STRATEGIC PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS WITHIN NCAA
DIVISION I FBS INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Korie Sawyer: Strategic Planning Implementation Factors within NCAA Division I FBS
Institutions
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The complexity of intercollegiate athletics is constantly changing and evolving, making it

difficult for athletic directors to manage their athletic departments in this high-stakes

environment. Given that NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments are using strategic planning,

if implemented effectively, it can be a powerful management tool (Earle, 2009; Kriemadis, 1997;

Yow et al., 2000). This research study was undertaken with the goal of identifying the strategies

used to implement strategic plans within NCAA Division I athletic departments and determining

if differences exist between implementation factors and their perceived effectiveness when

implementing strategic plans. A survey of 145 current athletic administrators revealed that

athletic departments are utilizing strategic planning strategies and perceive a majority of them to

be effective in strategic planning implementation. Additionally, no implementation factor was

perceived to be more effective when implementing strategic plans within athletic departments.

The results of this study will add to the literature of the strategic planning processes of athletic

departments, and will help athletic administrators as they strive to achieve athletic department

success through strategic planning.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

Introduction

  Over the past decade, the complexity of NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision intercollegiate athletic departments has created a dynamic and challenging environment within which to operate. Athletic departments are constantly forced to adapt policies and create strategies to deal with these challenges, while simultaneously meeting educational obligations and remaining competitive. Athletic directors are under pressure to succeed athletically and academically, while also meeting the needs and demands of other external key stakeholders such as donors, fans and alumni. In essence, institutions are in an "arms race" to stay competitive and must maintain a commitment to the goals and mission of the NCAA and the institution, thus, creating a challenging environment to operate within (Earle, 2009; Starsia, 2010).

  One trend that has become increasingly popular is the use of strategic planning. Strategic planning is a management tool used to help organizations adapt to rapidly changing environments and plan for the future. Strategic planning initially began in the mid-1960s and was used in the business industry (Mintzberg, 1994). After much success in the corporate world, universities and institutions became engaged in the use of strategic planning. According to Kriemadis (1997), "strategic planning may help athletic departments anticipate and respond effectively to their new situations, and develop strategies necessary to achieve the athletic department's mission and objectives" (p. 238). Many successful organizations, including higher education institutions, have recognized the benefits of strategic planning. Additionally, NCAA

Division I FBS athletic departments have high financial stakes in the university enterprise, making the need for a disciplined strategic plan more significant.

According to the literature, the use of strategic planning in NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments is on the rise. In a 1997 study conducted by Kriemadis, almost all athletic departments surveyed indicated they were involved in strategic planning activities, but less than half actually had a formal, written long-range plan. Earle (2009) found that nearly all athletic departments surveyed have a written strategic plan to guide decision-making in their departments. A study by Starsia (2010) also found that the majority of athletic administrators participate in a formal strategic planning process, and certain dimensions related to planning correlate with success.

After studying strategic planning models and their correlation with success, Starsia (2010) suggests that athletic departments have a unique position in the marketplace and must mirror similar organizations in the commercial world. According to Starsia (2010):

> Intercollegiate athletics is a high-risk, high-reward undertaking, the results of which significantly affect their institutions. The challenge to athletic administrators will be to maintain a fast-moving and market-driven strategy in order to remain competitive, while balancing the goals and priorities of their more slowly moving academic counterparts (p. 122).

Despite the stated benefits of using a strategic plan, researchers have agreed that organizations struggle to effectively implement strategic plans. According to Wilcoxson (2012), "an identified concern with the strategic planning process is the effectiveness with which the strategic plans are actually implemented" (p. 5). While studies have shown that NCAA Division I athletic departments engage in strategic planning and believe their departments are more effective because of it, there has been no attempt to define or measure this effectiveness (Earle, 2009). Additionally, research investigating strategic planning in athletic departments has been almost

exclusively focused on the planning process, with little attention paid to the implementation phase. The purpose of this study is to identify strategies used to effectively implement strategic plans within NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify effective strategies used to implement strategic plans within NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments. Though sparse, prior research in sports management has focused on the strategic planning processes of athletic departments. Several studies in the field of sports management have developed models to guide the strategic planning process for athletic departments and have attempted to measure organizational effectiveness with success (Earle, 2009; Kriemadis, 1997; Starsia, 2010; Yow et al., 2000). Researchers suggest utilizing newly used planning techniques that are evolving in management theory and have indicated the need to identify more tools and strategies used by athletic departments to implement strategic plans (Earle, 2009; Starsia, 2010). The present research will use modern strategic planning frameworks, focusing primarily on implementation strategies, to add to the body of literature on strategic planning in athletic departments. A modification of Okumus' (2003) strategy implementation framework will be used as a model to investigate the frequency and effectiveness of implementation strategies in NCAA Division I athletic departments.

Research Questions

[RQ1] Which strategies are being used to implement strategic plans in NCAA Division I athletic departments?

[RQ2] Which strategies are perceived to be the most effective when implementing athletic department strategic plans?

[RQ3] Is there a difference between perceived effectiveness and type of implementation factor?

        [3A] Organizational Culture

        [3B] Leadership

        [3C] Aspects of the Department

        [3D] Strategy Formulation

        [3E] Application

        [3F] Documentation

        [3G] Communication

        [3H] Monitoring

Definition of Terms

- *Effectiveness:* the organization's ability to set goals and achieve them based on performance.

- *Football Bowl Subdivision* (FBS): the highest division of the NCAA

- *Implementation:* the process of establishing and effectively executing strategic goals and initiatives.

- *National Collegiate Athletic Association* (NCAA): a voluntary, membership-driven organization of colleges and universities. The governing body of intercollegiate athletic competition.

- *Strategic Planning*: a management tool used by organizations to respond to a rapidly changing environment by creating a desired vision, setting goals, and fulfilling them by making strategic decisions.

Assumptions

- The measures used to conduct this research were valid and reliable.

- Athletic department administrators are well informed to make reliable judgments on the implementation strategies.

- Subjects responded to survey questions with honesty and objectivity.

- All of the information obtained from the survey will remain confidential and anonymous.

- The selected subjects voluntarily participated in this study and completed the survey.

Limitations

- Survey respondents may not be a representative sample of the Athletic Department surveyed.

- Survey results may not be a directly applicable to other NCAA Division I institutions or other levels of the NCAA.

Significance of Study

The complexity of intercollegiate athletics is constantly changing and evolving, making it difficult for athletic directors to manage their athletic departments in this high-stakes environment. In a time when the collegiate model is constantly evolving, it has never been more important for athletic department staff and stakeholders to engage in strategic planning to succeed athletically and academically, while remaining competitive. In essence, "the heightened real-time nature of how these departments operate creates a need to prepare everyone to be ready at any time. Just like any great college athletics team, the entire athletics department must be ready to perform their role from the same playbook at a moment's notice" (Brandon, 2012).

Although there have been studies pertaining to strategic planning in NCAA Division I Athletic Departments, the body of literature mostly describes the strategic planning process and

offers suggestions for the implementation phase. Additionally, there has been limited research on measuring the effectiveness of strategic planning used in athletic departments. Most of the literature measuring the effectiveness of strategic planning is focused toward best practices in businesses, with a few in the institutional setting. Although most athletic departments engage in strategic planning, most do not use the plan to guide day-to-day decision-making. Researchers have suggested that this is due to the lack of success with which the strategic plans are actually implemented (Earle, 2009; Kriemadis, 1997).

Given that NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments are using strategic planning, if implemented effectively, it can be a powerful management tool. In this regard, the current study uses effective implementation strategies as defined by the business sector for the criteria for measuring effectiveness of strategic planning in athletic departments. This study aims to identify effective strategies used to implement strategic plans that can contribute to the sustainability and management of NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments. The findings in this study will help athletic administrators as they strive to achieve athletic department success through strategic planning. This in turn will provide member schools and conferences better resources to fulfill its obligation as a member of the NCAA, "to make certain that intercollegiate athletics is successfully woven into the fabric of higher education" (NCAA, 2004, p. 1).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter will outline the existing literature regarding strategic planning and implementation factors. A brief historical overview of strategic planning within the business and higher education sector will be given. Additionally, literature and research regarding strategic planning within the field of sports management will be discussed. Okumus' (2003) extensive review of strategy implementation will serve as a theoretical framework for this study by examining factors and strategies that play a significant role in strategic planning implementation. In its entirety, the following literature review and studies provide a foundation that will guide this story on strategic planning implementation within athletic departments. In an effort to analyze how strategic planning implementation occurs within intercollegiate athletics, it is important to understand the previous literature associated with strategy implementation in the business setting.

History of Strategic Planning

The need for planning and management systems throughout history has long been recognized by government organizations and public and private sectors to survive within a rapidly changing environment. The use of strategy and tactics dates back to early military operations and further developed into the industrial setting during the 19th and 20th century (Earle, 2009). In the late 1960s, corporations began using this notion of strategic planning as they recognized the need to maintain organizational goals and objectives (Bloom, 1986; Earle, 2009; Mintzberg, 1994). Strategic planning became a useful tool for large companies in the public and

private sector, and according to Wilcoxson (2012), "the most effective method for devising and implementing strategies that would increase their corporation's competitiveness" (p. 14).

This formalized process of setting goals and intentionally making decisions to achieve future results is known as strategic planning. Strategic planning, as defined by Bryson (2004) is "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it" (p. 6). Mintzberg (1994) defines strategic planning as "a formalized procedure to produce an articulated result, in the form of an integrated system of decisions" (p. 12). Wilkinson and Monkhouse (1994) describe strategic planning as a way to position an organization and guide its direction and development, through prioritizing the use of resources through identified goals. Strategic planning can also be described as a process where organizations formulate and implement decisions that ultimately affect their future (Melcher & Kerzner, 1988).

One critical factor in strategic planning is the concept of implementation. Formulation and implementation are key components of strategic planning. By setting the right long-term goals and directly implementing, organizations can achieve what Bean (1993) describes as "strategic effectiveness". According to Bean's Law of Strategic Implementation, "companies that consistently set and implement strategic action plans achieve quicker and higher business results" (p. 21). Implementation can be described as the deployment and operation of the organization's systems, processes, and functions that are necessary to execute strategy (Amason, 2011; Chandler, 1962). For Amason (2011), strategy is the plan and implementation is the execution. According to Bryson (2004), "well-executed implementation completes the transition from strategic planning to strategic management by incorporating adopted strategies throughout the relevant system" (p. 238).

Strategic Planning in Higher Education

The educational sector also realized the necessity of strategic planning in responding to these rapid environmental changes (Earle, 2009; Kotler & Murphy, 1981; Kriemadis, 1997; Wilcoxson, 2012). According to Kriemadis (1997), "Educational administrators are confronted with changes associated with ageing facilities, changing technology, changing demographics, increasing competition, rising costs, funding cuts, etc." (p. 238). Thus, institutions of higher education used strategic planning to fulfill educational missions and objectives by responding to new situations and adapting to changes (Wilcoxson, 2012).

Strategic planning relates to the educational sector because it can help determine the future for the institution. Scholars suggest that decisions must be strategic and match the characteristics and resources of the institution with its environment (Kotler & Murphy, 1981; Wilcoxson, 2012). Additionally, the institution is required to determine its own future, and decisions should show the goal that the organizational is willing to change.

Institutions quickly adopted this management technique and have integrated strategic planning into their operations. Despite this popularity, however, many have struggled with implementing a business model into the higher education system (Wilcoxson, 2012). Earle (2009) argues, "the unique structure of higher education institutions and the environment in which they operate is not always conducive to strategic planning (p. 39). According to Kotler and Murphy (1981) higher education institutions are efficient when performing "patterns of operations" – the same acts day after day. However, if institutions continue these patterns under environmental conditions that will eventually change, the operations will become less effective.

Scholars agree that higher education institutions will not succeed in implementing strategic planning if a cookie-cutter approach is used (Earle, 2009; Kotler & Murphy, 1981;

Wilcoxson, 2012). Unlike the business sector, higher education institutions have a unique decentralized structure, very distinct silos, little control over their niche marketplace, and a high degree of independent freedom to faculty and departments.

Several scholars have attempted to draw conclusions about strategic planning effectiveness in higher education institutions. Literature suggests that these institutions have recognized the benefits of using strategic planning as a management tool to effectively respond to new situations. According to Starsia (2010), "for colleges and universities, strategic planning, when properly practiced, can be a powerful tool in helping academic units listen to their stakeholders, recognize opportunities, correct operational weaknesses, and make decisions that help to support the organizational mission" (p. 15). Moreover, having this organizational skill-set will be a source of competitive advantage for institutions as the environment becomes more complex. In essence, strategic planning in the current world of higher education, can serve as an effective tool to help an institution achieve the goals and objectives it strives to accomplish (Bryson, 2004; Wilcoxson, 2012).

Intercollegiate athletic departments are very much part of the higher education sector, and similar to institutions, must anticipate and respond to a rapidly changing environment to achieve the desired goals of the department while effectively promoting the institution's identity. The highly competitive environment that athletic departments operate within makes strategic planning essential to remaining successful.

Strategic Planning in Intercollegiate Athletics

The NCAA is a membership-driven organization – primarily colleges and universities – and its current mission is to "support learning through sports by integrating athletics and higher education to enrich the college experience of student-athletes" (NCAA, para. 2). Division I

schools are the major athletic powerhouses that compete at the highest level and must recognize the importance of spectatorship and sponsorship to maintain their Division I status, unlike the other two divisions. With university presidents, chancellors, administrators and faculty representatives guiding each division, higher education plays a pivotal role in intercollegiate athletics.

Scholars agree that intercollegiate athletics plays an integral role in the extracurricular activities of Division I institutions, making them extremely complex and comprehensive. According to Starsia (2010), athletics are important because of the opportunities afforded to participants as well as lessons provided in education and entertainment. Intercollegiate athletics can also be instrumental in uniting an institution. Moreover, intercollegiate athletics can be used to build a university brand, as it engages students with their school to enrich their on-campus experience.

Won (2004) observes that athletic departments and higher education institutions both operate with a dual purpose that includes the responsibility of providing opportunities to student-athletes in addition to serving as an "independent entertainment enterprise" that most concern itself with profits and wins.

The literature is sparse on strategic planning in intercollegiate athletic departments, but scholars agree that strategic planning can successfully lead athletic departments in this dynamic and challenging environment. As explained by Sutton and Migliore (1988), "Intercollegiate athletic programs present a logical application target for strategic long range planning because of the necessity of the athletic administrator to be future focused in terms of acquiring, managing, and allocating resources in a changing environment" (p. 233).

In an attempt to determine the extent to which strategic planning was being used and develop a model to assist athletic administrators with strategic planning activities, Kriemadis (1997) conducted a study on the strategic planning processes at NCAA Division I-A athletic departments. Of those that responded, 80 percent of athletic departments were engaged in strategic planning activities such as creating a vision, mission, goals and objectives. However, only 43.4 per cent of athletic departments surveyed actually had a formalized, written strategic plan, and 36.8 percent utilized short-term operational plans.

Research by Bowden and Yow (1998) on the relationship of planning to successful athletics departments found that department effectiveness increased when formal planning was used, followed and carefully executed. Additionally, Bowden and Yow found that athletic departments that utilized formal planning also achieved at the highest level in athletics, academics, facilities and fundraising. Yow, Migliore, Bowden, Stevens and Loudon (2000) expanded upon the Bowden and Yow (1998) study, and developed one of the first and most comprehensive models of strategic planning for intercollegiate athletics.

Yow et al. (2000) developed a theory of planning for athletic departments looking to anticipate and respond effectively to a rapidly changing environment. Despite resistance to planning and the perceived disadvantages similar to those found by Kriemadis (1997), the authors claim that long-range planning is not only recommended, but is required for athletic departments to be successful and remain competitive. Conversely, the authors suggest that planning is meaningless if it does not lead to improved performance. Yow et al. (2000) emphasizes the importance of planning in that:

> To have an athletics department that looks forward to the future
> and tries to stay alive and prosper in a changing environment, there
> must be active, vigorous, continuous, and creative planning.

Otherwise, a department will find itself in the untenable position of simply reacting to its immediate environment. (p. 7).

The strategic planning process as defined by Yow et al. (2000), includes: (1) defining a purpose or mission; (2) analyzing the environment; (3) developing written, specific, and measurable objectives; (4) identifying strategies for resource allocation; (5) developing operational plans that include (a) individual objectives, (b) strategy action plans and (c) performance appraisal and reward; and (6) evaluating performance through evaluation. Additionally, Yow et al. recommends each major unit within the athletic department should develop its own strategic plan that integrates the athletic department's strategic plan.

Much of the Yow et al. (2000) study focuses on the strategic planning process, but acknowledges that an effective planning process requires effective implementation of the strategic plan. The authors reference many issues that affect implementation of strategic plans: staffing, training, building and maintaining relationships amongst staff, organizational culture, leadership, evaluation and rewards (Yow et al., 2000). Accordingly, "the strategic plan concentrates on 'doing the right things' while implementation concentrates on 'doing things right'" (Yow et al., 2000, p. 25). Yow et al. (2000) offers two main reasons to incorporate planning: "protective benefits resulting from reduced chances for error in decision making, and positive benefits in the form of increased success in reaching departmental objectives" (p. 7).

Using Miles and Snow's (1978) typology of strategic types, Cunningham (2002) examined the relationship of the different strategic types of NCAA Division I athletic departments with measures of organizational effectiveness. Cunningham used athletic achievement and academic achievement to measure athletic department organizational effectiveness, and measured social performance using Title IX compliance. Athletic departments characterized as "prospectors" were found to have greater athletic achievement. Prospector

organizations operate with a high degree of autonomy, and low levels of formalization and specialization (Cunningham, 2002). Nonetheless, Cunningham (2002) found that no one strategy was related to departmental outcomes and effectiveness.

Athletic and academic achievement are commonly used in sports management literature to measure athletic department success, and are probably not the most accurate variables to measure organizational effectiveness as it relates to strategic planning. Cunningham's (2002) study also failed to take into account the opinions of employees, coaches and student-athletes. Additionally, this study forced athletic departments to choose one strategy that best resembled their organization, and emphasizes the "one size fits all approach." This approach is heavily discouraged in most of the strategic planning literature.

Earle (2009) conducted a study that examined strategic planning by Division I athletic departments and identified specific steps in the planning process to better understand how the strategic plan is developed and implemented. Earle found that strategic planning was occurring in athletic departments and found a significant increase in the number of athletic departments that are engaged in strategic planning when compared to the Kriemadis (1997) study. This is a good indication that the use of strategic planning as a management tool for athletic departments is on the rise and becoming relatively popular.

Using the strategic planning process developed by Yow et al. (2000) as a benchmark, Earle (2009) identified which components athletic departments used. Research indicated nearly all athletic departments included a five-year plan, updated at least once every two years, and the most common components of strategic planning used by athletic departments were a mission statement, vision statement, specific and measurable goals and objectives, written values, and an environmental scan. While only 64.8% of athletic departments include an environmental scan in

the planning process, Earle (2009) suggests that many athletic departments lack this necessary component that can improve the overall effectiveness of their strategic plan.

Earle's (2009) study also supports Yow et al.'s (2000) claim that athletic departments face problems with implementing the strategic plan. To measure plan implementation, Earle looked at employee involvement, budget and management objectives linked to the plan, and annual evaluations based on the plan. Earle found that nearly one-third (30.2%) of athletic departments did not involve employees in strategic plan development. Additionally, Earle found little tangible evidence that athletic department employees were using the strategic plan as a day-to-day management tool.

Research by Earle (2009) expanded upon the model developed by Yow et al. (2000) by proposing an additional process model specifically for Division I-A athletic departments. Earle's process model is composed of two stages and includes nine specific steps. The planning stage includes: (1) plan to plan; (2) mission and value; (3) values guiding principles; (4) environmental scan; and (5) goals and objectives. The implementation stage includes: (6) operational plans - strategies; (7) link to budget; (8) link to performance and management; and (9) monitoring and reporting.

Not included in the Yow et al. (2000) planning process model is the first step, "plan to plan." Earle suggests that before an athletic department can define its mission and vision, it is important to first lay out details of the planning process such as the time period, how often it is updated, and who is involved. Earle (2009) suggests that the plan-to-plan step will lead to effective strategic planning. Within the implementation stage, Earle (2009) emphasizes the role of operational plans for functional units and individual athletic programs in order to effectively activate the strategic plan. The author suggests that without operational plans for each unit, "the

strategic plan tends to be little more than a vision statement of what the department wishes to become without any concrete strategies to get it there" (p. 109).

Without proper implementation, strategic planning is useless for organizations. The aforementioned research has indicated that athletic departments are utilizing strategic planning, however, many fail to actually use them on a day-to-day basis (Earle, 2009; Yow et al., 2000). It is evident that challenges with implementation prevent athletic departments from fulfilling the goals and objectives stated in their strategic plan. The conceptual framework in this study defines and establishes implementation strategies that incorporate elements of literature in strategic management theory and organizational culture theory to identify specific strategies and tools to assist athletic departments with implementing their strategic plan.

Strategic Planning Implementation Factors

In an effort to analyze how strategic plans are effectively implemented in athletic departments, it is important to first understand the previous literature associated with strategy implementation. There are important similarities and differences between each of the following studies, but each framework provides a unique perspective for this research. All of these studies provide a fairly comprehensive description on implementation factors used for effective strategic planning.

Much of the literature suggests that strategic plans are not effective when they are not implemented during the strategic planning process (Bryson, 1995; Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Despite this realization, there are very few studies that focus solely on the implementation phase of strategic planning. While frameworks exist to help with the implementation phase of strategic planning, there is no agreed upon framework for effective strategy implementation (Earle, 2009; Kriemadis, 1997; Okumus, 2003; Wilcoxson, 2012).

In the collegiate setting, several studies propose linear planning models and framework for strategic planning. Yow et al. (2000) suggests implementation of the strategic plan can occur through staffing and training, relationship building, commitment, organizational culture, leadership styles, evaluation and rewards. Earle (2009) expanded on the strategic planning process model used by Yow et al. (2000) and developed a process model built on two stages – planning and implementation. The planning stage focuses on the creation of the strategic plan, and the implementation stage is when the plan becomes a management tool (Earle, 2009). Earle stresses that without the implementation stage, the strategic plan cannot be effective.

In an empirical study conducted by Wilcoxson (2012), nine elements of strategy implementation are recommended for businesses to adopt to achieve the goals and objectives in the strategic plan. Wilcoxson's findings present a straightforward approach to strategy implementation and include the following elements: conduct a planning session, acquire a champion to guide implementation of strategic plan, manage strategic projects, align strategy and operations, assign resources to strategic projects, align leadership with innovative techniques, modify staff assignments, determine measurable outcomes, and acquire stakeholder feedback.

Using the Baldridge assessment model, Jasinski (2004) analyzed organizations that were Baldrige recipients to identify common themes in their strategic development process. These themes include developing a clear map, using an ongoing closed-loop cycle, collection and analysis of multiple internal and external factors, appropriate number of strategic objectives (four to six), creating a detailed deployment plan, using benchmarks to analyze progress, integrating human resource plans, technology plans, and academic plans with strategic objectives and action plans, spending a period of time focusing solely on strategic planning activities, developing

17

evaluation and improvement cycles, used performance results, and having a straightforward communications framework (Jasinski, 2004; Wilcoxson, 2012).

One concept of strategic planning management is the combination of different factors to develop strategy and achieve organizational goals (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Research by Waterman, Peters, and Phillips (1980) argue a relationship between the factors strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, skills and subordinate goals for effective organizational strategy. They argue that, "organization effectiveness stems from the interaction of several factors" (Waterman et al., 1980, p. 17-18). Yip (1992) proposed a framework that identified four implementation factors: organizational structure, culture, people and managerial processes, and proposed that each factor and their individual elements affect implementation.

Unlike the frameworks discussed above that propose a linear approach to strategic planning implementation, studies have also found that effective implementation can occur through a combination of factors and their individual elements (Amason, 2011; Okumus, 2003; Saunders, Mann & Smith, 2008). The following implementation frameworks reflect the dynamic nature of strategic planning and take into consideration the relationships and interactions between factors.

Saunders, Mann, and Smith (2008) produced an implementation framework after conducting an exploratory study on the leading practices for implementing strategic initiatives. They identified seven strategy deployment constructs, and discovered there is a relationship between each construct when implementing strategic initiatives. These constructs include communicating the initiative, achieving buy-in, aligning implementation, learning, creating the infrastructure for deployment, understanding the business drivers and identifying deployment options.

The McKinsey 7-S Model, developed in the late 1970s, illustrates how the various

components of implementation and the different parts of an organization work together to

produce performance results. The implementation factors found in this model include strategy,

systems, skills, style, staff, structure and shared values. This model demonstrates how all of the

factors are connected, directly or in-directly. Amason (2011) acknowledges that "each of these

elements is important in its own right. However, they are all much more important as part of a

larger whole. The fit of that larger whole is essential to effective implementation" (p. 224).

Okumus (2003) conducted an extensive review of strategy implementation in businesses

and organizations, and identified key factors that played a significant role in strategy

implementation. He found that previous studies and implementation models only provided partial

explanations to strategy implementation. The strategy implementation framework that Okumus

(2003) proposed groups the 11 key implementation factors into four different categories: (1)

strategic content: strategy development; (2) *external strategic context*: environmental

uncertainty; and *internal strategic context:* organizational structure, organizational culture,

leadership; (3) *operational process:* operational planning, resources, communication, people,

control; and (4) *outcome*: results. According to Okumus, this framework is not to be used as a

prescriptive approach to strategic planning. Additionally, he emphasizes that each

implementation factor interacts and influences the other factors.

There are many theoretical frameworks and different implementation strategies found in

the literature, and similarities of implementation factors that have been found effective when

implementing strategic plans. The conceptual framework for this study will use a modification of

the Okumus (2003) strategy implementation model within the context of intercollegiate athletics

to investigate effective implementation factors. This framework will include eight

implementation factors grouped into three categories: (1) *context*: organizational culture, leadership, aspects of the department; (2) *content:* strategy formulation and application; and (3) *process:* documentation, communication and monitoring. This study will utilize the many of the frameworks and their individual elements found in the literature to guide the survey content in order to determine the most effective implementation strategies used within athletic departments. For purposes of this study, the term factor is used to describe a group of elements that influence implementation.

Context Factors

Context refers to internal and external changes in the environment that effect strategic initiatives. Internal characteristics of the organization can influence the other implementation factors, and having a strong organizational context is essential for successful strategic planning implementation (Okumus, 2003). According to Taylor and Miroiu (2002), "implementation is dependent upon the capability and delivery of individual members of staff" (p. 67). Furthermore, the authors emphasize effective leadership and an awareness of institutional culture for ensuring effective implementation. The context factors that will be discussed in this study include: organizational culture, leadership, and aspects of the department.

Organizational Culture. According to Okumus (2003), organizational culture is "the shared understanding of employees about how they do things within an organization" (p. 876). For Taylor and Miroiu (2002), an institutional culture is the behavior of individuals, which includes attributes, values and beliefs. A strong organizational culture can impact the effectiveness of a strategic plan, but is also crucial for the success of the organization. For Starsia (2010), "organizational design and adaptation are means of implementing an organization's strategy – and may be considered a source of sustainable competitive advantage" (p. 26). Certain

traits and conditions that contribute to successful planning can include: positive attitudes, incentives, creativity, ability to motivate others, and a willingness to change (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002).

In a study on organizational culture in intercollegiate athletics, Bailey (2007) found that relationships between culture traits and organizational effectiveness that impact all levels of an athletics department including student-athletes, coaches, and administrators. The author found that a strong culture could impact commitment among staff and the likelihood to go "above and beyond" the required duties. According to Bailey (2007), "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. 118).

Leadership. Leadership is a crucial implementation factor that can not only impact the organizational culture, but is a skilled required for effective implementation. According to Melcher and Kerzner (1988), "strategic planning is far more likely to succeed if the CEO initiates the strategic planning process and provides his/her general endorsement" (p. 16). For Taylor and Miroiu (2002), leadership is a key factor for effective implementation, "especially the capacity to coordinate and inspire others towards a common end" (p. 57). Bloom (1986) describe the leader as "active and supportive" during the planning process. For example, receiving open messages from the Athletic Director on importance of goals and projects can be important for implementation (Okumus, 2003).

One leadership strategy for effective implementation is encouraging and rewarding innovation and risk taking. According to Starsia (2010), "athletic directors must balance the culture of slow-moving change (institution) and the imperative of innovation and

competitiveness" (p. 124). Additionally, Starsia (2010) found that athletic directors must be willing to think differently and initiate innovative activities, all while keeping the integrity of the institution. Being "hands-on" and attentive to detail is one way to emphasize innovative thinking. In sum, leadership is crucial for not only getting things done, but also motivating others to help you carry out tasks and activities to fulfill the organization's goals.

Aspects of the Department. Aspects of the department are characteristics of the organization's structure that influence implementation. Internal characteristics such as job duties, responsibilities, decision-making processes, and reporting relationships can have an impact on how the strategic plan is implemented. Additionally, how an organization changes its structure due to strategic planning can have positive impacts on effective implementation. When implementing new strategies, changing an organizational structure for better communication, coordination, and cooperation among all levels of management and the different units can greatly influence implementation (Okumus, 2003).

Likewise, Taylor and Miroiu (2002) suggest that the organizational structure must be in line with the strategic plan to achieve successful implementation. The authors suggest clearly assigned responsibilities for all levels within the organization, and say that services should reflect the objectives and goals set out in the strategic plan. In order to succeed, the organizational structure must match the internal and external factors and conditions (Starsia, 2010). Strategy implementation will not occur if the strategy does not change with the environment. This requires organizations to build new structures, systems, skills and shared values that complement the new strategy (Amason, 2011).

Content Factors

Another important implementation category is content, which includes strategy formulation and application. Okumus (2003) refers to this category as "strategy content" which includes the why and how strategy is developed and initiated. Content implementation factors are important for creating strategies and initiatives to fulfill the stated objectives and goals, and ultimately it is used to measure the effectiveness of the strategic plan (Earle, 2009).

Strategy Formulation. Strategy formulation can be defined as the creation and development of ideas and strategies for strategic action (Bryson, 2004; Okumus, 2003). According to Bryson (2004), the purpose of strategy formulation is to "create a set of strategies that will effectively link the organization to its environment and create public value" (p. 186). Strategies should align with the stated objectives and goals in the organization's strategic plan. Strategy formulation typically occurs during the planning stage, but initiatives and objectives should always be monitored and updated throughout the strategic plan time frame (Bryson, 2004; Earle, 2009; Yow et al. 2000).

Internal and external context factors largely influence strategy formulation and implementation. An analysis of the external and internal environment of the athletic department should assist with the creation of strategies and objectives developed during the planning process. It is crucial during the planning stage to understand the business drivers behind initiatives through research and discussion (Saunders, Mann & Smith, 2008). Externally, organizations must adapt to environmental change by aligning or creating new strategies based on trends in the market (Earle, 2009; Okumus, 2003). Similarly, Thibault, Slack, and Hinings (1993) state, "there is no one best way to strategize in sport organizations; the strategy developed

should reflect the organizational situation. Hence, different organizational situations will yield different strategies" (p. 41).

One individual element of strategy formulation is information gathering and generation of new ideas from all members of the organization. Strategy formulation should be a participatory process that allows inputs from staff at all levels, as well as external stakeholders to the organization (Sutton & Migliore, 1988; Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). It is important for organizations to have a "bottom-up" approach to allow creative and innovative thinking for generating new ideas and improvements on existing activities (Bryson, 2004; Taylor & Miroiu, 2002).

Additionally, effective strategy formulation requires strategic planning information to be widely shared and accessible to members of the organization. Transparency will allow decisions to be more acceptable from both internal and external stakeholders (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Both involvement and communication of individuals from all levels of the organization are crucial for the strategic plan to be used as a management tool (Sutton & Migliore, 1988).

Application. Application can be referred to as characteristics of the organization that influence the implementation of strategic plan. According to Bryson (2004), "successful implementation of strategies and plans will depend primarily on the design and use of various implementation structures that coordinate and manage implementation activities" (p. 248). Strategy formulation and application work together by aligning current activities and operations with new initiatives. Examples of this alignment can include departmental training and orientation sessions and properly ensuring that all necessary resources are made available and linked to the stated strategies and initiatives (Bryson, 2004; Okumus, 2003; Wilcoxson, 2012; Yow et al. 2000). Studies have shown that many athletic departments fail to implement their

strategic plan because they do not have the proper funds to support new initiatives (Earle, 2009; Kriemadis, 1997; Yow eta al., 2000). Wilcoxson (2012) found that deliberately linking resource allocation to the strategic plan was essential for implementation.

An additional element of application is to utilize strategic planning specific events and activities for all staff members. Organizations should use full department meetings and planning retreats for "brainstorming" and the generation of new ideas (Taylor and Miroiu, 2002). Okumus (2003) refers to this activity as holding implementation activities for necessary training and development of staff to ensure that new skills and knowledge are acquired to implement strategies.

Process Factors

This category describes the process factors used to initiate the projects and activities created during the planning process. According to Okumus (2003), the process factors are "primarily used on a continuous basis to implement the strategy and manipulate the internal context" (p. 876). Earle (2009) emphasizes that effective strategic planning typically involves a process that it is necessary for successful implementation of the plan.

Documentation. Effective implementation can occur through formal documentation that monitors the strategic plan as well as the activities and results that are carried out (Okumus, 2003). Bryson (2004) suggests that organizations should create implementation specific documents and action plans to guide units and members throughout the strategic planning process. Implementation strategy documents should focus attention on decisions, actions, expected results, roles and responsibilities of teams and individuals, specific action steps and schedules. They should also include the communication and monitoring process (Bryson, 2004; Okumus, 2003).

Utilizing strategic planning resources such as presentations, newsletters, schedules and guidebooks is one documentation strategy that assists with implementation (Okumus, 2003; Yow et al., 2000). Additionally, Taylor and Miroiu (2002) found that using a standard planning format can force units to deliberately consider similar issues, which ultimately helps with consistency. Peter Lorange (1982) refers to this as communicability in design implementation, and he emphasizes that "realistic implementation deals with explaining the concept in such a way that the relevant managers can understand it" (p. 9).

Communication. Communication as an implementation factor can best be described as the mechanisms used to discuss strategies and goals. One strategy is preparing a communication plan to assist with the planning process. Bryson (2004) suggests creating communication guidelines such as investing in communication networks and activities, trying to reduce negative attitudes, and regular reporting of strategy initiatives. Sutton and Migliore (1988) claim the "effectiveness of the entire strategic planning process is dependent not only upon understanding and acceptance but upon the communication process involved" (p. 256).

Communication must be transparent during the planning process. This includes allowing staff to have discussions and dialogues around areas of concern throughout the process. According to Taylor and Miroiu (2002), "plans which have been prepared 'behind closed doors' of which include decisions that cannot be openly justified are unlikely to carry broad support within an institution" (p. 18-19).

Monitoring. According to Taylor and Miroiu (2002), monitoring aims to "assess progress made towards achievement of the targets put forward" (p. 68). Monitoring should not only include updates and revisions to the stated strategies but should also allow for changes based on the environmental circumstances (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Taylor and Miroiu propose

26

a monitoring structure that takes into account the strategic plan, operating plans and financial plans. The process for monitoring should be distributed to all staff members and should include the nature of monitoring, who is doing the monitoring, and a timeline for reporting.

In Earle's (2009) study, he found through personal interviews that there is seldom a formal and concrete monitoring process in place, and athletic departments "simply expose individuals to the strategic plan and then hope that they develop individual goals that align with the plan." Earle recommends that each functional unit's goals and objectives should be assigned to specific individuals, and those individuals and units should be held accountable.

Literature Review Summary

The ideas of strategic management and implementation factors are especially relevant to strategic planning in athletic departments. As strategic planning has evolved into a successful management tool, many different frameworks and models for strategic planning and implementation have emerged for various industries, including intercollegiate athletics. The review of literature is somewhat limited when it comes to implementation factors and strategies used by athletic departments. However, those findings and the previous studies found within the field of strategic management do provide valuable insight and provide an opportunity for comparison once data is collected. Understanding the importance of each implementation factor and its individual elements, this study will attempt to identify effective implementation strategies for athletic departments and determine if relationships exist between each factor.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to identify effective strategies used to implement strategic plans within NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments. This chapter will outline the methods employed to perform this study and will be structured as follows: explanation of study participants, instrumentation employed, summary of the procedures used, and the description of the statistical analysis used to interpret the data.

Participants

The population of interest for this study included current administrative staff in NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments from the following conferences: Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Southeastern Conference (SEC), Pacific 12 (Pac-12), Big Ten, Big 12, and the American Athletic Conference (AAC). Athletic departments that do not engage in strategic planning were not included in this study. An e-mail invitation to take the online survey via Qualtrics was sent to 1,400 administrative staff members from 73 institutions. Administrative staff members from the following departments were excluded from the sample: strength and conditioning, sports medicine, campus recreation and/or intramural sports. These individuals are typically not heavily involved in the strategic planning process.

Procedures

The survey instrument was created based on a thorough review of literature while utilizing an instrument from a similar study conducted to review leading practices for implementing strategic initiatives as a basis for instrument development (Saunders, Mann & Smith, 2008). In addition, the survey was reviewed by a panel of experts that included

professors, athletic department employees, and graduate students in content area to ensure survey validity. Feedback and suggestions were used to make alterations, and the panel approved a final version of the survey instrument.

The sample for this study included current administrative staff from athletic departments within the six automatic qualifying conferences. These conferences were selected for their similarity in mission, values, budgets and level of competition. The participants were chosen because they are typically involved in the strategic planning process. Subjects were identified by visiting the athletic department online staff directory, and contact information was gathered from the directory. Subjects were asked in an introductory e-mail to participate in this voluntary survey and a link to the online survey was included in the e-mail. If the athletic department did not engage in strategic planning, they were asked to not participate in the study.

Instrument

The survey was created to gain additional information about the strategic planning implementation strategies used by NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments, and it aims to measure their perceived effectiveness. The initial portion of the survey established categorical information on the athletic department strategic plan. Questions then addressed the frequency and effectiveness of implementation factors. The frequency section asked respondents to choose "YES," "NO," and "UNDECIDED" on 20 different statements. If "YES" was selected, respondents were then asked to rate the level of effectiveness the statement or strategy had when implementing the athletic department's strategic plan. The effectiveness section consisted of a 5-point Likert-scale [1 = Very ineffective to 5 = very effective]. Frequency and effectiveness were measured using the following variables: organizational culture, leadership, aspects of the department, strategy formulation, application, documentation, communication and monitoring.

The survey ended with an optional open-ended question that asked for additional thoughts related to the implementation of the respondents' athletic department strategic plan.

Data Analysis

For the first two research questions, descriptive statistics were used to establish percentages for the frequency and effectiveness of implementation factors. If respondents indicated "YES" to the statements and strategies characteristic of their athletic department, they were then asked to rate the effectiveness of each in the implementation of their athletic department strategic plan. Research question three used a one-way totally between subjects ANOVA to determine if there was a difference between perceived effectiveness and type of implementation factor. The implementation factors that were measured included organizational culture, leadership, aspects of the department, strategy formulation, application, documentation, communication and monitoring. Open-ended responses were analyzed qualitatively by implementation factor.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This research study was undertaken with the goal of identifying the strategies used to implement strategic plans within NCAA Division I athletic departments and determining which strategies are perceived to be the most effective when implementing strategic plans. The online survey was sent to 1,406 current NCAA Division I Athletic Administrators, and only athletic departments who currently engage in strategic planning were asked to take the survey, and out of the 72 athletic departments invited to participate in this study, 18 indicated that they currently do not engage in strategic planning. A total of 145 participants responded to the survey, and after eliminating athletic departments that do not currently engage in strategic planning, the sample size decreased to 1,057, and 132 surveys remained for the data analysis. It should be noted that not all respondents rated the perceived effectiveness of each strategy based on their utilization of the strategy so the "N" will differ for each strategy. After reviewing the data collected and the necessary statistical procedures, several important conclusions regarding strategic planning implementation within athletic departments are revealed. The results below are organized by research question and include tables and charts to supplement the data.

Demographic Information

Several questions were asked pertaining to characteristics of the respondents and their athletic department with regards to their strategic plan. In regards to current job title, there were five responses from Athletic Directors (3.8%), forty-three responses by Senior Associate Athletic Directors (32.6%), forty-two responses by Associate Athletic Directors (31.8%), twenty-eight

responses by Assistant Athletic Directors (21.2%) and fourteen responses by individuals who

indicated "other" (10.6%).

Table 1
Survey Respondents by Title

Title	(%)	*n*
Athletic Director	3.8%	5
Senior Associate Athletic Director	32.6%	43
Associate Athletic Director	31.8%	42
Assistant Athletic Director	21.2%	28
Other	10.6%	14

Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean years the respondents had held a position

in athletics administration at their current institution. The number of years ranged from a low of

.60 to a high of 35 years with an average of 9.24 (*SD* = 7.70).

Table 2
Characteristics of Athletic Department Strategic Plan

Question	Yes		No	
	(%)	*n*	(%)	*n*
Use of an external consultant to assist with strategic plan development	36.6%	48	63.4%	83
Athletic Department has a planning group or committee that oversees the strategic plan	85.6%	113	14.4%	19

As seen in Table 2, the use of an external consultant (outside of the institution) varies with

36.6% who indicated "yes" (*n* = 48) and 63.4% of responses indicating "no" (*n* = 83). In

addition, 85.6% (*n* = 113) of respondents indicated that their athletic department has a planning

group or committee that oversees the strategic plan, and 14.4% (*n* = 19) that do not.

Prevalence of Implementation Strategies

The first research question aimed to discover which strategies are being used to

implement strategic plans in NCAA Division I athletic departments. A review of literature

allowed for the identification of various implementation strategies that are typically effective for

strategic planning. The strategies that were most applicable to intercollegiate athletics were

chosen for this survey. In order to confirm the literature as well as determining if they are applicable to athletic departments, the survey asked athletic administrators if these strategies were generally characteristic of their athletic department as a result of the strategic plan. Frequency distributions were used to calculate percentages of characteristics and strategies used that are generally applicable to the athletic departments surveyed. The results found in Table 3 reveal the frequency for each strategy. The results indicate that 14 of the 20 strategies used to implement strategic plans are generally applicable to 70% or more of the respondents.

According to the results, nearly all administrators indicate that working in collaboration with others (93.2%) and cooperation between different units (91.0%) are characteristic of their athletic department as a result of the strategic plan. 84.1% of athletic departments review their organizational structure and policies as a result of strategic planning. As indicated in Table 3, the least common implementation strategies were using a standard planning format or template for all units (47.0%) and utilizing strategic planning resources for all staff (i.e. newsletters, guidebooks, schedules) (56.1%). Organizational culture strategies are most frequently used when implementing strategic plans, while documentation strategies are used less frequently. An examination of implementation factors will be discussed later. Interestingly, 22.0% of respondents were undecided of ensuring new initiatives and projects are supported until completion.

Table 3
Implementation Strategies Used by Athletic Departments

	Yes		No		Undecided	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*
Working in collaboration with others	93.2%	124	3.0%	4	3.8%	5
Cooperation between different units	91.0%	121	3.8%	5	5.2%	7
Review of organizational structure and policies	84.1%	111	8.3%	11	7.6%	10
Discussion and dialogue around areas of concern	82.6%	109	6.8%	9	10.6%	14
Athletic Director is hands-on and attentive to detail	79.0%	105	8.2%	11	12.8%	17
Aligning current activities and operations with new initiatives	77.3%	102	11.4%	15	11.4%	15
Understanding the business drivers behind initiatives	73.5%	97	12.9%	17	13.6%	18
Ensuring resource allocation (i.e. budgeting/staff) is linked to strategies and goals	73.5%	97	13.6%	18	12.9%	17
Preparing a communication plan	72.7%	96	12.9%	17	14.4%	19
Information gathering and generation of new ideas from all staff	72.0%	95	15.9%	21	12.1%	16
Receiving open messages from the Athletic Director on importance of goals and projects	72.0%	95	15.9%	21	12.1%	16
Changes in duties, roles, decision-making and reporting relationships	71.2%	94	22.7%	30	6.1%	8
Holding individuals and units accountable	71.2%	94	13.6%	18	15.2%	20
Utilizing strategic planning specific events and activities for all staff (i.e. full department meetings, staff retreats)	71.2%	94	18.2%	24	10.6%	14
Encouraging and rewarding innovation and risk taking	68.4%	91	14.3%	19	17.3%	23
Measuring and evaluating progress of initiatives and projects	67.4%	89	17.4%	23	15.2%	20
Ensuring new initiatives and projects are supported until completion	64.4%	85	13.6%	18	22.0%	29
Information is widely shared and accessible	62.1%	82	23.5%	31	14.4%	19
Utilizing strategic planning resources for all staff (i.e. newsletters, guidebooks, schedules)	56.1%	74	30.3%	40	13.6%	18
Using a standard planning format or template for all units	47.0%	62	37.9%	50	15.2%	20

Perceived Effectiveness of Implementation Strategies

The second research question strived to determine the perceived level of effectiveness of each strategy when implementing athletic department strategic plans. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate overall mean scores and standard deviations for the perceived level of effectiveness of each strategy. Only those respondents who indicated that the strategies were generally applicable to their athletic department were asked to rate the level of effectiveness. These questions were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with Very Ineffective (VI = 1), Ineffective (IE = 2), Neither Effective nor Ineffective (N = 3), Effective (E = 4), and Very Effective (VE = 5).

Table 4 provides a summary of the results and is sorted by the highest means. Receiving open messages from the athletic director on importance of goals and projects reported the largest mean (M = 4.27; SD = .703), indicating that a majority of athletic administrators perceive this strategy to be effective when implementing their athletic department strategic plan. Utilizing strategic planning resources for all staff (i.e. newsletters, guidebooks, schedules) reported the smallest mean (M = 3.91; SD = .894), indicating this strategy was neither effective nor ineffective in the implementation of the strategic plan. Overall, all of the strategies were perceived to be effective, as all of the means were between 3.91 and 4.27.

Table 4

Perceived Effectiveness of Implementation Strategies

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Receiving open messages from the Athletic Director on importance of goals and projects	4.27	.703
Athletic Director is hands-on and attentive to detail	4.22	.877
Holding individuals and units accountable	4.19	.704
Using a standard planning format or template for all units	4.16	.846
Measuring and evaluating progress of initiatives and projects	4.14	.787
Utilizing strategic planning specific events and activities for all staff (i.e. full department meetings, staff retreats)	4.14	.632
Working in collaboration with others	4.13	.796
Ensuring new initiatives and projects are supported until completion	4.13	.682
Ensuring resource allocation (i.e. budgeting/staff) is linked to strategies and goals	4.11	.745
Cooperation between different units	4.09	.753
Aligning current activities and operations with new initiatives	4.09	.715
Discussion and dialogue around areas of concern	4.09	.711
Understanding the business drivers behind initiatives	4.07	.750
Information is widely shared and accessible	4.06	.874
Preparing a communication plan	4.03	.756
Information gathering and generation of new ideas from all staff	4.01	.788
Encouraging and rewarding innovation and risk taking	4.00	.830
Review of organizational structure and policies	3.96	.709
Changes in duties, roles, decision-making and reporting relationships	3.96	.713
Utilizing strategic planning resources for all staff (i.e. newsletters, guidebooks, schedules)	3.91	.814

Note. The scale ranged from (1) "Very Ineffective" to (5) "Very Effective".

An additional element to add value to the study is combining the results from research question one and two to examine the perceived effectiveness and frequency of strategies. Table 5 shows the mean score for effectiveness and the percentage of respondents that indicated that the strategy was generally characteristic of their athletic department. The strategies are sorted in descending order by means. These findings indicate that the strategies perceived to be the most effective when implementing the athletic department strategic plan are not occurring most often.

As seen in Table 5, only 72% of administrators indicated that receiving open messages from the Athletic Director on importance of goals and projects was generally applicable to their athletic department, however, it had the highest mean score for effectiveness ($M = 4.27$). The 93.2% of administrators that identified working in collaboration with others as characteristic of their athletic department felt that the strategy was effective in implementing their athletic department strategic plan ($M = 4.13$). Only 47.0% of athletic departments are using a standard planning format or template for all units, a strategy that administrators perceive to be effective (4.16 mean). Conversely, 84.1% of athletic departments use a review of organizational structure and policies in regards to their strategic plan, even though they perceive this strategy to be neither effective nor ineffective.

Table 5

Perceived Effectiveness and Frequency of Strategies

	Mean	Yes (%)
Leadership		
Receiving open messages from the Athletic Director on importance of goals and projects	4.27	72.0%
Athletic Director is hands-on and attentive to detail	4.22	79.0%
Encouraging and rewarding innovation and risk taking	4.00	68.4%
Monitoring		
Holding individuals and units accountable	4.19	71.2%
Measuring and evaluating progress of initiatives and projects	4.14	67.4%
Ensuring new initiatives and projects are supported until completion	4.13	64.4%
Documentation		
Using a standard planning format or template for all units	4.16	47.0%
Utilizing strategic planning resources for all staff (i.e. newsletters, guidebooks, schedules)	3.91	56.1%
Organizational Culture		
Working in collaboration with others	4.13	93.2%
Cooperation between different units	4.09	91.0%
Application		
Utilizing strategic planning specific events and activities for all staff (i.e. full department meetings, staff retreats)	4.14	71.2%
Ensuring resource allocation (i.e. budgeting/staff) is linked to strategies and goals	4.11	73.5%
Aligning current activities and operations with new initiatives	4.09	77.3%
Communication		
Discussion and dialogue around areas of concern	4.09	82.6%
Information is widely shared and accessible	4.06	62.1%
Preparing a communication plan	4.03	72.7%
Strategy Formulation		
Understanding the business drivers behind initiatives	4.07	73.5%
Information gathering and generation of new ideas from all staff	4.01	72.0%
Aspects of Department		
Review of organizational structure and policies	3.96	84.1%
Changes in duties, roles, decision-making and reporting relationships	3.96	71.2%

Note. The scale ranged from (1) "Very Ineffective" to (5) "Very Effective".

Differences Between Effectiveness and Implementation Factor

The third research question for this study strived to determine if implementation factors and their individual elements were more effective for strategic plan implementation. There were eight implementation factors measured: organizational culture, leadership, aspects of the department, strategy formulation, application, documentation, communication and monitoring. Respondents were not told what type of factor each strategy was coded. Thus, to answer this question, means were calculated for the perceived effectiveness of the strategies grouped by implementation factor. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to determine if significant differences existed. There were no significant differences in the means of perceived effectiveness of implementation factor [F (7, 1925) = 1.960, p = .057]. The results are sorted in descending order, as depicted in Table 6.

Leadership, the implementation factor with the highest mean, had a score of 4.17 (SD = .814). The leadership strategies that make up this factor include athletic director is "hands-on" and attentive to detail, receiving open messages from the Athletic Director on importance of goals and projects, and encouraging and rewarding innovation and risk taking. Aspects of the department, the implementation factor with the lowest mean, had a score of 3.96 (SD = .709). Those strategies include review of organizational structure and policies and changes in duties, role, decision-making and reporting relationships.

Seven out of the eight implementation factors had a mean score above 4.0, indicating almost all of the factors are perceived to be effective in strategic plan implementation. While there are no statistically significant differences, when considering the overall approach, it seems

that type of strategy (implementation factor) does not alter the level of effectiveness when

implementing strategic plans.

Table 6

Perceived Effectiveness of Implementation Factors

Implementation Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation
Leadership	4.17	.814
Monitoring	4.15	.724
Organizational Culture	4.11	.774
Application	4.11	.697
Communication	4.06	.773
Strategy Formulation	4.04	.767
Documentation	4.02	.832
Aspects of the Department	3.96	.709

Note. The scale ranged from (1) "Very Ineffective" to (5) "Very Effective".

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

After reviewing the data collected and the necessary statistical procedures, several important conclusions regarding strategic planning implementation within athletic departments are revealed. Results from the survey indicate that athletic departments are utilizing strategic planning strategies and perceive a majority of them to be effective in strategic planning implementation, but there were not statistically significant differences between any implementation factor and the perceived effectiveness. Thus, this examination indicates there is no one factor perceived to be more effective when implementing strategic plans in athletic departments.

The results show that 63.4% of athletic departments do not use an external consultant to assist with strategic plan development, while a majority of athletic departments (85.6%) have a planning group or committee that oversees the strategic plan. These findings indicate an increase in the use of an external consultant when compared to Earle's (2009) study that found 72.2% of athletic departments did not use an external consultant. Previous literature has indicated that insufficient time is a significant challenge of athletic department strategic planning, which may help explain the increase in use of an external consultant (Earle, 2009; Kriemadis, 1997).

Frequency of Strategies

In regards to the frequency of implementation strategies used by athletic departments, 95% of the strategies (19 out of 20) asked in the survey are generally characteristic of 50% or more of the athletic administrators surveyed. This is a good indication that athletic departments are using the strategic plan as management tool in day-to-day operations. Working in

collaboration with others as a result of the strategic plan seems to be generally characteristic of most athletic departments surveyed. This supports Earle's (2009) findings that the most common benefit of strategic planning for athletic departments is being unified as a result of strategic planning. Furthermore, the results suggest that most athletic departments are utilizing organizational culture strategies, whereas documentation strategies are utilized the least by athletic departments when implementing strategic plans. However, it is important to remember that there is a wide array of potential strategies to consider depending on the goals of the athletic department.

While survey data reveals that communication strategies are being utilized by athletic departments, the open-ended responses are less conclusive. Multiple respondents indicated that a lack of internal communication is a barrier for effective strategic planning. This finding supports previous research that communication, or lack thereof, makes it difficult for athletic departments to effectively engage in strategic planning (Kriemadis, 1997). According to one respondent, "Only a very few of us know about any adjustment to a strategic plan. They are not shared generally until well after the fact" (Respondent #57) Another respondent indicated that "there is not adequate internal communication and discussion to appropriately support the plan". Preparing a communication plan for athletic department staff members can be a valuable tool for improving internal communication and prevent instances like those stated above. Additionally, using a standard planning format or template can enhance clarity and make sure that all staff members are on the same page (Allio, 2005).

When looking at the frequency of the monitoring strategies, this study revealed that 67.4% of athletic departments are measuring and evaluating progress of initiatives and projects, while Earle (2009) found that 88.9% of athletic departments measure department progress

against goals and objectives found in the strategic plan. The other monitoring strategies had similar low percentages, whereas 71.2% of athletic departments hold individual units accountable and 64.4% ensure new initiatives and projects are supported until completion. These results indicate that athletic departments are using strategies for monitoring less frequently compared to the others when they engage in strategic planning.

Athletic departments indicated that 72% use information gathering and generation of new ideas from all staff when they engage in strategic planning. This is a slight increase from Earle's (2009) study that found 64.2% involve employees at all levels in strategy development. This indicates that more athletic departments are attempting to involve all employees in strategic plan development. Most researchers agree that employee involvement in the planning process is known to help improve buy-in from employees, which helps unify the staff, leads to greater ownership of the plan, and can possibly increase the effectiveness of strategic planning by athletic departments (Bloom, 1996; Earle, 2009; Yow et al., 2000). It is interesting to note that this was not one of the top strategies that administrators indicated were effective when implementing their strategic plan. This could be due to the fact that respondents were senior athletic administrators and scores could be different for middle and lower level employees.

Additionally, only 73.5% of athletic departments ensure that resource allocation (i.e. budgeting/staff) is linked to strategies and goals. The findings in this study reveal a decrease from Earle's (2009) study that found that 88.9% of athletic department budgets reflect the goals, objectives, and priorities established in their strategic plan. Research has indicated that a lack of funding has been found to be a major challenge in implementing strategic initiatives (Earle, 2009; Mieso, 2010; Wilcoxson, 2012). This is an important step because it is the only way to make sure that adequate funding is available for the athletic department to achieve the stated

goals and objectives. In an athletics context, it is possible that strategic planning has yet to be thought of as a business advantage if there is lack of commitment to funding the strategic initiatives. Athletic departments should involve their development team to make sure efforts for fundraising and executing strategic goals are in place. Perhaps further research should examine resource allocation and how athletic departments link the budget and strategic plan.

Perceived Effectiveness

Of the five strategies with the highest overall mean score for perceived effectiveness, four pertained to leadership and monitoring. Receiving open messages from the athletic director on importance of goals and projects and having an athletic director that is "hands-on" and attentive to detail seem to be effective strategies for administrators when implementing their athletic department strategic plan. Utilizing strategic planning resources for all staff (i.e. newsletters, guidebooks, schedules) was perceived to be less effective than the other strategies, however, a mean of 3.91 out of 5 indicates that administrators felt this strategy was neither effective or ineffective when implementing their strategic plan. Thus, no strategy was perceived to be "ineffective."

Further examination between the frequency and perceived effectiveness for each strategy reveals that the strategies perceived to be the most effective when implementing the athletic department strategic plan were not generally applicable to most of the athletic departments surveyed. This discrepancy has two possible indications. The first is that some athletic departments are not using strategies that are deemed effective by athletic departments that do utilize them. These strategies include using a standard planning format or template for all units and measuring and evaluating progress of initiatives and projects. The second possible explanation is that certain strategies are more effective based on the goals and needs of athletic

departments. For example, an athletic department that has a "siloed" organizational structure where departments are not housed under the same building may need to use more communication strategies to effectively implement their strategic plan.

The third research question seeks to discover if there is a difference between perceived effectiveness and type of implementation factor. The findings reveal no significant differences between perceived effectiveness and type of implementation factor, indicating that no specific implementation factor is more effective when implementing athletic department strategic plans. Though no significant differences in mean scores were found, it is important to look at the scores for each implementation factor compared to previous research.

The factor leadership recorded the highest means, 4.17, which indicates that athletic administrators perceive leadership strategies to be most effective when implementing their athletic department strategic plan. This suggests that leadership from the athletic director is key for effective strategic planning implementation to occur. This finding supports Taylor and Miroiu (2002) who state that leadership is a key factor for implementation. Additionally, Earle (2009) also found that the role of the athletic director is crucial in strategic planning.

According to the literature, leadership can play a pivotal role in getting buy-in from lower-level employees who may be resistant to strategic planning and change (Noble, 1999). Previous research has found that personnel resistance is one of the challenges that make it difficult for athletic departments to engage in strategic planning (Earle, 2009; Kriemadis, 1997). Open-ended responses also revealed that leadership and buy-in from senior administrators was imperative for the strategic plan to work and not only be a document. This study further verifies that leadership is a crucial factor to eliminate challenges that prevent effective implementation.

Another common theme for effective implementation in the open-ended results was monitoring. Administrators believed that meeting frequently to get an update on the progress toward the initiatives and goals were helpful in implementing their strategic plan. In particular, one respondent indicated that HR evaluations are based on metrics related to their strategic plan. Interestingly, monitoring strategies had the second highest mean score for effectiveness, despite the low frequency. The consensus in the literature is that monitoring is a critical step to ensure strategic decisions are being made, and that gives departments the ability make necessary changes by adapt to the environment (Earle, 2009; Starsia, 2010; Sutton & Migliore, 1988; Yow et al., 2000).

The implementation with the lowest mean score for perceived effectiveness was aspects of the department. When considering this implementation factor, it is possible that turnover in the athletic department may lead to confusion about the strategic plan because of additional changes in duties, roles, and reporting relationships (Starsia, 2010). According to one respondent, "Our athletic department has had a lot of turnover the past few years. Different philosophies couple with the restart of the planning process leaves individuals burned out" (Respondent #144). Additionally, four respondents mentioned in the open-ended responses that their strategic plan is currently being revised or paused because of a new athletic director.

The lowest mean score for perceived effectiveness was 3.96 which indicate that no factor is perceived to be "ineffective" for strategic planning implementation. These findings support previous research which has found these factors to play a significant role in strategic planning implementation (Okumus, 2003). Additionally, the results suggest that a combination of factors are required to effectively implement strategic plans, and that not one implementation factor is significantly more effective than the other. This verifies the research conducted by Okumus

(2003) who found that it is a combination of all factors working together that makes strategic planning implementation possible. These findings support previous frameworks that propose multiple factors and their elements simultaneously work together for effective implementation and organizational change (Okumus, 2003; Saunders, Mann & Smith, 2008; Waterman et al., 1980). In an athletics context, this is important because each athletic department operates differently. For many sport organizations, there is no best way to strategize and strategy formulation should be situational (Thibault, Slack & Hinings, 1993). These results agree with Starsia's (2010) findings that strategic planning in intercollegiate athletic departments is multi-dimensional, and certain aspects apply under various contexts and conditions. Athletic departments, similar to higher education institutions, will not succeed in implementing strategic plans if a cookie-cutter approach is used (Earle, 2009; Kotler & Murphey, 1981; Wilcoxson, 2012). In other words, strategic plans cannot be implemented effectively by applying the same framework to all athletic departments.

Conclusion

With the constantly evolving landscape of NCAA Division I Athletics, many athletic departments are engaging in strategic planning in an effort to plan for the future and remain competitive. This study was intended to identify strategies being used within athletic departments to implement strategic plans, and to determine which implementation factors are perceived to be the most effective in implementation. The results provide explanations about the utilization and effectiveness of each implementation factor and its relationship with other factors in an athletics context. No significant differences between perceived effectiveness and type of implementation factor were found. The findings indicate that no factor and their individual elements are more effective in implementing strategic plans within athletic departments. Despite

this insignificance, the study revealed several areas that could lead to effective implementation for athletic departments currently engaged in strategic planning or just beginning the planning process.

The first is that leadership from the athletic director is crucial for effective strategic planning. Athletic directors constantly make critical decisions that affect implementation of the strategic plan. An additional recommendation is for athletic departments to utilize monitoring strategies more. Monitoring is a critical part of strategic planning, and the findings from this study indicate that these strategies are effective when implementing the athletic department strategic plan, but not all athletic departments are utilizing them. Intercollegiate athletics operate under rapidly changing conditions, and athletic departments must regularly review their strategic plan and update it accordingly. This is an important step if athletic departments want to maximize the benefits of strategic planning.

Lastly, a fundamental implication of this study is that there is no ready-made solution or framework to follow for athletic departments that engage in strategic planning. To effectively implement strategic plans, athletic departments must realize that organizational culture, leadership, aspects of the department, strategy formulation, application, documentation, communication and monitoring are interconnected. Additionally, implementation factors should be applied on a situational basis. For some athletic departments, the critical implementation factor might be communication. In others, it could be strategy formulation or leadership. In essence, effective strategic planning where goals and objectives are met must be attained by using a holistic approach to implementation.

Intercollegiate athletics is a huge industry. A constant challenge for NCAA Division I athletic departments is to continually increase revenue without compromising the mission of the

university. To do so, athletic departments must think and act strategically. A comprehensive strategic plan will guide athletic departments as they strive to be a premier intercollegiate athletics program and achieve academic and athletic excellence. Athletic departments should not take a prescriptive approach to strategic planning, but instead develop an implementation framework based on their needs, resources, goals and objectives.

Future Research

While valuable data was collected and many important conclusions were found, there are numerous opportunities for future research in this area. This research should expand the population to include athletic department employees from all levels of management to collect data from those more involved in the strategic planning process. A broader scope of participants would allow researchers to make comparisons between perceived effectiveness based on level of management. Similarly, a comparison based on the department of the employee (i.e. marketing versus compliance) may reveal differences in perceived effectiveness between each implementation factor.

To supplement the current research, a case study method could be employed to get an extensive and deeper understanding of strategy implementation and identify even more strategies used by athletic departments to implement strategic plans. Personal interviews should be used to identify specific examples of how athletic departments are implementing strategies. Also, a content analysis could investigate specific strategic planning documents used by athletic departments for implementation. These documents include a communication plan, financial plan, human resources plan, and any strategic planning templates or guidebooks. Additionally, a

longitudinal case study that evaluated implementation factors from the beginning to the end of

the strategic planning process could reveal possible changes in effectiveness during that time

frame.

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