

THE ATHLETIC DIRECTOR'S PERCEPTIONS OF STRATEGIES EFFECTIVE IN BUILDING A
STRONG ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Robert Andrew Steele

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Approved by:

Coyte Cooper

Robert Malekoff

John Brunner

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ABSTRACT

Robert Andrew Steele: The Athletic Director's Perceptions Of Strategies Effective In Building A Strong Organizational Culture
(Under the direction of Coyte Cooper)

This study was designed to reveal the athletic director's perceptions of strategies effective in building a strong organizational culture within intercollegiate athletics. Research questions focused on those specific effective strategies, how they are implemented at each institution, and the personal development of the athletic director. Four strategies were discovered using interview research with each participant. The six participants were Kathy Beauregard (Western Michigan University), Morgan Burke (Purdue University), Bubba Cunningham (University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill), John Currie (Kansas State University), Ian McCaw (Baylor University), and Michael O'Brien (University of Toledo). Each participant serves as the athletic director at an NCAA Division I FBS institution and has demonstrated administrative excellence within intercollegiate athletics during their tenure as an athletic director. The interviews produced key trends for effective strategies and personal development behaviors. The findings from this study provide unique perspectives and aid previous research on organizational culture in intercollegiate athletics.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In an ever-changing world of intercollegiate athletics, athletic departments require an effective leader to challenge and inspire fellow administrators, staff, coaches and student-athletes. The desire for effective leadership brings with it challenges as turnover seems to happen often, leaving holes atop the organizational structure (Smith, 2015). As new athletic directors step into vacancies around the country, inevitable responsibility to make an impact for the better come with those new roles, but what does that look like? How do these athletic directors, labeled by many as leaders, implement reform to mold the organization into their own model of effectiveness? Dave O'Brien, a writer with College Sports Business News, offers an interesting take on how leaders influence their organizations. "Leaders passionately believe that they can make a difference. They envision the future, creating an ideal and unique image of what the organization can become. Through their magnetism and quiet persuasion, leaders enlist others in their dreams. They breathe life into their visions and get people to see exciting possibilities for the future" (O'Brien, 2011, para. 7).

There are many principles and ideals that are perceived as effective leadership strategies and ways to implement culture into an organization throughout administrators, staff, and others close to intercollegiate athletics (Belzer, 2013; Burns, 2014; Jansen, 2013; O'Brien, 2011). Richard Baddour, former athletic director at the University of North

Carolina-Chapel Hill, focused on two principles when asked about transitioning into a new athletic director role, “Rome wasn’t built in a day” and “Something good happened before you got there”(personal communication, October 13, 2015). It can take time to make adjustments while realizing there were also productive staff members driving the organization to accomplish end goals.

Jeff Jansen (2013) discusses a variety of concepts in his article, “The 11 Attributes of Effective Athletic Directors.” One of the key attributes he emphasizes is having a vision for the program. In order for athletic directors to be effective for those around them, they need to be able to develop and communicate a vision for the program. For example, one athletic director created this vision and goal for their athletic department: “To be one of the nation’s Top 25 overall athletic programs as ranked by the Directors’ Cup, and graduate at least 75 percent of their student-athletes” (Jansen, 2013, para. 1). Although it might be challenging for the respective school, it provides those in athletics with a specific goal and vision to strive for greatness and excellence (Jansen, 2013). To further elaborate on the idea of vision, Jim Phillips, Northwestern University’s athletic director, talks about the steps he took to implement his vision into the athletic department. The key was accountability. Phillips says:

When I first got to Northwestern, within the first 3 months I had individual meetings with every single one of the more than 170 staff members in the department at the time, even our janitors and groundskeepers. I asked each of them to create a SWOT analysis of our athletics department from their prospective, as well as a one-page sheet telling me anything and everything they wanted me to know about them. I definitely received some funny looks, but it also made them realize that I cared

about what they thought from day one. Each year, I'll meet with them again and they are now required to come to me with 5 individual goals and 5 unit goals, for which they will be judged on. (Belzer, 2013, para. 7)

Phillips first showed everyone that he valued their input and perspectives which in turn enables support. Then, he created the sense of accountability by having his staff develop goals. The goals then allow everyone to focus on the vision being created within Northwestern's athletic department.

In an article discussing the success of the University of Oregon and its athletic director, Rob Mullens, two senior administrators discuss a key quality that has made Mullens successful (Burns, 2014). Lisa Petersen, senior associate athletic director and senior woman administrator, has been with Mullens for 20-plus years at different universities. Some of his top qualities she says are "maintaining a clear vision, accountability...and I always trust that he is looking at the big picture" (Burns, 2014, para. 2-3). Craig Pintens, senior associate athletic director for marketing/public relations says, "Rob has tremendous vision for where we want to go, whether it's academically, athletically or in the community. He imparts that vision and really allows people who work here to take forth that vision and make it happen" (Burns, 2014, para. 4). Mullens adds to the article by referencing this vision and culture he has created, "The thing that I'm most proud of, though, is the culture that we've been able to build here. The culture of everybody buying in. The culture of commitment. The culture of excellence" (Burns, 2014, para. 15).

With a few approaches already presented, taking a deeper look into this aspect of intercollegiate athletics will provide some insight into what athletic directors perceive to be effective strategies that help build a strong organizational culture.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study is to identify the strategies that are effective in building a strong organizational culture among athletic directors who have demonstrated administrative excellence. The athletic directors will be from NCAA Division I FBS institutions and will be determined to have demonstrated administrative excellence based on being awarded the NACDA “Under Armour AD of the Year Award” at some point in their career (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014).

Research Questions

[RQ1] - What strategies do these athletic directors perceive as being effective in building a strong organizational culture?

[RQ2] – How do these athletic directors implement these strategies within their own athletic department?

[RQ3] – What do these athletic directors do, personally, to create their own vision and proactive behavior? Do they develop certain goals? Mission statements? Values?

Hypotheses

For [RQ1] and [RQ2], it will be determined that athletic directors who have demonstrated administrative excellence will have employed specific strategies that lead to a strong organizational culture. Those strategies include: creating a mission for the athletic department, developing an organized strategic plan, establishing clear short-term and long-term objectives for the overall department and each unit within the department, and encouraging athletic staff members to create their own goals and making sure they are reaching them. For [RQ3], it will be determined that there will also be personal strategies

that these athletic directors follow: creating short-term and long-term goals, developing a mission statement, and establishing core values.

Definition of Terms

- Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) – the highest division of the NCAA.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) – a voluntary, non-profit, and membership-driven organization that is comprised of colleges and universities. It is the governing body of intercollegiate athletic competition that regulates the institutions, conferences, organizations and individuals.
- National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) – the largest association of collegiate athletics administrators that provides educational opportunities and networking experiences for those in the profession of athletic administration.
- Strategy – ideals or concepts used to achieve a common goal
- Organizational culture - a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which determines how people in the organization operate
- Vision – ability to set goals and develop a big picture perspective

Assumptions

- Athletic directors interviewed are honest in responses
- Athletic directors chosen are representative of the overall group of athletic directors who have demonstrated administrative excellence

Delimitations

- Limiting to people who have won the “Under Armour AD of the Year” award, since the award is used as the criteria for this research but does not guarantee these are the only athletic directors who demonstrate administrative excellence
- Limiting to a sample of six people
- Limiting to athletic directors within the “Power 5”

Limitations

- Might not be representative of all athletic directors in intercollegiate athletics

Significance of Study

With intercollegiate athletics constantly changing, it is important that NCAA Division I athletic directors find a vision and culture unique to them, and find ways to inspire those around them to support it. There has been research done with athletic department staff and coaches providing information on the effectiveness of athletic directors, and also research done with athletic directors, athletic department staff and coaches providing information on effective leadership styles (Andrew, Kim, Todd, & Stoll, 2011; Burton & Peachey, 2009; Doherty, 1997; Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996; Kent & Chelladurai, 2001; Kim, Magnusen, Andrew, & Stoll, 2012). However, perspective is lacking from the athletic director’s/practitioner’s point of view. This study aims to identify the perceived effective strategies that athletic directors are using to implement a strong organizational culture and vision within their athletic departments, from their own perspective. The findings in this study will help other athletic directors and administrators develop strategies to implement their athletic department culture or be effective leaders who will develop and maintain a productive organizational culture.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership in Intercollegiate Athletics

In order to understand and assess the culture within an athletic department, the leadership must be examined. Doherty (1997) states, "Leadership is considered a significant determinant of managerial effectiveness in any organizational context" (p. 275). While many different leaders – university presidents, athletic directors, coaches, boosters, etc. - might emerge throughout an athletic department, the athletic directors have been designated as the formal leaders. Schroeder (2010) explained, "those with leadership are capable of negotiating and managing the cultural balance between the institution, department, and external environment," and it is the responsibility of these athletic directors in leadership to determine the athletic department culture (p. 105).

The abilities of these athletic directors to lead are evaluated based on different leadership styles. Although there are many leadership theories that exist, when it comes to research within sport, there have been decades of research done surrounding the ideas of transformational and transactional leadership and its relationship to the organizational culture (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Kim, Magnusen, Andrew, & Stoll, 2012). J. M. Burns was "the first scholar to conceptualize transformational and transactional leadership" (Burton & Peachey, 2009, p. 246). Burns (1978) defines transformational leadership as a process in which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (p. 20). According to Burns' view, leaders with transformational qualities provide a

purpose that recognizes follower's needs over short-term goals (Burton & Peachey, 2009), which causes the followers to recognize the needs of the leader, as well (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). On the other side, transactional leadership is seen as an exchange of resources where leaders give something in return for achieving their desires (Burton & Peachey, 2009; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987), which offers more of a "cause and effect" perspective (Sinclair, Harper, & Segrave, 2014, p. 34).

Transformational leaders, which is considered the new leadership approach (Bryman, 1992), influence those working for the leader to accept the vision of the organization, exhaust more effort for the sake of higher needs, and exceed performance expectations (Doherty, 1997). As Hickman (1997) describes it, transformational leadership can "create and sustain a context for building human capacity by identifying and developing core values and unifying purpose, liberating human potential and generating increased capacity, developing leadership and effective followership, utilizing interaction-focused organizational design, and building interconnectedness" (p. 2).

From there, Bass (1985) developed his behavioral model of transformational and transactional leadership theory based on the initial conceptualization of Burns (Doherty, 1997). Bass (1985) identified transformational leadership into four characteristics: 1) individualized consideration, 2) intellectual stimulation, 3) inspirational leadership, and 4) idealized influence. *Individualized consideration* refers to treating each member of the organization based on their own needs and abilities; *intellectual stimulation* is understood as a leader's ability to promote intelligence and encourage members of the organization to stretch their limits of thinking; *inspirational leadership* describes a leader's ability to convey expectations and create a common purpose; *idealized influence* is where the

followers believe and trust the vision that the leader promotes (Bass, 1985; Burton & Peachey, 2009; Doherty, 1997; Kim, Magnusen, Andrew, & Stoll, 2012). There have been changes to these characteristics over time, based on insufficient evidence that there is a significant distinction between the last two components, thus increasingly creating a single *charismatic leadership* characteristic instead (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Choi, Sagas, Park, & Cunningham, 2007; Kent & Chelladurai, 2001).

Throughout the past, many researchers have explained what they believe to be the most effective characteristics and styles of leadership. It seems that leaders can fall into categories of transformational or transactional leaders, or they might even exhibit qualities from both styles. This background provides a great understanding of how others perceive that athletic directors manage and create a culture within their athletic departments. However, it seems that an important voice could add great value to this conversation. If the most effective strategies are going to be discussed, why not ask the leaders themselves? The athletic directors can add a new, unique perspective on what they believe to be the most effective strategies in creating a strong organizational culture.

Leadership Studies in Intercollegiate Athletics

While only a handful of sport-based studies that have been done to examine the effectiveness of athletic directors and their transformational leadership styles in relation to organizational commitment, there are some common themes among the studies that have been conducted. Some of these studies have included Division III athletic directors, lower level administrators, athletic department staff, and even coaches (Andrew, Kim, Todd, & Stoll, 2011; Burton & Peachey, 2009; Doherty, 1997; Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996; Kent &

Chelladurai, 2001; Kim, Magnusen, Andrew, & Stoll, 2012). However, most studies examine this idea from the subordinates' view of leadership style effecting the organization.

When athletic directors were included in the studies of transformational leadership, NCAA Division III athletic directors were used. They were given multiple vignettes of other athletic directors exhibiting qualities of transformational leadership versus transactional leadership, those that exhibited transformational leadership were preferred and favored in areas of "satisfaction with the leader" and "extra effort stimulated by the leader" (Burton & Peachey, 2009, p. 253), which was consistent with other research in sport management (Choi, Sagas, Park, & Cunningham, 2007; Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996). However, unlike previous findings in sport management, "transformational leadership was not evaluated more favorably than transactional leadership on leader effectiveness," and perhaps could be viewed as equally favorable in achieving positive organizational outcomes in intercollegiate athletics (Burton & Peachey, 2009).

In studies done with other athletic administrators and athletic department staff, transformational leadership improved the commitment of the overall organization and leader. When Kent and Chelladurai (2001), studied third-tier employees, which were below middle management, they found that charismatic leadership "had almost an exclusive influence on member's organizational commitment" (Kent & Chelladurai, 2001, p. 152). Members of the athletic department generated the faith and respect for the athletic director, the representative of the entire organization, which were related to organizational commitment (Kent & Chelladurai, 2001). These findings were similar with Andrew, Kim, Todd, and Stoll (2011) who studied the transformational leadership's impact on the employees' job satisfaction and level of commitment. Even though the leadership style did

improve the organization, there was a stronger impact on commitment to the athletic director (Andrew, Kim, Todd, & Stoll, 2011). Kim, Magnusen, Andrew, and Stoll (2012) also found that transformational leadership impacted commitment to both the athletic director and athletic department. When using the different characteristics of transformational leadership – individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charismatic leadership – all had a significant effect on sports’ employees commitment toward their athletic director. As for the significant effect on commitment to the athletic department, all but one – charismatic leadership – influenced the employees. If the charismatic leader is too pronounced, employees could become dependent upon the leader and lose sight of the overarching goals of the department (Kim, Magnusen, Andrew, & Stoll, 2012).

Coaches have also been included in the studies of transformational leadership. Ontario university coaches were asked to rate the abilities of their athletic directors and assistant athletic directors on the effects of various leader characteristics and behavior (Doherty, 1997; Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996). They described their athletic administrators to predominantly maintain profiles of transformational leaders. There were found to be strong, positive relationships between transformational leadership of administrators and perception of effectiveness by the coaches, particularly in the areas of individualized consideration and charisma (Doherty, 1997; Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996).

These studies reveal that transformational leadership can be effective in establishing a strong, positive organization. The employees that are subordinate to the leader often commit to the leader and the organization based on a transformational leadership style and characteristics. This research is important to provide a framework

when determining what the athletic directors themselves will perceive to be effective in creating a strong organizational commitment and culture.

Organizational Culture in Intercollegiate Athletics

As intercollegiate athletic departments are becoming more and more diverse due to the differences among administrators, staff and coaches, there is one common core that points them back to the mission and values. The organizational culture aligns each entity towards the common organizational goal presented by the leaders of the department (Southall, Wells, & Nagel, 2005).

Organizational culture was basically defined by Schein (1996) as, “the set of shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments” (p. 236). Okumus (2003) defined it as, “the shared understanding of employees about how they do things within an organization” (p. 876). The organizational culture could even be characterized as having a multi-layered concept with both external and internal elements (Rousseau, 1990). While there are many ways to define what the organizational culture actually is, it is still commonly accepted that the development of the organizational culture is created and influenced by the leader, and further, development of leaders is impacted by the culture of the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Burton & Peachey, 2014; Schein, 1992; Schein, 2004).

Before the organizational culture in athletic departments can be developed, it is important to examine how these principles pertained first to higher education in general. The culture within American higher education is distinctively structured, revealing differences from all similar organizations in the world (Duderstadt, 2000; Schroeder,

2010). Many different frameworks have been constructed over time to form five main features that help define the American university culture: accounting of the institutional history; internal environment; subcultures created by students, faculty and staff; entities in the external environment; and leadership. *Accounting of the institutional history* refers to the background of the university and how it has developed over time to lay the foundation for many values. The *internal environment* is made up of the mission of the university and the academic program as a product of that mission. The various *subcultures* have the ability to enhance, change or hurt the overall culture. Numerous *external environments*, like alumni, accreditation bodies and media outlets, can ultimately change the principles that make up the university. The *leadership* of the university can affect those mentioned before or be an effect of the culture (Berquist, 1992; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Rhoads & Tierney, 1992; Schroeder, 2010; Tierney, 1988; Tierney, 2008). While all of these ideas provide a good foundation for culture in higher education, it is difficult to present these all as fact for the intercollegiate athletic department model that is unique in nature and structure.

In order to define the varying organizational cultures of athletic departments across the country, there have been a few essential concepts discussed among the little research that has been done. The elements, such as institutional culture, external environment, internal environment, and leadership and power, and the interaction of these elements will help form a unique athletic department culture (Schroeder, 2010). First, the *institutional culture* is developed by its mission, academic and admission standards, institutional control, national organization, and conference affiliation, all of which provides cultural parameters for the athletic department (Robles, 2009; Schroeder, 2010; Ward & Hux, 2008). Second, the *external environment* is another building block for the athletic

department culture. Stakeholders, such as fans and boosters, post-season organizations and professional leagues, can alter the values along with the large amounts of media coverage, which provides financial rewards to top performers (Duderstadt, 2000; Noll, 2004; Schroeder, 2010). Governing bodies, like the NCAA and conferences, are other external factors that constrain the cultures (Southall, Wells, & Nagel, 2005; Southall & Nagel, 2003). Third, the history, mission and subculture that derive from the institutional culture mold the athletic department culture as *internal environmental* factors. Institutions with successful athletic traditions and histories can influence a great deal (Schroeder, 2010). Fourth, the leadership and power of the athletic department has the ability to manipulate and manage each of the previous items individually, and then how the elements interact. Fifth, and finally, as these elements interact, they produce tension among staff members with differing personal values, the institution and external pull in other directions and a leader to manage the change throughout it all. In the end, there is the development of a unique athletic department culture to drive the organization (Schroeder, 2010).

In reviewing the organizational culture regarding the vision and culture of the athletic directors, there are some specific characteristics that can be used for each based on past studies. For culture, influence of the leader can be seen in employees who work in organization. Also, the culture impacts commitment, performance, and productivity. Finally, it provides a revision of shared assumptions and values. Then, in terms of the athletic director's vision, the followers' frame of reference or thinking is changed so that they see new opportunities that were not noticed before. Also, followers are inspired to

reach their potential in the context of the work that needs to be done to achieve the organization's vision and mission (Givens, 2008).

When it comes to intercollegiate athletics, Bailey (2007) determined that "taking the pulse of an organizational culture within athletics is a good way to track culture development over time and use it to meet the external demands of an athletics environment and develop into a championship culture" (p. 116).

The research discussed above represents the perspectives of different levels of administrators and coaches on the leadership of athletic directors, along with the organizational culture in intercollegiate athletics. The future research will connect these ideas with the actual perceptions of the athletic directors, themselves, and provide a unique viewpoint into what strategies are perceived to be effective in building a strong organizational culture.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to identify the strategies that are effective in building a strong organizational culture among Athletic Directors who have demonstrated administrative excellence. This chapter will outline the methods used to conduct this study.

Subjects

The target population for this study was NCAA Division I FBS athletic directors who have demonstrated administrative excellence in their roles as leaders of an organization. More specifically, the athletic directors were determined to have demonstrated administrative excellence based on being awarded the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics' "Under Armour AD of the Year Award" at least once during their career as an athletic director. The award is in its 18th year and "recognizes athletic directors who have shown administrative excellence with the campus and/or college community for the current academic year" (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014). In order to be eligible for the award, the athletic director must be nominated by another NACDA-member athletic director, college or university president, or conference commissioner and meet the following criteria:

- Be a NACDA member.
- Have served as an athletics director for a minimum of five (5) consecutive academic years (July 1-June 30).

- Be employed in a full-time capacity as the director of athletics (not as an associate, assistant or senior woman administrator) at the institution listed at the time of nomination.
- Demonstrate a commitment to higher education and student-athletes.
- Demonstrate continuous teamwork, loyalty and excellence.
- Demonstrate a commitment to continuing education for the athletics administrative staff.
- Demonstrate the ability to inspire individuals or groups to high levels of accomplishment.
- Demonstrate leadership and/or significant outreach for the betterment of youth and/or the local community.
- Show leadership on the regional and/or national levels through serving on (1) NACDA committees; (2) NCAA, NAIA or junior/community college committees; (3) other athletics committees (NACWAA, USOC, AAU, etc.).
- Have received previous awards for administrative excellence.
- If a nominated athletics director's institution is on probation, he/she is not eligible for the ADOY award until the institution is removed from the appropriate governing bodies' probation.
- Any director of athletics who meets all other criteria for the award and who has inherited a program currently on probation or is under review for probation (or lack of institutional control), is eligible to receive the award, as long as no other significant violations have occurred since his/her arrival that contribute(d) to the aforementioned (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014).

Award winners are chosen by a selection committee, and athletic directors who meet the above criteria may only win the award once in three years (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014).

A group of thirty-six athletic directors were determined to have won the award within the past ten years. Sixteen athletic directors were chosen randomly and contacted via email to request participation in this study. After ten business days, a follow-up email was sent to request further participation. A total of six athletic directors responded and participated in the study.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study was conducted using interview research. The process of using an interview involved facilitating a conversation with a subject in order to obtain information needed for this research. The reason this design was used was to produce unique, detailed qualitative data based on individual experiences and gain a better understanding in this area. The interviews were done in-person or over the phone, if the subject was not easily accessible. Each interview was confirmed with meeting place and/or call time to ensure successful completion of the interview. The interviews were semi-structured with six questions guiding the conversation based on the study's research questions.

Prior to the interviews questions being asked, each interview began with an introduction, brief description of the study, and obtaining verbal consent from the participant. Then, based on the review of literature, the following questions were developed and asked:

- 1) What strategies do you perceive as being effective in building a strong organizational culture in intercollegiate athletics?
- 2) How have you implemented these strategies within your own athletic department?
- 3) Can you define the culture within your athletic department?
- 4) What are the challenges you face in trying to create these types of environments?
- 5) How would you define an effective athletic director?
- 6) What do you do, personally, to create your own vision and proactive behavior?
Do you develop certain goals? Mission statements? Values?

There were also follow-up questions asked, which were dependent upon each interviewee's responses to the questions above. Each interview was different based on the differences of the subject and method of interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for future data analysis.

Data Analysis

After interviewing each subject, a profile was created based on background information provided in the interview. The profiles consisted of their current employment and athletic career history. In order to examine the data collected from each interview, the interview was transcribed from the recording and notes taken during the interview. Each interview was validated with member-checking, as it was sent back to the interviewee for review. The transcribed interviews were then analyzed using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis and research software. The analysis of the interviews involved creating memos, and then codes, throughout each individual interview. Then, using the codes that were found in each interview, all interviews were compared to explore for commonalities. Those

commonalities were used to identify specific themes and trends present among the responses of the six subjects. Once those themes were developed, they were used to construct and organize findings and draw conclusions about the data, which is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify the strategies that are effective in building a strong organizational culture among Athletic Directors who have demonstrated administrative excellence. In addition, it was important to learn what athletic directors do, personally, to create their proactive behavior and leadership. The study was comprised of six individuals and used qualitative research based on semi-structured interviews to identify these strategies, determine how they implement them at their respective institutions, and learn about the personal development of each leader. The findings from the interviews are presented in this chapter beginning with background information on each participant. The rest of this chapter is divided up by the key themes and trends of effective strategies and personal development learned through the coding of the interview transcripts. The themes listed will serve as primary findings that will answer the study's three research questions. Then, in chapter 5, an in-depth discussion of the findings and conclusions from this research will be provided.

Participant Background Information

For this study, thirty-six individuals met the initial requirements. Of those thirty-six, sixteen were contacted for participation. Six participants responded to participate, with one in-person interview and five phone interviews. Therefore, the response rate was 37.5%. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all six individuals providing unique responses and stories for the study. Each participant gave verbal consent to use

their background and responses in the study. Therefore, below are the backgrounds of each participant, in alphabetical order by last name. Most of the information provided was shared during the actual interviews, however, some additional research was done to enhance the personal information. See Table 1 for a summary of participant information.

Kathy Beauregard

Kathy Beauregard (“Beauregard”) is the athletic director at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. After a unique career serving in athletics at Western Michigan for the past thirty-six years, she has spent the last nineteen years as the athletic director. She holds the longest tenure as athletic director in the Mid-American Conference and is one of eight female athletic directors in the FBS. Her athletic career started as the Western Michigan gymnastics coach, a position created due to a Title IX lawsuit, following graduation from college. While coaching some of her former teammates, she turned it into a championship program and led the team for nine years. Then, she moved into athletic administration for the university and served for nine years as a senior associate athletic director. Upon departure of Western Michigan’s former athletic director, Beauregard was offered the head position, without a job search, leading her to be the athletic director of the Broncos. Over the course of her career, Beauregard has served on multiple NCAA committees, in addition to her athletic director duties. She currently serves on the NCAA Diversity and Inclusion Committee and has represented her institution as a member of the NCAA Championships Cabinet and NCAA Football Bowl Certification Committee, as well as serving as the chair of the NCAA Olympic Sports Liaison Committee for two years. She has received various awards throughout her career and seen great success within her athletic department under her leadership (Kathy Beauregard - Staff Directory, 2016).

A key aspect of the inclusion criteria for this study is that participants must have won the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics' "Under Armour AD of the Year Award" at least once during their career as an athletic director. Beauregard won this award as the athletic director of Western Michigan following the 2010-2011 school year (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014). The interview with Beauregard was conducted on March 3, 2016.

Morgan Burke

Morgan Burke ("Burke") is the vice president and athletic director at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. His athletic career began as a student-athlete competing in the pool for the Boilermakers, although he claims he was a better student than a swimmer. After completing two degrees from Purdue and getting a law degree from John Marshall Law School in Chicago, Burke had a successful career with Inland Steel Co. climbing the ladder very quickly. While the transition from vice president of his steel company to athletic director was "happenstance", he has been in leadership at Purdue for twenty-two years, and is set to retire in July 2017 after a long, successful career. The challenges and new opportunities of athletics are what have kept him there, along with the Purdue being his alma mater. During his tenure, Burke has served as the past president of the Division 1A Athletic Directors Association and a member of the NCAA Leadership Council (Morgan Burke - Staff Directory, 2016).

Burke received the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics' "Under Armour AD of the Year Award" following the 2009-2010 year (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014). The interview with Burke was conducted over the phone on February 25, 2016.

Bubba Cunningham

Bubba Cunningham (“Cunningham”) currently serves as the athletic director of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (“UNC”) in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. With a career in athletics lasting almost twenty years, Cunningham has been at UNC since 2011. Cunningham is in his tenth year as a Division I athletic director, with prior stops as athletic director at Tulsa University for six years and Ball State University for three years. Before his time at Ball State, Cunningham worked in athletics at Notre Dame from 1988-2002 and spent the latter half of that term as an associate athletics director. He graduated from Notre Dame and was a member of the golf team for one year. During his time as an athletic director at UNC, Cunningham has served on the NCAA Division I Men’s Golf Committee, is a member of NACDA’s Executive Committee, and been on various boards (Bubba Cunningham - Staff Directory, 2016).

Cunningham was awarded the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics’ “Under Armour AD of the Year Award” during his time as athletic director of Tulsa following the 2008-2009 academic year (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014). The interview with Cunningham was conducted in-person on February 10, 2016.

John Currie

John Currie (“Currie”) is the athletic director at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas. He has been in this current role since 2009. During his short time there, the athletic department has experienced many athletic and academics accomplishments due to his leadership. He has served as chair of the Big 12 AD’s and been a member of the NCAA Division I Administrative cabinet. He has also been named to SportsBusiness Journal’s 2011 prestigious Forty Under 40 list of national sports leaders, which only one

other intercollegiate athletic directors have been named to. Currie has been in athletics since 1993 when he started in athletic development at Wake Forest University. Over the course of his career, he moved back and forth between Wake Forest and the University of Tennessee multiple times before serving as Executive Associate Athletics Director at Tennessee prior to being named athletic director at Kansas State (John Currie - Staff Directory, 2016).

Currie was named the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics' "Under Armour AD of the Year Award" winner for 2012-2013 (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014). Currie's interview was conducted over the phone on February 22, 2016.

Ian McCaw

Ian McCaw ("McCaw") currently serves as the athletic director at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. His athletic career started as a sport management graduate student from the University of Massachusetts–Amherst. Upon graduation, McCaw received his first athletics job at the University of Maine, where he spent five years. Then, he went to Tulane University as a senior associate athletic director for five years and even acted as co-interim athletic director for some time during that span. From there, he received his first job as athletic director at Northeastern University from 1997-2002. Then he went back to the University of Massachusetts to be their athletic director from 2002-2003. In 2003, he was named the athletic director at Baylor and has been there for thirteen years. With extraordinary success in academics, athletics and administration at Baylor, McCaw has also served in various capacities in intercollegiate athletics. He is currently on the Division IA Athletics Director Association Board of Trustees, is a member of the Big 12 television and

game management and officiating committees, and previously has served as chair of the NCAA Recruiting and Personnel Issues Cabinet and on the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics Executive Committee (Ian McCaw - Staff Directory, 2016).

McCaw was awarded the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics' "Under Armour AD of the Year Award" twice in his career, following the 2011-2012 and 2014-2015 years (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014). The interview with McCaw was conducted over the phone on February 26, 2016.

Michael O'Brien

Michael O'Brien ("O'Brien") is the current vice president and athletic director at the University of Toledo in Toledo, Ohio. O'Brien started tenure as athletic director at Toledo in 2002 and has spent fourteen years shaping the athletic program into one of the best in the Mid-American Conference. O'Brien has been a builder in all aspects of facilities, athletic success, and academic achievement. In addition to those duties, O'Brien is a member of the NCAA Division I Council working on the Competition Oversight Committee, chairs the MAC Football Coaches Committee, and has previously served as the chair of the Mid-American Conference Athletic Director's Committee and was a member of the NCAA Division I Football Issues Committee. His athletic career started as a basketball coach but ultimately moved into administration for professional development. His first job was at Ball State University for three years. Then, O'Brien went to the University of Pittsburgh as director of development for four years. He took his first athletic director job at Lamar University for four years before going to Kansas State as a senior associate athletic director. From there, O'Brien started his second stint as an athletic director at Toledo where he currently holds

the second longest tenure among MAC athletic directors (Michael O'Brien - Staff Directory, 2016).

O'Brien won the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics' "Under Armour AD of the Year Award" for the 2011-2012 year (Under Armour AD of the Year Award, 2014). The interview with O'Brien was conducted over the phone on February 3, 2016.

Table 1
Participant Information

Participant	College	Conference	Years as AD	Award Year(s)
Kathy Beauregard	Western Michigan University	Mid-American Conference	19	2010-2011
Morgan Burke	Purdue University	Big Ten Conference	22	2009-2010
Bubba Cunningham	University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill	Atlantic Coast Conference	13	2008-2009*
John Currie	Kansas State University	Big 12 Conference	7	2012-2013
Ian McCaw	Baylor University	Big 12 Conference	18	2011-2012, 2014-2015
Michael O'Brien	University of Toledo	Mid-American Conference	18	2011-2012

**Athletic Director, University of Tulsa*

Effective Strategies

For the purpose of this study, "effective strategies" will refer to the perceived strategies that are effective in building a strong organizational culture that were most discussed throughout each of the interviews. Each effective strategy is summarized below.

See Table 2 for a complete summary of the findings where n =the number of participants that discussed that specific strategy in their interview.

Table 2
Effective Strategies

Strategies	%	n
Developing Staff	100.0%	6
Enhancing the University and Community	100.0%	6
Setting Goals and Objectives	83.3%	5
Communicating Effectively	66.7%	4
Implementing Code of Conduct	33.3%	2
Developing Personal Philosophy	16.7%	1

Developing Staff

One of the most prominent strategies effective in building a strong organizational culture in athletics is developing the staff and those working in the athletic department. It was the one strategy that was consistent across all participants in some way ($n=6$, 100%). From hiring, enabling, delegating, aligning, supporting or training, the staff is one of the primary areas that helps create the culture and establish it at each individual institution, starting with the athletic director.

Beauregard immediately discusses the idea of surrounding yourself with good people, especially those with stronger talents than the athletic director. The senior leadership at Western Michigan has been together for over twenty years, making for a very

unique situation that fosters the culture they believe in. When Beauregard is hiring, she does not use search firms, since she knows best what their culture is like and hires with those values in mind.

Burke focuses on getting to know people and spending a lot of face time with them, early on. He recognized that people want to talk and share things that are important to them regarding athletics or academics. The staff must be engaged in what you are trying to accomplish and so it takes time to get staff alignment. Getting the people on board is key, but once you have that, you can achieve the goals of the organization.

Cunningham started immediately developing and involving the staff when he took the position as athletic director. The entire department was surveyed to gauge the issues, challenges and successes of the athletic department, and almost 100% responded. Staff members were prideful and loyal to the department. Each year, these characteristics of the staff, including consistency, customer service and focus, are measured to ensure the culture is where it should be. In addition, an onboarding process has been instituted to ensure new employees and hires understand the values and mission of the athletic department.

Currie discussed starting from the inside out and making sure the culture is unified by meeting once a month as an entire department. The staff must be ambassadors for the department out in the community. This is done by intentionally getting the organization together and walking around interacting with those in the department. When it comes down to it, 50% of Currie's time is spent with relationship development, and that includes his staff.

McCaw's top priorities involve developing the staff through leadership training, professional development and team building. There is also a personnel plan that fits with

the departmental culture and the things they are trying to accomplish. From leadership training segments for the senior staff once a week to professional development once a month to community service as a whole, the staff is being developed to strengthen the culture. Then, incoming personnel is hired based on three C's – character, competency, and chemistry. Staff is a priority for building the organization's culture.

O'Brien is another firm believer in surrounding himself with a great staff and encouraging teamwork to develop the athletic department culture. From the beginning, the executive team and other staff met with O'Brien to discuss the current state. From there, the culture can be created by focusing on having the right personnel and getting buy-in by locking arms to improve athletics at Toledo. O'Brien understands it is not a one person show.

Communicating Effectively

Communication is another effective strategy in building the organizational culture, whether it is communicating with the staff, university or community ($n=4$, 66.7%).

To Beauregard, communication must be intact and strategized in all areas of the athletic department, university and community. It's important to keep everyone's goals and objectives at the forefront of what the department is doing. Through that communication piece, it also helps the athletic directors be aligned with the president and university.

Burke communicates through letters to the president and university at large regarding athletic department achievements and plans for the upcoming year to keep everyone informed regarding the current objectives.

Currie lists that communication is among five basic priorities for each day, but emphasizes that communication is THE most important thing he is doing daily. It is a part

of making every other aspect effective. This is achieved by daily news releases to the public and even letters from the desk of the athletic director often, sometimes weekly, although there is not a set schedule. The desire is for all of the staff to be able to effectively communicate about Kansas State athletics. Currie also spent his first 60 days on campus meeting in every dean's office, the chief of police office and in coaches' offices to foster the communication between athletics and the university.

At Baylor, McCaw will use the weekly and monthly staff meetings to disseminate information and revisit the department's core values to ensure that all are aware of what's happening. Communication skills are essential for his role in leading the athletic department.

Setting Goals and Objectives

Another effective strategy is implementing goals, annual objectives, and/or strategic plans in an athletic department to build the organizational culture ($n=5$, 83.3%).

In order for Burke's athletic department to get where they want to be, they must define the goals they hope to reach. Annual objectives, that are much more metric driven, are set every year to assist in reaching those goals as an athletic department. There must be measurements like rolling three-year plans that are put together for the different areas within the organization, and they are created by the staff, not Burke. There are also performance reviews for each employee which enables them to set objectives for the year to come and then re-assess throughout to make sure they are accomplishing those objectives. For Burke, it is as simple as PDCA – plan, do, check and act.

Shortly after Cunningham arrived to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a team was put together to organize a strategic plan that would guide the organization.

With the responses from the rest of the staff about the state of the department, the strategic plan was implemented because it allowed the athletic department to “Verbalize your mission, your vision, your values, and then allocate your resources based on that set of criteria you’ve developed” (Cunningham, 2016). Once in place, the department could work against the plan and measure the departmental culture to ensure that they continue to move forward, even though they are already very good.

Currie notes that their strategic plan boils down to the vision and five core goals of the athletic department. While they do have a strategic plan, the emphasis is on their vision of “being a model intercollegiate athletic program” and those objectives are listed on a small pocket-budget card to be carried around by each athletic department member.

Upon McCaw’s arrival at Baylor, a strategic plan was formulated and a vision was developed for the direction of athletics. Within that plan are five over-arching goals and then action plans under each for the department to focus on. Each time there is a staff meeting, those goals and values are discussed to make sure they permeate the department and act as guide to move forward, which McCaw describes that Baylor has been very effective in doing that.

O’Brien set specific goals for different areas within the department from fundraising to marketing to ticket sales when he started. Over the course of time, goals have been set that fall under the threefold culture of academics, social and competition. Those items are often mentioned by O’Brien, even to prospective student-athletes and employees, to reiterate the organizational culture.

Enhancing the University and Community

In trying to implement a strong organizational culture, these athletic directors ($n=6$, 100%) found that a strategy that is effective is enhancing the university and community around them.

Beauregard prioritizes the university and community in shaping and implementing Western Michigan's departmental culture. With relationships and support of the presidents over the course of her career as athletic director, there is an understanding that athletics is the front porch of the university. For the past twenty years, one of their primary events each year is "CommUniverCity," an event for the community and university, along with the first home football game, that hosts 15,000 people. The entire athletic department is committed to the community and community service.

Student-athletes under Burke have really gotten involved with community service and have begun organizing inclusive large activities. For instance, on Martin Luther King day the student-athlete council arranged community service activities for all teams.

Cunningham is a firm believer that athletics is designed to enhance the university's education profile. Athletics should play a role in building a sense of community and pride, but it is not the most important thing to the university. Instilling that in the rest of the department and campus helps defines the culture and direction of the athletic organization.

Currie prioritizes enhancing and communicating with all of their constituents – campus, community and state. When any member of their athletic staff is out in the community, each is recognized as the face of "K-State" athletics. The community is engaged through Currie's daily news reports and letters. Another aspect of college athletics is that it tends to silo itself from the university or community. Currie saw the importance of

integrating the athletic department into campus, and the football coach has been a leader in this by hosting a dean of the school on each one of his coach's shows over the past twenty-five years. There needs to be an importance on engaging academic staff and the community members to enhance the culture within athletics, the university, and community.

While McCaw is focusing on creating his culture, he makes sure to involve community service for all of the staff and student-athletes. This in turn goes back to developing his staff and focusing on their values as a department.

O'Brien wants to emphasize the quality of people that the University of Toledo has by making his staff visible in the community, regionally and nationally. It is these people that help generate the culture and enhance the community around them. The image is also key and that everyone sees the athletic department involved on campus. It is a partnership between athletics and the university.

Other Effective Strategies

While the strategies listed above were common amongst most of the participants in the study, there were additional strategies shared by some that are perceived to be effective in building a strong organizational culture.

Beauregard and Burke talk of implementing a student code of conduct at their respective university as a strategy that has been effective in shaping their athletic department. Beauregard says that student-athletes and staff members in the athletic department understand there are rules to follow. Twenty years ago, they were one of the first ones to place a staff member in charge of enforcing their stringent code of conduct to make sure all were treated equally and fairly. It is an educational process that they stick to. Under Burke's leadership, the student-athletes created their own code of conduct that they

could be proud of and use to hold each other accountable. They want to do something right the first time. A positive code of conduct was developed and the upperclassmen work to educate the incoming freshmen. There is pride that enhances the culture of athletics at Purdue.

Cunningham believes the most important thing in building an effective culture is being consistent with the philosophy that is personal to the athletic director. His philosophy, values and personal mission, which he developed early on when deciding to become an athletic director, are things that will always dictate the leadership and culture of how the athletic department will operate.

Personal Development

For the purpose of this study, “personal development” will refer to the different things each participant does to create their own proactive behavior and leadership in athletics as discussed throughout each of the interviews. Each personal development item is summarized below. See Table 3 for a complete summary of the findings where *n*=the number of participants that discussed that specific personal development behavior in their interview.

Table 3

Personal Development

Item	%	<i>n</i>
People Skills	100.0%	6
Continual Learning	66.7%	4
Personal Mission and Goals	66.7%	4

People Skills

In an effort to continually develop, personally, these athletic directors ($n=6$, 100%) put a strong emphasis on people skills. Beauregard has an open door policy within her department and also spends time attending practices and games, talking to coaches and listening to student-athletes. She says, “you learn a lot that way by doing it” (Beauregard, 2016). Burke prides himself on getting to know as many student-athletes and staff members as he can, while also attending practices almost every afternoon around the same time. Feeling that he is approachable is important and showing that he cares about the individual. Cunningham spent time observing others, during the early years of his career, to determine his own leadership style and philosophy. Currie explains that he was blessed to work for high integrity people throughout his career, which has lead to his growth. He focused on supporting those around him, and now his goal is to make the president’s life better. McCaw tries to “Spend a good amount of time networking with colleagues” because “you can certainly learn a lot from each of them” (McCaw, 2016). O’Brien has developed from having mentors and creating the mindset within the department to focus on teamwork. Locking arms with the team around you is important and also learning to be cohesive across campus.

Continual Learning

Another way to develop personally and professionally is to continually learn in different areas ($n=4$, 66.7%). Beauregard shares that she takes part in the professional development within the business by attending NACDA and serving on committees and councils for the NCAA. Uniquely, she focuses primarily on interactive learning and communication. She spends time studying press conferences from the corporate world,

while also reviewing and learning from her own speeches and interviews. Burke states, “You can never stop learning. You’ve got to read” (Burke, 2016). While he does not put a set standard for how much he reads, it is the continual desire to learn that is essential. For Cunningham, reading is something that he has developed to do over time as a way to learn and grow, although he was not much of a reader when he graduated from college. McCaw is a big believer in reading leadership books as a way to grow and challenge himself, professionally. In addition to that, he also tries to continually learn by attending professional development opportunities, like NACDA, to make sure he is exposing himself to “Understand the cutting edge from a professional standpoint” (McCaw, 2016).

Personal Mission and Goals

For some, continuing to develop professionally and personally means developing a personal mission and/or goals ($n=4$, 66.7%). Cunningham spent time observing the people he worked with in athletics and considering his leadership style to determine a philosophy that fit him, personally, which is a value-based philosophy. He says, “I value education. I value athletic opportunities. There are a million ways to get there, but I do not deviate off those fundamental values” (Cunningham, 2016). Along with his philosophy, he made a list of goals in 1995 of things he wanted to participate in and spectate every ten years until he was sixty-five years old. It is shocking to him how many have come to fruition. He also does annual plans for himself and family. Currie has grown by focusing on the immediate job at hand and being sequential in his goals. To him, the next step was the main emphasis. McCaw has a personal mission statement for himself, which is something that he holds himself to. Along with that, he created a “Statement of roles and goals” to categorize all aspects of his life (McCaw, 2016). With that in mind, he has set objectives that will

continually move him in a positive direction. O'Brien looks back on how his parents treated others with respect to develop his own personal philosophy, "You treat people how you want to be treated" (O'Brien D. , 2011).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In order to gain a better understanding of the effective strategies in building a strong organizational culture in intercollegiate athletics, the interviews were done to gather unique perceptions and information from the six participants that could not be gathered otherwise from previous research. Ultimately, the data and findings from the interviews were used to answer the research questions and accomplish the purpose of this study. To reiterate, the research questions are as follows:

[RQ1] - What strategies do these athletic directors perceive as being effective in building a strong organizational culture?

[RQ2] - How do these athletic directors implement these strategies within their own athletic department?

[RQ3] - What do these athletic directors do, personally, to create their own vision and proactive behavior? Do they develop certain goals? Mission statements? Values?

This chapter will be used to build on the key findings, presented in the previous chapter, and assist in further answering the research questions listed above by discussing further details from the interviews along with the literature reviewed in chapter 2.

Effective Strategies

Before getting into the specific strategies, a brief review of the leadership theories and past athletic organizational culture foundation are important to discuss in order to determine how these strategies relate to the past research. As the leaders of the

organizations shared their perspectives on how they implement their culture, they clearly have influence in dictating the direction it will go. It is commonly accepted that the organizational culture is created and influenced by the leader (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Burton & Peachey, 2014; Schein, 1992; Schein, 2004). These leaders can fall under two types of leadership discussed earlier, transformational and transactional, or even be a combination. Regardless, this is generally how others will perceive the athletic director and act as a result. The transformational leaders will raise those members around them, and vice-versa, to “higher levels of morality and motivation” (Burns J. M., 1978, p. 20). Leaders recognize the needs of their staff over short-term goals, which causes the staff to accept the leader’s vision and perform beyond expectation, thus creating a strong culture (Burton & Peachey, 2009; Doherty, 1997; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). On the other hand, transactional leadership offers a cause and effect perspective whereas the leaders are seen as exchanging resources in return for achieving the desires of the staff (Burton & Peachey, 2009; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987; Sinclair, Harper, & Segrave, 2014). Both types have proven to be effective in prior sport research in different areas of satisfaction with the leader, effort stimulated by the leader, leader effectiveness and achieving positive organizational outcomes when it comes to the athletic organization (Burton & Peachey, 2009; Choi, Sagas, Park, & Cunningham, 2007; Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996). The athletic directors in this study determined that in order to implement their culture, they had to develop their staff, communicate effectively, set goals and objectives, and enhance the university and community through their leadership.

As organizational culture varies across many athletic departments, there are a few essential concepts that explain how these cultures are developed. Institutional culture is

created by the mission, standards, control and affiliations of the university to set parameters (Robles, 2009; Schroeder, 2010; Ward & Hux, 2008). The stakeholders, fans, boosters, governing bodies like the NCAA and athletic conferences, and media can provide an external environment for the culture (Duderstadt, 2000; Noll, 2004; Schroeder, 2010; Southall, Wells, & Nagel, 2005; Southall & Nagel, 2003). The internal environment is based off of the institutional culture and shapes the athletic organization based on the history, mission and athletic traditions. The leadership and power has the ability to manipulate and manage the interaction of all of these elements. When all of these things come together, it creates a unique athletic department culture with staff and a leader to manage it all (Schroeder, 2010). Implementing the culture will take place in many different ways but some trends discovered in chapter four show some unique perspectives from the viewpoint of the athletic director.

Developing Staff

One of the strongest trends in implementing the culture is developing the staff. Many of the athletic directors discussed this idea in various ways. Beaugard and O'Brien had planned to surround themselves with a great staff from the beginning and have been able to keep that staff in place. Additionally, for Beaugard, she has even been able to keep her senior leadership team together for twenty years at Western Michigan. Finding ways to focus on the development of the staff as professionals and leaders through weekly or monthly meetings has been essential for McCaw and Currie, who even devotes 50% of his time to doing so. Burke says that you must align the organization through face time, so that people understand where the organization is going and what it is all about. It is at that point that the goals of the organization, or culture, can be achieved. Cunningham wasted no

time hearing from the staff, upon his arrival, to see what kind of culture they had and how they wanted it to change moving forward. As a transformational leader, the athletic director must find ways to unify the organization through “liberating human potential, developing effective followership, and building interconnectedness” (Hickman, 1997, p. 2). One of the base ideas of leadership in the Bass (1985) idea of transformational leadership, is treating each member of the organization based on their own needs and abilities, which is known as individualized consideration. Doing that helps develop the staff, when you include them in the processes like Cunningham did and spend time getting to know them as Burke found to be effective. When coaches were studied, it was determined that the idea of individualized consideration led to strong, positive relationships and effectiveness between the coaches and administrators (Doherty, 1997; Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996). As the organizational culture is established and affected by the leadership and staff, it is the responsibility of the athletic director to manage all of those differing personal values and develop the members to see the vision and drive the organization (Berquist, 1992; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Rhoads & Tierney, 1992; Schroeder, 2010; Tierney, 1988; Tierney, 2008). In addition to developing the staff around the leader, the participants explained that they were able to personally develop and grow through furthering their people skills and continually learning. By talking with staff, working with good people, emphasizing teamwork, getting to know everyone in the department (including student-athletes), reading, attending professional development conferences like NACDA, the athletic director could develop their own qualities to make them an effective leader and shape the culture of the organization.

Communicating Effectively

Communicating to the athletic department, university and community can be vital in implementing a culture. Under Bass' (1985) model of transformational leadership, a category of inspirational leadership was one of the characteristics and it cornered on the leader's ability to convey expectations and promote the vision of the organization (Bass, 1985; Burton & Peachey, 2009; Doherty, 1997; Kim, Magnusen, Andrew, & Stoll, 2012). This would then promote the culture through communication. Over time, those two categories were combined to create a category of charismatic leadership, since there lacked a significant distinction between the two (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Choi, Sagas, Park, & Cunnigham, 2007; Kent & Chelladurai, 2001). When a study was done on third-tier employees in athletics, Kent and Chelladurai (2001) found that the idea of charismatic leadership had an exclusive influence on the member's commitment to the organization. Communicating expectations and visions brought about accepting the visions of the athletic director and creating the culture they are trying to implement. The athletic directors in this study explained that the communication with the staff, university and community is key to developing their culture. Currie describes it as THE most important thing he is doing on a daily basis. Burke uses communication, through letters, to inform the president and university of the department goals and objectives so that all know the state of the organization. Beauregard is strategizing the communication in all areas of the department, university and community. Then, McCaw (2016) disseminates information through weekly meetings, since he believes "Communication skills are essential." Since the institutional environment, external environment, and members of the organization are building blocks for athletic culture, the communication with these areas is a primary effective strategy in

building a strong organizational culture (Duderstadt, 2000; Noll, 2004; Robles, 2009; Schroeder, 2010; Southall & Nagel, 2003; Southall, Wells, & Nagel, 2005; Ward & Hux, 2008).

Setting Goals and Objectives

Almost all of the participants discussed setting goals and objectives in some way as an effective strategy to implementing their culture. They also had personal missions, philosophies and goals that they created for themselves that would ultimately help shape the culture they desired and how it would be implemented in the department. Presented by the leader of the department, the organizational culture and goals help align the entity (Southall, Wells, & Nagel, 2005). Burke (2016) reinforces this idea immediately when asked of effective strategies, "I think you need to align the organization behind what you're trying to create." At Purdue, he does this through annual objectives and performance review management that are metric driven. Each member must set goals and objectives for the year, and then revisit them to remain on track with the organization's overall mission, vision and culture. This idea can also be achieved through a strategic plan, something that most athletic departments have. Under Baylor's strategic plan, McCaw describes that there is a vision and common goals with underlying action plans to steer the organization forward, and it has been effective. Currie places these goals and objectives on pocket cards to often remind his staff on the overall mission they are trying to achieve, simply reinforcing the culture they want daily. Setting these goals, objectives and plans allows the leader and athletic department to measure where they are. Essentially, "Taking the pulse of an organizational culture within athletics is a good way to track culture development over time and use it to meet the external demands of an athletics environment and develop into

a championship culture” (Bailey, 2007, p. 116). Cunningham finds that after developing the strategic plan early on, which included the staff and their desires for culture, they “created mission, vision, values, objectives, measurables” and have been able to work against those since it was launched in 2012 (Cunningham, 2016). Now, “Through a series of surveys we can tell whether we are getting better or worse in certain areas relevant to our departmental culture. We do one annual survey of corporate culture” (Cunningham, 2016). Burke is also doing this through annual objectives and rolling three-year plans. Setting goals and objectives helps shape the culture and keep everyone on track towards achieving it. Even when the department might be really good, they can still make sure they are progressing.

Enhancing the University and Community

Two of the five building blocks in organizational culture for higher education refers to how the culture is shaped by the university and community. The internal environment, mission of the university and academic programs, and numerous external environments, like alumni and media, can affect the principles that make up the university culture (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Choi, Sagas, Park, & Cunnigham, 2007; Kent & Chelladurai, 2001). When it specifically pertains to shaping the athletic culture, three out of five elements presented in past research relate to the community and university. The institutional culture and internal environment provide parameters to mold athletics and influence based on mission, traditions and history. Then, the external environment provides influence from the outside due to alumni, organizations and media, which can result in providing finances (Duderstadt, 2000; Noll, 2004; Robles, 2009; Schroeder, 2010; Southall & Nagel, 2003; Southall, Wells, & Nagel, 2005; Ward & Hux, 2008). Therefore, the athletic departments

need to find ways to enhance the university and community around them to create and further establish their culture. All participants in the study recognized this as an important strategy for building a strong organizational culture. As Cunningham (2016) shared, “I firmly believe athletics should enhance the university, and the athletic department is something that is a way to build a sense of community, a sense of pride, but it is not the most important thing to the university.” With Beauregard’s (2016) example of “CommUniverCity,” there is evidence to support that and the fact that athletic events are the “front porch of the university.” Through this event, 15,000 members of the community are able to come together prior to a football game, and it has been successful for over twenty years now. Community service is another way to enhance the constituents around the department. It has become a significant concept for the staff and student-athletes at Purdue and Baylor to the point where the student-athletes have taken on the responsibility to organize large events that include all student-athletes and members of the staff. It is a way for team building within the department to uphold the culture, but also enhances the community. Image is also key, when it comes to how O’Brien’s staff is viewed, and he wants them to be known as first-class in the community. To do that at Kansas State, Currie implemented a plan during his first 60 days on the job to get into the offices of every dean on campus. By doing so, he was able to understand the university from a different viewpoint. For many of the academic staff members and university officials, it was the first time an athletic director had set foot in their office. Currie discussed the typical mindset is to invite professors to practice and show them athletic facilities, but rarely do athletic administrators and coaches visit the academic side. Currie has taken a different approach to enhancing the university and community by taking athletics to the university. The

athletic department needs to be involved in various aspects of the university and community so that it can enhance those areas to further shape its strong organizational culture.

Conclusion

As intercollegiate athletics evolves, colleges and universities will continue to seek leaders able to implement a strong organizational culture. For some athletic directors who have been in the same department, it is about finding ways to adapt with the new generation of student-athletes and young professionals to continually move forward towards a championship culture. This study provided some key strategies that are effective in building a strong organizational culture from leaders who have demonstrated administrative excellence and the ability to do so. Some of them have made a career in one department, while others have moved to as many as three different institutions as an athletic director. However, many of them seem to agree on four important strategies: developing staff, communicating effectively, setting goals and objectives, and enhancing the university and community. Not all of these things will be done exactly the same, as each athletic director and department will implement these strategies differently, but they provide a framework that others can follow. In addition to these strategies, these leaders in athletics find ways to personally and professionally develop through working on people skills, continuing to learn, and setting personal missions and goals. The goals of this study were accomplished by determining what strategies were perceived to be effective, how athletic directors are implementing them within their own athletic department, and what athletic directors do, personally, to create their own vision and proactive behavior. In an area where there is minimal research on organizational culture from an athletic

perspective, this study acted as an opportunity to conduct further research studies. Those ideas are listed below.

Future Research

This study provided a good framework for future research. As each athletic department is unique, this study could be furthered by including more athletic directors within the NCAA Division I FBS. While this would take more time and resources, it would provide additional unique experiences and strategies that are believed to be effective in building a strong organizational culture. In addition, this study strictly focused on Division I FBS, so it is possible that these strategies are not effective for athletic departments in other divisions. So including athletic directors from Division 1 FCS, Division II, Division III, NAIA, etc. could provide some differing results. Additionally, one could study the comparisons or contrasts of the strategies among the different divisions, or even football vs. non-football schools. In an attempt to gain a whole picture perspective, a case study approach could be taken to include surveys or interviews from staff members within the organization to determine if the findings are similar, and whether or not the staff perceives these strategies to be effective. Hearing directly from the athletic directors in this study added unique perspectives to the previous research and sets the stage for more data to be collected from those in a position of leadership.

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