Of the responding schools, 11 of the 13 provided demographic information that can allow for categorization into one of the three NCAA subdivisions. NCAA Division I has 331 member institutions, which is broken down into the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) and Non-Football schools. There are 120 FBS members (36% of population), 118 FCS members (35% of population), and 93 non-football members (28% of population). The survey’s population has 15 FBS members (31% of population), 21 FCS members (43% of population) and 12 non-football members (25% of population). In the survey sample, of the 11 schools that provided their demographic information there were 4 FBS members (36% of population), 3 FCS members (27% of population) and 4 non-football members (36% of population). As
illustrated in Figure 1, these proportional similarities provide a representative sample of schools.

Figure 1. Description of Sample Compared to Population and NCAA Division I

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**Diagram Description**

- **Y-axis:** Percentage
- **X-axis:** FCS, FBS, Non-Football
- **Legend:**
  - NCAA Division 1
  - Population
  - Sample

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Research Question 1

Who were the people involved in the decision making process? The decision making process begins with the gestation time, or the interval from the first mention of the issue in an organization until action begins to be taken toward making a decision (Cray, et al. 1988). In this case, the first time that discontinuing varsity sport programs are proposed into consideration in a meeting would be the beginning of the gestation period. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the sampled institutions stated that the Senior Staff had initially proposed discontinuation. Of those schools, 44% stated that they were the only group involved in that initial proposal.

Of all the respondents, 25% of schools had two or less total people involved in the initial proposal of discontinuation. There were only two schools that responded that all of those involved in the decision making process did not come to a consensus on discontinuing varsity sport programs, and both of these schools had less than two total people involved in the initial proposal of discontinuation. Additionally, both of those schools final decisions were made by the President of the University. The average number of months the decision making process took from the initial proposal to the announcement was only 6.5 months for schools with two or less people involved the initial proposal. The average number from the entire sample was 9.7 months.

The institutions that had three or more total people involved in the initial proposal of discontinuation were in 100% consensus as to the decision to discontinue multiple varsity sport programs. The President of the University made the final decision in these instances only 10% of the time. Of these schools, the average number of months the decision making process took from the initial proposal to the announcement was 10.8 months, as oppose to the
After the initial proposal, the Process Time begins, which is the interval from the initiation of action towards a decision to the moment when the final decision is authorized for implementation (Cray, et al. 1988). One hundred percent (100%) of schools responded that both the Senior Staff and the Athletic Director were involved in the decision making process to discontinue multiple varsity sport programs. Additionally, 92% of schools stated that the Senior Woman’s Administrator was involved, 77% stated the President of the University was involved, and 69% had their Chief Athletics Financial Officer involved. Those high percentages were in stark contrast to the 23% that had an outside consulting group and 15% that involved at least one of their head coaches (see Figure 2). Also of note, open-ended responses indicated that the following people were also involved in the decision making process: Equal Opportunity Officer, alumni, boosters, Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR), University Budget Officer and Vice President of Development.
Although every school stated that there were four or more people involved in the decision making process, sixty-two percent (62%) said the Athletic Director made the final decision, followed by the President of the University (31%) and Senior Staff Members (7%). The President, Athletic Director and Senior Staff were the only groups to be selected as the person/group that made the final decision.

**Research Question 2**

What were the guidelines regarding the structure of the decision making process? The enormous amount of factors and influences that convolute the decision making process of discontinuing multiple varsity sport teams make the final decision a non-programmed one.
(Simon, 1960). The uncertain outcome is the result of a unique set of circumstances, and every institution’s decision is different. However, a set of guidelines can frame the decision makers’ intentions within the rules of the process to prevent an unjust outcome (Hickson, 1987). This study measured the guidelines in the decision making process by analyzing the data for those schools that answered ‘Yes’ to whether or not there were principles that formally guided their decision making process for discontinuing varsity sport programs. This study found only 62% \((n=8)\) of schools used principles to formally guide their decision making process. Those schools proceeded to rate the importance of specific principles in the decision making process on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Not Important’ to ‘Extremely Important’

**Schools that used principles.** Of the schools that did use principles to formally guide the decision making process, 63% \((n=5)\) responded that fiscal responsibility was extremely important and 88% \((n=7)\) of schools stated that fiscal responsibility was moderately to extremely important. As illustrated in Figure 3, Fiscal responsibility also had the highest mean of any guiding principle factor \((\bar{x}=4.00)\), followed by a commitment to competitive excellence \((\bar{x}=3.80)\) and the Mission of the Athletic Department \((\bar{x}=3.30)\).
Of the schools that used principles, 63% \((n=5)\) rated a commitment to competitive excellence as very to extremely important, and 50% \((n=4)\) rated the Mission of the Athletic Department as very to extremely important. The only principle that did not receive a single rating of extremely important by any responding institution was the Mission of the University.

Additionally, the only principle that was rated as slightly to not important by 50% \((n=4)\) of the responding schools was the Core Values of the Athletic Department. The least influential guiding principle factors were the Mission of the University \((\bar{x}=2.50)\) and the Core Values of the Athletic Department \((\bar{x}=2.60)\).
**Schools that did not use principles.** Of the schools that did not use principles to formally guide their decision making process, eighty percent (80%) stated that an Athletic Department budget shortage was very or extremely influential in the decision making process to discontinue programs.

The biggest change in the level of influence a single factor had in the decision to eliminate sports between schools that did use guiding principles and those that did not, was Title IX / Gender Equity Implications. Schools that did use guiding principles stated Title IX as a more influential factor (\(\bar{x}=4.10\)) than those who did not use guiding principles (\(\bar{x}=2.60\)). The only other factor with a mean difference over one was that establishing conference affiliation was more influential for schools who did use guiding principles (\(\bar{x}=2.80\)) compared to those who did not use guiding principles (\(\bar{x}=1.60\)).

**Research Question 3**

What did the institution state as the reasons for eliminating teams? Survey respondents were asked to rate the influence of 18 potential reasons for eliminating multiple varsity sport programs. The factors that had the highest mean results were in order: Athletic Department Budget Shortage (\(\bar{x}=4.23\)), Institutional Financial Constraints (\(\bar{x}=4.00\)), Title IX / Gender Equity Implications (\(\bar{x}=3.54\)), and Financial Strain of Individual Programs (\(\bar{x}=3.15\)). As illustrated in Figure 4, those four factors recorded the only mean results above moderately influential.
The factors that had the lowest mean results, or were the least influential in order were: The personal relationship between the Athletic Director and Coach ($\bar{x}=1.00$), Student-Athlete Academic Issues ($\bar{x}=1.08$), Student-Athlete Character Issues ($\bar{x}=1.08$), and the Coaching Staff ($\bar{x}=1.23$).

**Responses by NCAA subdivision.** By splitting the respondents into the NCAA Subdivision categories of FBS, FCS and Non-Football, comparisons may be made to determine whether there are differences in the reasons institutions eliminate multiple varsity
sport programs between these groups. By looking at the data empirically, the difference between the means of the reasons institutions eliminate teams can indicate the reasons one subdivision cuts sports in comparison to another subdivision. Within each subdivision, the means of the responses were calculated for each decision making factor. As illustrated in Figure 5, Institutional Financial Constraints for Non Football schools ($\bar{x}=4.75$) was much more influential than for FCS schools ($\bar{x}=3.00$), or FBS schools ($\bar{x}=3.50$). The same can be seen for Lack of Facilities being more influential for Non Football Schools ($\bar{x}=3.33$) than FBS schools ($\bar{x}=1.50$) or FCS Schools ($\bar{x}=2.70$). Conversely, an Athletic Department Shortage was more influential in FBS schools ($\bar{x}=4.75$) and FCS schools ($\bar{x}=4.30$), than for Non-Football schools ($\bar{x}=3.25$), as well as the financial strain of an individual program in FBS schools ($\bar{x}=3.25$), FCS schools ($\bar{x}=3.00$) and Non-Football Schools ($\bar{x}=2.75$). The same pattern can be said for Reallocation of Funds to Revenue Sports, where FBS schools ($\bar{x}=3.00$), and FCS schools ($\bar{x}=2.30$) found the factor to be more influential than Non-Football Schools ($\bar{x}=1.25$). Additionally, the pattern continues with Title IX / Gender Equity Implications, where FBS schools ($\bar{x}=4.00$), and FCS schools ($\bar{x}=3.70$) found the factor to be more influential than Non-Football schools ($\bar{x}=2.25$).
Responses by final decision maker. Differences can also be seen in the level of influence between schools when separating the responses by the person who made the final decision to discontinue multiple varsity sport programs. Of the schools that stated the Athletic Director made the final decision, the Athletic Department Budget Shortage factor was found to have a much greater mean level of influence ($\overline{x}=4.90$) than those schools that stated the President of the University made the final decision ($\overline{x}=3.50$). Conversely, Institutional Financial Constraints was found to be more influential in schools that the President made the final decision ($\overline{x}=4.50$) than when the Athletic Director ($\overline{x}=3.80$) made the final decision.
Responses by length of time in which the decision was made. Schools that took nine or more months to make the decision to eliminate multiple varsity sport programs, had contrasting means of influence factors than schools that took six or less months to make the decision. Exactly half of the responding schools (one did not answer the number of months the decision took) stated that the decision took nine or more months. The biggest difference was in Title IX / Gender Equity Implications, which had more influence in schools that took more than nine months to make a decision ($\bar{x}=4.70$) compared to schools that took less than nine months to make a decision ($\bar{x}=2.30$). The same can be said for Athletic Department Budget Shortage for schools that took longer to make the decision ($\bar{x}=4.70$) compared to those who took less time ($\bar{x}=3.70$). The other two factors of influence that follow the same pattern is Institutional Financial Constraints ($\bar{x}=4.50$ vs. $\bar{x}=3.30$) and Financial Strain of Individual Program ($\bar{x}=3.80$ vs. $\bar{x}=2.30$). Additionally, Establishing Conference Affiliation ($\bar{x}=2.80$ vs. $\bar{x}=1.70$) and Maintaining Conference Affiliation ($\bar{x}=2.30$ vs. $\bar{x}=1.20$) also showed differences with schools that took more than nine months having those factors be more influential than schools that took less than nine months to make the decision to discontinue multiple varsity sport programs. See Figure 6.
Also, it should be noted that there were two open-ended responses further clarify the level of influence of additional factors. The following responses provided by the respondent had a ‘Very Influential’ mean (\(\bar{x}=4.00\)): “weather related issues, facility renovation requirements, lack of competitive success, cost per student-athlete, reallocation of funds to remaining programs”.

**Research Question 4**

What other options were reasonably explored as an alternative to eliminating teams? The decision making process to discontinue multiple varsity sport programs goes through many stages of conversation and discussion. “Rational choice” theory (Simon, 1955) explains the behavior for those making decisions in an organizational context. Rational
choice can exist in computational capacities, but humans are in much more fluid environments with external factors, which Simon uses to explain the uncertainty of outcomes in a decision making process (Simon, 1955). Institutions and athletic departments have to make decisions constantly, which can be defined as “a judgment with a choice between alternatives” (Drucker, 1966, p. 143). When alternatives are considered to cutting teams, the proposals all get varying levels of deliberation.

The two most common alternatives were to raise more revenue or to cut expenses. Of the schools that responded, 54% stated that reductions were considered. Open-ended responses provide additional insight: “Options included across the board cuts in budgets, staffing and scholarships, or continuing some programs without scholarships”. Other write-in responses included: “Discontinuation of scholarships”, and “Reduction of scholarships and budgets.”

The other alternative to cutting expenses was to raise more revenue to be able to support the programs financially. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the schools said that raising more revenue was a viable alternative to discontinuing teams. For example, one respondent explained: “The university would have had to raise the subsidy to the athletics department or require the department to commit less to revenue sports – neither of which were viable options.” Other open-ended responses included: “Funding to keep the sports (raise more revenue) and support of the program through alumni and donors” and “Generating private support.”

Of the schools that considered cutting expenses, the average number of student-athletes who were affected by the decision to discontinue teams was approximately 59. However, of the schools that considered raising revenue as a way to avoid discontinuing
teams, 79 student-athletes was the average. One school provided the following comment on the decision making process in regards to whether alternative options were explored:

   Barely. The president informed the AD that these sports were going to be eliminated. The AD, me and another senior athletic staff explained to our reporting line that we were not in Title IX compliance and suggested alternative ways to meet the president's desires. We contacted an attorney specializing in college athletics law and Title IX. The attorney weighed in with an opinion. The President proceeded with the elimination as he originally informed us of, per the reporting line channel. Yes, I am not sure the president ever spoke directly with the AD.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Summary

The excessive increase in operating costs in intercollegiate athletic departments has created large deficits in the annual budgets for many Division 1 institutions (Knight Commission, 2010). As athletic departments struggle to balance their budgets, they are forced to make tough decisions on how to reduce their expenses or attempt to raise additional revenue. Although there are over 400,000 NCAA participation opportunities for student-athletes (NCAA, 2009), there is still a common trend for schools to reduce expenses by cutting the number of participation opportunities by eliminating varsity sports teams. The decision to discontinue multiple varsity sport programs is a difficult one for most institutions, as it is a judgment call between alternative options (Drucker, 1966). A decision making framework helps to pinpoint the key areas of the process, and past research serves as the guiding structure to this study’s findings.

The purpose of this study is to determine the primary reasons why institutions eliminate varsity sports teams, and examine the decision making process used to come to the conclusion of eliminating multiple teams at once. The method chosen for this study was to conduct a survey of a sample of Division I athletic administrators who were in decision making positions at their respective schools when their institution eliminated multiple varsity sport teams. A survey response rate of 27% produced data from a representative sample of institutions that eliminated three or more varsity sport programs at once between the years of
2000 and 2010. As seen in Figure 1, the balanced representation of the sample is consistent with the population and the entire NCAA Division 1 membership. Although the majority of schools in Division 1 have not cut multiple varsity sport programs at once, this information is applicable to them because less than 5% of institution’s athletic departments recorded a profit in 2009 (NCAA, 2009), which means that they could be looking to reduce expenditures to balance the budget. The decision making process to eliminate multiple varsity sport programs begins with people weighing the options of whether or not cutting sports is viable, and therefore the people involved in the decision making process is crucial to understand.

**People Involved in the Decision Making Process**

Decisions require individuals to exercise judgment, which is dependent upon their experience, insight and intuition (Simon, 1960). Subjects were asked numerous questions about the decision making process, including the persons who first proposed discontinuation of varsity sport programs, the persons involved in the decision, the person who led the decision, and who made the final decision. Beginning with the gestation time, or the interval from the first mention of the issue in an organization until action begins to be taken toward making a decision, the discontinuation of multiple varsity sport programs starts with the initial meeting about potential budget cuts in an athletic department (Cray, et al. 1988). The group that was responsible for the initial proposal most frequently, according to the responses, was the Senior Staff. The Senior Staff are those staff members that regularly meet together to consult with the Athletic Director on decisions for a university athletic department. Senior staffs can be made up of a small number of individuals to more than a dozen depending on the institution. So it is not surprising that this group was involved frequently in the initial proposal, since this group usually has a great deal of athletic
administration experience and makes decisions on all areas of the athletic department, including compliance, development, marketing, facilities, tickets and more.

The findings show that the Senior Staff led the decision making process in sixty-six percent (66%) of the schools in which they were involved in the initial proposal of the discontinuation of varsity sport programs. This high percentage speaks to the qualifications and the ability of the Senior Staff in decision-making situations. Often, Senior Staff have oversight over specific varsity programs and their perspectives are vital to the department when cuts are being considered. The findings show that a perspective that was not often given consideration in the decision making process was the Head Coaches. The Head Coaches have a clear bias when it comes to their sport and their program, however they can also have a very different perspective than other decision makers when it comes to sports other than their own being eliminated. Head Coaches can see the impact that the opportunity to participate in a varsity sport has on the student-athlete’s college experience. The student-athletes who are directly affected by program discontinuation are sometimes overshadowed by the ability for athletic departments to make a profit, and the Head Coaches can speak to the fairness and the ethics in these decisions better than most.

However, as can be seen in Hickson’s previous research, the more interest groups represented at the decision making table can create political bureaucracy. Each specialization of the athletic department may have their own interests in mind and exert their influence, and the more powerful the influence, the more likely it is that the views it offers will be acted upon (Hickson, 1987). Organizations are comprised of individuals with different goals, interests and values that can be conflicting. An individual or interest group with a powerful influence over a decision can sway an organization one way or the other (Hickson, 1987).
The notion of having one person with the influential power goes to the crux of why it is important to understand who was involved in the decision making process when sport programs are discontinued. This study found that only 15% of the institutions decision makers did not reach a consensus on discontinuing varsity sport programs, both of which had less than two people involved in the initial proposal. The individual making the decision in both these circumstances was the President of the University, who is not usually a member of the Senior Staff of the athletic department. These findings show that there may be a disconnect between the President of the University’s philosophy on athletics and the athletic administration’s philosophy. This lack of communication and inability to work in cohesion directly affected the student-athletes from these institutions when their sports were eliminated. A decision with the amount of ramifications that sport program elimination has, should be given the utmost amount of time and consideration. One of these two schools also made the decision in 1.5 total months, a full 8.2 months less than the sample’s average.

Institutions that had three or more total people involved in the initial proposal of discontinuation were in 100% consensus as to the decision to discontinue multiple varsity sport programs. The stark contrast between these two groups shows that the decision to eliminate sports, though an incredibly difficult one, can be agreeable amongst decision makers under certain circumstances. In particular, if all other options are exhausted. These schools took an average of 10.8 months to make the decision, showing that they gave this decision more time consideration. On the other hand, it is also possible to interpret a 100% consensus in a decision as controversial because it could show that the decision is being driven by one person who is more influential than the rest and is coercing the group into a single conclusion rather than weighing the options.
Ultimately, the number of people involved in the decision making process does not dictate whether or not the final decision was in the best interest of all parties involved. Powerful influence groups can have great impact on the outcome of a decision (Hickson, 1987). The more powerful a group, the more likely it is that the views it offers will be acted upon. However, having an open and transparent decision making process with numerous people and interests represented helps to ensure fairness and consideration. Organizations are comprised of individuals with different goals, interests and values that can be conflicting. Since the interests of the student-athletes can often be overlooked, the team that is being affected and the individuals participating on that team should be an interest group with a voice in the decision. An individual or interest group with a powerful influence over a situation, such as a University President or Athletic Director can sway an organization one way or the other (Hickson, 1987). Therefore, the quality of the decision makers is more important than the quantity of decision makers. As important as who makes the decisions, it is also crucial for institutions and decision makers to abide by certain guidelines through the decision making process to protect themselves and to be fair to student-athletes.

**Guidelines for the Decision Making Process**

The guidelines for the decision making process can be seen as formal written rules (Hickson, 1987), that can be in the form of bylaws, procedure manuals, constitutions or written policies (Hill & Kikulis, 1999). Formal rules can also come from external organizations, such as governmental entities, conference restrictions, or in the case of gender discrimination, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The University has an obligation under legal requirements of Title IX to provide intercollegiate athletic participation opportunities equally for both men and women.
Previous studies have focused on the importance of gender equity requirements, namely The United States General Accounting Office (GAO), which performed a study that examined how institutions developed and implemented strategic decisions to eliminate teams (General Accounting Office, 2001). The research found three key elements to the discontinuation of men’s teams: insufficient student interest, gender equity requirements and resources needed to be allocated to other sports. Although the research in the GAO’s study was focused specifically on the discontinuation of men’s programs, this study did find two similar findings when looking at schools that used guiding principles to make their decision. Schools that used guiding principles stated that Title IX / Gender Equity Implications were more influential ($\bar{x}=4.10$) than schools that did not use guiding principles ($\bar{x}=2.60$). Additionally, schools that used guiding principles stated that the reallocation of funds to revenue sports was more influential ($\bar{x}=2.80$) than those who did not use guiding principles ($\bar{x}=1.60$). These two comparisons could indicate that schools that cut men’s programs are doing so because they want to reallocate their funds to revenue sports. Women’s sports are less likely to be eliminated because of the need to maintain gender equity within the athletic department to achieve Title IX compliance. It makes sense that gender equity implications would be more of an influential factor to schools that use guiding principles, because they would presumably understand the importance of equality if they took the time to create guidelines based on their principles and philosophies.

Surprisingly, only 62% of schools stated they used principles to formally guide their decision making process. Of the schools that did use principles to formally guide the decision making process, 63% responded that fiscal responsibility was extremely important and 88% of schools stated that fiscal responsibility was moderately to extremely important. Fiscal
responsibility also had the highest mean of any guiding principle factor (\(\bar{X}=4.00\)), followed by a commitment to competitive excellence (\(\bar{X}=3.80\)) and the Mission of the Athletic Department (\(\bar{X}=3.30\)). From these findings, it appears that schools that took the time and consideration to create guiding principles may have been forced to make necessary budget cuts because of the need to be fiscally responsible. However, the overwhelming number of Division I institutions operate at a deficit, so it begs the question whether institutions are concerned about actually reducing spending, or if they simply wish to reallocate existing resources.

The respondents in this study indicated that being competitive was their next most important principle. This is consistent with the GAO study’s finding that institutions reallocate funds to other sports (General Accounting Office, 2001). This practice makes sense – limited resources are reallocated so that those other sports can be more competitive when others are discontinued. This philosophy could be considered ‘tiering’ sports, or prioritizing your sports by the amount of money and resources they receive to be competitive at the Division 1 level. Division I institutions must sponsor at least 14 sports – at least seven for men and seven for women or at least six for men and eight for women (NCAA, 2010). However some schools offer over thirty sports and this large range for Division I membership allows for many differences between how schools allocate their funding. Institutions could give priority to one sport over another by the equipment they use, the facility they play in, the media coverage they receive or unique experiences they are offered. Prioritizing sports is another way to say that an Athletic Department is going to devote more resources, most often money, into certain programs because they feel that they have a better potential to be successful. The potential to succeed and bring the University prestige through
achievements on and off the field could be cause for tiering sports in an athletic department.

The data shows that the use of guiding principles in institutional decision making has room for growth. Since only fifty percent \((n=4)\) of schools that used guiding principles rated any of their principles as ‘Extremely Important’, the data could indicate that the Core Values and the Mission Statements of the University and Athletic Department aren’t representative enough of what is important in the decision making processes. Athletic Departments could look to the mission statements of the University or the NCAA to better shape their values and principles. This importance of the opportunity to participate in intercollegiate athletics as a component of higher education could help athletic administrators decide on what is most important to not only their department, but to their university and to the community as a whole.

Of the schools that did not use guiding principles to structure the decision making process, 80% stated that an Athletic Department Budget Shortage was very or extremely influential in the decision making process to discontinue programs. The budget shortfall could have been considered such an important factor for schools because the lack of funds replaced the need for guiding principles. The importance of finding a solution for the budget shortfall, could have been in essence, the principle that guided the decision making process. If a school felt that a budget deficit was enough of a dilemma that a solution drove the decision making process, then guiding principles may not have been discussed.

Another possibility with a budget shortage being such an influential factor is that the department may not have had a lot of time to react to their financial deficit. Therefore, if a decision had to be made quickly, it could have been at the expense of formally creating guiding principles. One response in particular speaks to the possibility of their being an issue
of time and how quickly things moved when an announcement of the discontinuations
needed to be made for a school that did not use guiding principles:

The AD, me and other Senior athletic staff member informed each coach privately on
the same day. We then met with each team privately on the same day as when we
informed the coach. Then the University released a press announcement. This was
done on a Wednesday - 2 days before school let out for Spring break.

This response was given by an institution that had made their decision in 1.5 months and had
less than two people involved in the initial decision making process. Additionally, their
reasons for eliminating teams had very prominent influential ratings. Institutional Financial
Constraints and Lack of Facilities were rated as ‘Extremely Influential’ and every other
reason was rated as ‘Not Influential’. This severe contrast gives an excellent indication of the
decision making process and how the varsity sport programs were selected for
discontinuation.

The element of Time in the decision making process can indicate more comparisons
between schools. Schools that took nine or more months ($\bar{x}=4.70$) to make the decision to
eliminate varsity sport programs viewed Gender Equity Requirements as more influential
than schools that took less than nine months ($\bar{x}=2.30$). It is possible that schools that took
longer to make the decision to cut programs could have been examining the Title IX
implications more closely, and therefore it took them longer to make the announcement. This
can be supported by the following response in this survey from the same institution that took
1.5 months to make their decision of discontinuation:

The president informed the AD that these sports were going to be eliminated. The
AD, me and another senior athletic staff explained to our reporting line that we were
not in Title IX compliance and suggested alternative ways to meet the President's
desires. We contacted an attorney specializing in college athletics law and Title IX.
The attorney weighed in with an opinion. The President proceeded with the
elimination as he originally informed us of, per the reporting line channel. Yes, I am
not sure the president ever spoke directly with the AD.
The response can be seen as a breakdown in communication, but if the length of time was extended in the decision making process, then the decision maker may have had more information to make their decision.

As decision makers decipher through the complexities and political bureaucracies that exist in an organization, previous research recommends that they keep within a structure, a set of guidelines that acts as the rules of the game (Hickson, 1987). There are no written rules when it comes to the decision making process of the discontinuation of varsity sport programs; however Title IX does set a legal precedent for providing equal opportunities for both men and women. This research helps to inform athletics administrators about the process others have used, providing a model in some cases as well as an example of how not to operate when they are going through varsity sport program elimination. Not using guiding principles and not involving enough people in the decision making process have been identified as potential pitfalls for universities thus far. To better understand what schools can do to avoid making judgment errors in their decision making process, it is important to understand the reasons that schools eliminate sports and what other options can be explored as an alternative.

**Primary Reasons for Eliminating Multiple Varsity Sport Programs**

Previous research in program discontinuation has been done by surveying athletic directors to identify the criteria they found important when deciding whether or not to eliminate their wrestling programs (Weight, 2006). This study found similar results related to the factors that were most influential in the decision making process: Athletic Department Budget Shortage, Institutional Financial Constraints, Title IX / Gender Equity Implications and Financial Strain of Individual Program were the primary reasons why institutions
eliminate varsity sports teams. Additionally, there were factors that were not influential in either study, including the Personal Relationship between the AD and the Coach and the National Popularity of the Sport(s). The biggest difference between the two studies was that the success of the team in terms of wins / losses was not found to be even slightly influential ($\bar{X}=1.62$) in this study, but it was very influential ($\bar{X}=3.45$) in the previous study (Weight, 2006). A potential reason for the difference between the two studies is that this study looked at the influential factors of all the sports that were discontinued together, whereas Weight (2006) looked specifically at elimination of wrestling programs. Further research could examine institutions that cut multiple varsity sport programs, and then survey the decision makers to find out the primary reasons for eliminating each sport separately.

This study dissected the data further by splitting the responses by the NCAA Subdivision categories of FBS, FCS, and Non-Football. As seen in figure 3, Institutional Financial Constraints was extremely influential reasons to eliminate varsity sports for non-football schools ($\bar{X}=4.75$) compared to FCS schools ($\bar{X}=3.00$) and FBS schools ($\bar{X}=3.50$) which indicated it was moderately to very influential. Lack of Facilities followed the same trend of being more of an influential factor with Non-Football Schools ($\mu=3.33$) than FBS Schools ($\bar{X}=1.50$) or FCS Schools ($\bar{X}=2.70$). This may be explained by the amount of money schools with big-time football programs have compared to schools without football. The Big East Conference is a prime example of the budget differences between FBS, FCS, and Non-Football Schools (See Figure 7). Of the sixteen Big East schools, there are nine FBS schools, two FCS schools and five non-football schools. The athletic department budgets are very different for schools in these subdivisions. Big East FBS schools have an average annual budget of $50.37$ million, FCS schools have an average annual budget of $27.35$
million and Non-Football schools have an average annual budget of $21.56 million (Brown, 2010). The differences between the three subdivisions in The Big East are well representative of the differences in the annual budgets of all of NCAA Division 1. Therefore, the more money a university or athletic department has in their budget, the more money they have to potentially spend on facilities. So it is not surprising that non-football schools see their institutional financial constraints and their lack of facilities as more influential of a factor when they decide to discontinue varsity sport programs (Brown, 2010).

Figure 7. 2009-10 Big East Athletic Department Budgets: FBS vs. FCS vs. Non-Football Schools
However, not all FBS schools generate enough revenue to cover their budgets. For those that spend more money than they are able to generate, an Athletic Department Budget Shortage becomes a more influential factor in the decision to discontinue programs. This could be described by Non-football schools ($\bar{X}=2.75$) not having to spend as much money annually on their budget, since they aren’t supporting expensive football teams, while FBS schools ($\bar{X}=4.75$) and FCS schools ($\bar{X}=4.30$) spend great amounts of money on their football programs and don’t always see as much of a financial return on their investment. The clear difference between FBS and Non-Football schools are their ability to generate revenue, and with the emphasis on making money, it’s no surprise that the Reallocation of Funds to Revenue Sports is more influential in FBS schools ($\bar{X}=3.00$) and FCS schools ($\bar{X}=2.30$) than in Non-football schools ($\bar{X}=1.25$). Since Non-Football schools usually only have one sport considered as a revenue generator, men’s basketball, it makes sense for FBS and FCS schools to have that factor be more influential in their decision making process.

Another big difference between the subdivisions is the impact of Title IX / Gender Equity implications. Non-football schools ($\bar{X}=2.25$) do not have to balance out the excessive number of male football student-athletes with female student-athletes, FBS schools ($\bar{X}=4.00$) and FCS schools ($\bar{X}=3.70$) are influenced in their decision making process by gender equity requirements more frequently. Although all institutions are under the same gender equity requirements, the large squad sizes maintained for football programs places extra pressure on schools to provide more women’s participation opportunities than non-football schools if they are relying upon the substantial proportionality prong of the 1979 Policy Interpretations of Title IX by the Office of Civil Rights (Federal Register, 1979) to prove Title IX compliance. Ultimately, when schools cut women’s sports, they cannot state a case that they
are effectively accommodating the interest and abilities of the members of the underrepresented sex unless they have achieved substantial proportionality.

There are also differences in the mean levels of influential factors when the results are split by who the final decision maker is. When the Athletic Director made the final decision to discontinue varsity sport programs, the Athletic Department Budget Shortage had a mean indicating it was extremely influential ($\bar{x}=4.90$) compared to when the President of the University ($\bar{x}=3.50$) made the final decision, which indicated it was moderately to very influential. Conversely, Institutional Financial Constraints were found to be more influential when the President made the final decision ($\mu=\bar{x}=.50$) compared to the Athletic Director ($\bar{x}=3.80$). This difference could be explained by the circumstances of the university dictating who the decision maker needed to be. For example, if the Athletic Director is under pressure to reduce expenses, it makes sense that they would feel that they needed to make a decision to solve the problem of an athletic department budget shortage. This problem could be solved by decreasing expenses or increasing revenues. Therefore, the athletics director would be the final decision maker regarding discontinuing varsity programs. On the contrary, if the President needed to reduce expenses, he or she would feel the pressure of the institutional financial constraints and would be the final decision maker related to the reduction of athletic expenditures.

**Alternative Options to Cutting Sports**

Reducing expenses and increasing revenues are both solutions that can be achieved in a number of ways to avoid cutting sports. However, they both come with their potential drawbacks and issues. Clearly, if generating additional revenue was a viable option for all universities, they would choose to do so. However, it is not always realistic to be able to raise
enough private funds to keep a team, or to generate more ticket sales or corporate
sponsorships. Previous studies have looked at ways to reduce expenses and found that
reducing staff and limiting travel were options to avoid cutting sports (Hill & Kikulis, 1999).

Similarly to Hill and Kikulis’ study, this study found that across the board budget
cuts, staffing and scholarship reductions, and continuing programs without scholarships were
all options that schools considered when looking for ways to avoid cutting sports. However,
only 54% of schools stated that they looked at other areas to reduce expenses besides cutting
sports. This surprisingly low number could be the result of the budget gap being too great to
reasonably look at any option besides eliminating multiple teams entire budgets; in particular
with the schools in this sample cutting more than three teams and an average of over 60 total
student-athletes.

The other alternative to cutting expenses is to raise more revenue and support the
teams financially who are being considered for discontinuation. Only 31% of schools saw
raising revenue as a viable option to keep from cutting their programs. Since less than a third
of schools considered raising revenue, it may not have been a realistic approach in a down
economy the past few years. Most schools are losing money and operating in a deficit, so if
they had the opportunity to raise additional revenues, they would. Additionally, if the
institution had plans to reallocate funds to other sports, or to decrease their subsidy from the
athletic department, then raising more money wouldn’t necessarily mean it would go towards
the sports being considered for elimination.

Both decreasing expenses and raising revenue could have been potential options well
before the initial process began to discuss the discontinuation of varsity sport programs. So
although not all schools responded that they looked at both options, they may have had
internal conversations about different alternatives that weren’t considered formal enough to include in their responses. Since many units within an athletic department are responsible for generating revenue, such as development, marketing and the ticket office, it would be unlikely that multiple revenue generating conversations weren’t taking place as an alternative to avoid cutting programs.

**Limitations**

There are numerous potential limitations when interpreting the results of this study. The subjects were limited to NCAA Division I institutions that discontinued three or more sports in a one year period between 2000 and 2010. This research therefore, cannot be extended to NCAA Division II and III as well as schools that have eliminated less than three sports at once. Additionally, this study is delimited to institutions that have eliminated varsity sport programs and not to reductions in other educational areas.

The response rate could be construed as another limitation at 27%. Although it is a good representation of the NCAA member base and the population of schools that have cut three or more teams at once between 2000 and 2010, there could be a non-response bias. Those who did not complete the survey may have responded differently and changed the results. A non-response bias is a strong possibility when dealing with sensitive information like program discontinuations because of the amount of scrutiny universities and athletic departments receive when they make these types of decisions. Also, previous comparable research results had slightly higher response rates (Weight, 2006).

**Implications and Recommendations**

The number of people involved in the initial phase of the decision making process had a clear impact on the outcome of the decision. The only two schools whose decision
makers did not come to a consensus on the decision to discontinue programs both had two or less people involved in the initial proposal. Therefore more viewpoints throughout the process may create more discussion to enhance the fairness and quality of the decision making process. This concept of multiple decision makers from the beginning can be easily implemented along with principles to formally guide the process to create a more transparent and direct formula when contemplating the discontinuation of varsity sport programs. Since previous research has found similar factors that influence the decision making process to eliminate teams, such as Gender Equity Requirements, reallocation of funds to revenue sports (General Accounting Office, 2001), Athletic Department Budget Shortages, and financial strain of an individual program (Weight, 2006), it seems reasonable that the way in which the decisions are made leads to the conclusion of eliminating teams, not the reasons or factors why teams are eliminated.

The decision making process is different for every school because they all have their own unique sets of circumstances. However, a set of principles that can formally guide the decision making process can be utilized by any institution when they are contemplating the discontinuation of varsity sport programs. The process that leads to the decision could be seen as more important than the final decision itself. Ultimately, it may not change the decision; however the image of the University and the Athletic Department could benefit from being able to say that a formal procedure was instituted and followed as opposed to it seeming as though a rash decision was formulated from a few individuals. A process that is viewed as rational and thorough will more likely be perceived as ethical or fair to all parties involved.

The communication between the university and athletic department can also be
improved in order to improve the decision making process. Athletic administrators can help protect student-athlete participation opportunities by dictating a well-structured decision making process, which could find solutions other than discontinuing teams. Those solutions could then be articulated to the university, and if there is already a strong relationship in place, it would be more likely that at the very least, the decision could be delayed and reviewed, as opposed to being quickly acted upon. It is crucial for the Athletic Department to keep a positive relationship with university officials, so that in times of budget cuts and reduced spending, there can be an open dialogue to protect the interests of the student-athletes.

Financial concerns and gender equity implications are the two areas of greatest concern for the potential discontinuation of varsity sport programs. Universities, Athletic Departments and individual varsity sport programs all must be aware of their spending and manage it efficiently to avoid having to make cuts when the economy struggles. Athletic Departments must be advocates for Title IX and Gender Equity to provide equal opportunities for both men and women. The lack of importance placed on gender equity is concerning, but fortunately, the overall women’s and men’s NCAA participation opportunities continue to rise, which should hopefully continue for many years to come.

**Future Research**

Future research should examine the decision making process through interviewing those involved in the process. Qualitative research may uncover more crucial elements to the decision making process that were not discussed in this study. There is a lot of information that can be accumulated and analyzed by having an open dialogue with an athletic or university administrator who has been through the discontinuation process. A qualitative
process allows the researcher to further examine which alternative options were discussed, and perhaps more importantly, why they were unsuccessful. Future studies could focus on schools that have avoided program eliminations but made the decision to go an alternative route. The successes and failures of these alternate choices could be helpful for athletic administrators who will deal with program discontinuations in the future.

Additionally, the decision making factors level of influence can be looked at sport by sport, to determine whether or not every program is discontinued for the same reasons. Future research could also have administrators rank the influential factors to determine which reasons are the most important across the board in each sport and each institution. Understanding why sports are eliminated will be beneficial for coaches as well, so they can put their programs in the best position to continue to grow as oppose to being eliminated.
APPENDIX A: Survey (part 1 of 4)

1) Name of Institution: __________

2) How many total student-athletes were on the teams that were discontinued? __________

3) Specifically, who first proposed that discontinuation of varsity sport programs be considered? Please select all that apply.
   - President / Chancellor
   - Athletic Director
   - Senior Woman Administrator
   - Senior Staff Members
   - Chief Athletics Financial Officer
   - Head Coach(es)
   - Outside Consultants / Outsourced Group
   - Other (please specify): __________

4) After the process was initiated, which of the following people were involved in the decision making process to discontinue multiple varsity sport programs? Please select all that apply.
   - President / Chancellor
   - Athletic Director
   - Senior Woman Administrator
   - Senior Staff Members
   - Chief Athletics Financial Officer
   - Head Coach(es)
   - Outside Consultants / Outsourced Group
   - Other (please specify): __________

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5) Which of the following people led the decision making process to discontinue varsity sport programs? Please select all that apply.

- President / Chancellor
- Athletic Director
- Senior Woman Administrator
- Senior Staff Members
- Chief Athletics Financial Officer
- Head Coach(es)
- Outside Consultants / Outsourced Group
- Other (please specify): __________

6) Who made the final decision (as opposed to the approval of the decision) in the process to discontinue varsity sport programs? Please select the option that applies the most.

- President / Chancellor
- Athletic Director
- Senior Woman Administrator
- Senior Staff Members
- Chief Athletics Financial Officer
- Head Coach(es)
- Outside Consultants / Outsourced Group
- Other (please specify): __________

7) Was the decision to discontinue varsity sport programs the result of a consensus among the people involved in the decision making process?

- Yes
- No

8) Were the specific sports selected for discontinuation the result of a consensus among the people involved in the decision making process?

- Yes
- No
9) How long did the decision making process take, from the beginning of the discussion to discontinue varsity sport programs to the announcement of the decision? Please answer in terms of number of months. __________

10) What were the reasons for discontinuing varsity sport programs? Please rate the influence of each of the following factors in the decision making process. “1” indicating “Not Influential”, “2” indicating “Slightly Influential”, “3” indicating “Moderately Influential”, “4” indicating “Very Influential” and”5” indicating “Extremely Influential”

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<th>Factor</th>
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<td>Additional Factors (please list)</td>
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11) Were there principles that were used to formally guide the process for discontinuing varsity sport programs? (If yes is selected, proceed to question 12. If no is selected, skip to question 13)

- Yes
- No
12) Please rate the importance of each of the following principles in the decision making process to discontinue varsity sport programs. “1” indicating “Not Important”, “2” indicating “Slightly Important”, “3” indicating “Moderately Important”, “4” indicating “Very Important” and “5” indicating “Extremely Important”

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<td>Mission of the Athletic Department</td>
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<td>Commitment to Competitive Excellence</td>
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<td>Additional Factors (please list)</td>
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13) Were other options reasonably explored as an alternative to discontinuing varsity sport programs? If so, what were they? __________

14) How was the announcement made to discontinue varsity sport programs? __________

15) When the announcement was made to discontinue varsity sport programs, which of the following groups were notified before the student-athletes on the effected teams? Please select any that apply.

- University Administrators
- Faculty
- Athletic Administrators
- Board of Trustees
- Alumni
- Media / Press
- General Public
- Coaching Staff
- None
- Other (please specify) __________
Appendix B: Invitation E-mail

Dear Athletic Administrator,

My name is Jordan Skolnick and I am a graduate student in Sport Administration at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As a former intercollegiate student-athlete, I believe in the value of having an excellent academic and athletic experience. Additionally, as I continue to pursue a career in college athletics, I strive to learn more about the ways in which athletic departments make decisions.

As a component of my graduate degree, I am researching the decision making processes in athletic departments when multiple varsity sport programs are eliminated at once. The purpose of this study is to determine the primary reasons why institutions eliminate multiple varsity sports teams at once. I realize the sensitivity of this issue, and understand that these decisions are extremely difficult to make.

The survey will only take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time and your responses will remain confidential at all times. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can reach me anytime at 860.670.6894 or skolnick@unc.edu. Further, you can contact my advisor, Professor Barbara Osborne, J.D. at 919.962.5174 or sportlaw@unc.edu. Additionally, if you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject you can contact the UNC Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 919.966.3113 or subjects@unc.edu. If you contact the IRB, please reference study 11-0126.

If you are interested, I am happy to provide you with the collective results of this study. I truly appreciate you using your valuable time to assist me with my research. Best of luck to you and your teams throughout the remainder of the year. Thanks again for your time.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip any question for any reason. By clicking the link below, you agree to be a participant in this research study.

https://uncodum.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5b9qvFNg7OhJClu

Sincerely,

Jordan Skolnick
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Master of Arts Candidate, Sport Administration
860.670.6894 / skolnick@unc.edu
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Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C., 1681-1688

