A STUDY OF STUDENT INTEREST IN AND PERCEPTIONS OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The traditions and values of higher education have often clashed with an ever increasing focus upon intercollegiate athletics. The media have placed most of this focus upon large institutions, but the value of intercollegiate athletics is also critical to the management functions of small to moderate sized private institutions. Colleges and universities have unintentionally, or even sometimes intentionally, defined several widely varying roles for athletics. These roles vary from the value of the athletic program as a revenue producer to a strict focus on student participation. The role of athletics assigned by institutions is often dictated by size, location, and philosophy; yet the debate over the appropriate role, value, and scope of intercollegiate athletics continues on both external and internal levels. The perspectives of athletics by students, faculty, administration, alumni, and other constituencies vary widely from institution to institution. Many institutions justify the existence of intercollegiate athletics on the basis of their ability to fulfill these perceived roles. Many of these roles appear to be based on perceptions created by the media and other avenues of institutional exposure. Unfortunately much of the exposure athletics, in private institutions, receives is not based on actual facts or research.

Current research is not clear regarding the value of intercollegiate athletics as perceived by the general student population at small to moderate sized church-related private institutions. If intercollegiate athletics is to be truly a part or supportive of the institutional academic mission, a clear and concise mission is necessary. Any institution

that legitimately claims to be student centered should look at the interest and perceptions of the general student population. Athletics has been a growth industry in many small to moderate size private church-related institutions. This growth has been primarily due to expansion mandated by Title IX and the desire to increase enrollment at tuition driven schools (Jones, 1998). The value of institutional exposure has also been cited as a justification for expansion (Dodd, 1997). There was little literature supporting the value of the growth in intercollegiate athletics other than Title IX. The lack of clarity and limited amount of related literature on intercollegiate athletics at small to moderate sized private church-related institutions creates a need for more research on student interest and perceptions of this area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences and similarities of student interest and perceptions in the area of intercollegiate athletics and to examine whether the interest and student perceptions of intercollegiate athletics had an effect upon campus life, enrollment and retention. This was done by studying three small-moderate sized private church-related universities that had intercollegiate athletic programs of similar scope, athletic conference affiliation, undergraduate enrollment, and comparable costs. The study was designed to explore the significance of several internal variables affecting student interest in athletics, enrollment, and retention at each of the universities. The major focus of this study was to determine if any of these variables had significant effects upon student interest, enrollment, and retention.

The Statement of the Problem

The problem was to examine the differences and similarities of student interest in and perceptions and to examine whether the interest in and perceptions of intercollegiate athletics had an effect upon campus life, enrollment and retention at three small-moderate sized private church-related universities.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were used for this study:

1. There will be no significant differences in general student population interest in intercollegiate athletics among the various categories.
2. There will be no significant differences by variables in the effects of intercollegiate athletics upon initial enrollment by the general student population
3. There will be no significant differences by variables in the effects of intercollegiate athletics upon retention by the general student population.
4. There will be no significant differences in the factors that affect attendance at intercollegiate athletic events.
5. There will be no significant differences by variables in the level of competition influencing enrollment at any university.
6. There will be no significant differences by variables in the student's perception of a football team improving campus life and spirit.
7. There will be no significant correlation between Question 4 (athletic event attendance) and any of the other questions.

Significance of the Study

There is a paucity of literature dealing with general student population interest in athletics and the relationship that that interest poses for enrollment and retention at small to moderate sized church-related private universities. Most of the literature deals with the effects of athletic exposure and success upon enrollment at major universities. Virtually none of the literature deals with the effects of intercollegiate athletics upon retention for the general student population. Also very few researchers have examined what factors create student interest in intercollegiate athletic programs.

This study provided some insight into the levels of student interest at the three universities and what factors might influence these differences. It was the goal of the researcher to show how the delineation of these factors can help to influence student interest in intercollegiate athletics and possibly affect campus life and enrollment. Also the value of intercollegiate athletics and the affects it has upon retention can provide information for long-term programming and support for intercollegiate athletics.

Definition of Terms

Academic Classification: Academic year in school.

Dependent Variable: The 12 question survey instrument.

General Education Wellness Class: A required 1 hour general education course offered at each of the three universities in the study.

General Student Population: Undergraduate students enrolled in at least one class at the primary campus location and not enrolled in adult degree completion programs.

Independent Variables: Gender, varsity athlete status, international student status, campus residence status, permanent Oklahoma resident, age, and academic classification.

Intercollegiate Athletics: Varsity athletic programs sponsored by institutions of higher education and sanctioned by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics or the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

International Student: Student that is not a U.S. citizen and holder of an I-20 visa

On-Campus Resident: Student living in university owned or controlled housing.

Permanent Oklahoma Resident: A graduate of an Oklahoma high school or student having a defined family residence in Oklahoma.

Retention: The concept of retaining currently enrolled students

Small-Moderate Sized Private Church-Related Universities: Institutions with an undergraduate enrollment of fewer than 3000 students and limited graduate/professional programs and affiliated with a church denomination.

Student Interest: The attention of undergraduate students, who do not participate in athletics, towards intercollegiate athletics.

Varsity Athlete: Individual who is a member of a university sanctioned varsity intercollegiate athletic team.

Limitations

The following restricted the scope of this study:

1. The sample was limited to students enrolled in the general education wellness classes and the information gained in this study can only be generalized to the current general student population at the three universities in this study.

2. The instrument was designed by the researcher and was administered by individuals trained by the researcher.

Delimitations

1. The study was delimited to three small-moderate sized private church-related universities in the central Oklahoma area.
2. The following independent variables were included for analysis in this study: gender, age, academic classification, campus residence, international student status, varsity athlete status, and in-state residence status.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. The samples were representative of the general student population within classifications at each of the three universities.
2. All data collection influenced subjects equally and was compiled from all subjects in the same manner.
3. The respondents answered honestly.
4. The interpretation of the data was unbiased and truthful.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on intercollegiate athletics typically focuses on scandal and reform or economic issues. Some research directly addresses the intersections between intercollegiate athletics and external relations. Another area for research has been the impact of athletic participation upon the student athlete (Toma, 1998). To draw connections between intercollegiate athletics, its relationship with institutions of higher education, and its impact upon the general student population one must look at a disparate body of related literature.

American higher education is a combination of the English and German models of higher education (Chu, Seagrave, and Becker, 1985). The unique twist added to the American systems of higher education is the development of highly structured intercollegiate athletic programs. Legend has intercollegiate athletics developing as a "pure" recreational and physical activity for students; yet the reality is somewhat different. Areas addressed in this chapter are the historical foundations of intercollegiate athletics, roles of intercollegiate athletics (including external and internal roles), and other related studies.

Historical Foundations of Intercollegiate Athletics

Intercollegiate athletics traces its roots to the mid-nineteenth century with crew races between Harvard and Yale. In 1869 the first intercollegiate football game between Rutgers and Princeton was played. These early contests were generally organized by

students, coached by students, and only sometimes had a faculty member as a sponsor/advisor. By the 1890's the interest in these intercollegiate contests, particularly football, had increased to the point that there was significant interest by alumni and the local community (Rudolph, 1990). Pressure from these groups led to the hiring of "professional" coaches and the use of non-students in the contests. Public acknowledgment of intercollegiate athletics was also heightened by the development of the early All-American football teams by Yale football coach, Walter Camp, in the 1890's. This All-American concept yielded the first intercollegiate athletes and programs to receive national press coverage. This resulted in increased public visibility that served to raise the pressure to be successful in institutions that sponsored football.

One of the defining moments in the institutional governance of intercollegiate athletics occurred with the development of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1905. This organization was formed in response to pressure from President Theodore Roosevelt to reduce football injuries and standardize rules. The organization of the NCAA also led to the development of basic eligibility rules for participants. The NCAA also sponsored the first national intercollegiate championships with the Track and Field Championships in 1908.

The early development of intercollegiate athletic programs contributed to the romanticized concept of the "Collegiate Ideal". This is a uniquely American concept where higher education includes not just academic endeavors, but also the pursuit of community through customs and rituals, events and activities, and residential life and recreational facilities (Toma, 1999). The ideal also existed with the development of the concept of public service by higher education that developed in the late nineteenth

century (Rudolph, 1990). This concept of public service included both applied research and auxiliary programs that served the local community. Through this concept, intercollegiate athletic programs could serve interested individuals from the different constituencies. These two concepts, the Collegiate Ideal and public service, were used as justifications for the intercollegiate athletic programs that were developed at virtually all institutions of higher education by the 1920's (Chu, 1989).

Another significant occurrence in institutional control of intercollegiate athletics was the study commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation and published in 1929. This study, American College Athletics, was very critical of the then current state of intercollegiate athletics. The criticisms included: the commercialization of sports, the demoralizing influence of publicity upon the athletes, the distorted sense of social values, alumni recruiting, athletics being too absorbing to allow the athlete to study, a negative example upon secondary schools, and lack of intellectual purpose (Cowley,1999). Despite the acceptance of these criticisms by much of the academic community, the study did little to slow down the growth or popularity of intercollegiate athletics. The Carnegie study viewed the intercollegiate athletic programs as strictly auxiliary to the academic programs while, conversely, athletic programs had already been accepted by much of the higher education community and public as a tool for external relations (Chu, 1989).

Roles of Intercollegiate Athletics

This conflict over the appropriate role of intercollegiate athletics in higher education has continued through the years to the present. The Knight Foundation Commission issued a report in 1991 that was not drastically different from the Carnegie report in 1929.

While the Knight report did result in several changes in the governance structure of intercollegiate athletics, the Knight Foundation felt that external pressures upon athletics have not slowed (Gerdy, 1997). Authors such as Sperber in College Sports Inc.: The Athletic Department vs. The University (1990) and Thelin and Wiseman in The Old College Try: Balancing Athletics and Academics in Higher Education (1989) have chronicled the conflicts over the appropriate roles of intercollegiate athletics. A Harris poll commissioned by the Knight Foundation found that 96% of university faculty agreed with the statement that big-time athletic programs "are largely beyond the president's control and not part of the academic community"(Dodd, 1997). However there have been few studies or discussions on the roles (or mission) of intercollegiate athletics at small to moderate size private universities that do not seek to compete on the NCAA Division I level (Cross and Toma, 1998). While justifications for intercollegiate athletic programs have included physical fitness, character development, student interest, revenue, and institutional exposure (Gerdy, 1997), small to moderate sized private institutions have often used athletics to drive enrollment. This justification and others is explained through a four athletic mission paradigm model (Potter, 2000). This model uses Participation, Performance, and Enrollment paradigms to define institutional athletic missions. The Enrollment paradigm is illustrated by a study which shows that athletic costs may be offset by the revenue actually generated through portions of tuition paid by athletes on partial scholarships (Cusack, Sweeney, and Talbot; 1996). This approach is actually a revenue generator for many private universities. The athletic mission model also offers a fourth paradigm, referred to as the Synergistic paradigm, to explain a mission that combines strategic elements of the first three paradigms with an integrative

approach to the institutional mission (Potter). This approach recognizes the value of several different roles for intercollegiate athletics and provides a philosophical base for the defense of these roles to various constituencies. This integrative approach probably most characterizes the athletic mission of the three institutions that were examined in this study.

One private institution mentioned in the literature was a school that had experienced financial difficulties due to declining enrollment. The enrollment decline was reversed by the development of several programs that attracted students including football and other athletic programs. Concepts which described the "The Collegiate Ideal" were justification for the development of these programs (Jones, 1998). These new programs could also be justified through the Enrollment paradigm. Another institution mentioned in the literature had redefined its mission from a single sex population to a coeducational one. This school used the development of football and other men's sports to support this change in mission (Sellman, 1998). The approach of using athletics at this institution to support the university mission fits the definition of the Synergistic mission paradigm.

External Roles for Intercollegiate Athletics

Intercollegiate athletics, particularly spectator sports, provide a bridge between external constituents and "The Collegiate Ideal". The result is a concept of a broader university community rather than just the campus community. The relationship of the university to a larger community has many desired benefits for institutions particularly for those who seek to enhance their image and exposure (Toma, 1998).

Private institutions that desire to move to a higher level of competition generally do so to increase institutional exposure. High Point University of North Carolina moved from NAIA to NCAA Division II to NCAA Division I over a 10 year period. The driving force behind these moves was the desire to be recognized on a level with large private universities, such as Wake Forest and Duke, in their region. The costs associated with these moves were justified by the rationale that the increased exposure would result in increased enrollment and donations to the university (Cohen and DiMartino, 1999). Each upward reclassification move was made after the institution's administration felt that the athletic program could better fulfill the university mission at the new level. Xavier University of Cincinnati was a long time member of NCAA Division I, but sought to increase university exposure. One way of doing so was through intercollegiate athletics. The university uses athletics as one of nine keys in its strategic plan for university development. Xavier refers to their concept as "Mission Driven Athletics" (Dodd, 1997). The enhancement of institutional image through athletics has been studied quite extensively. The use of high profile sports like football and basketball is viewed by many schools as a key component in their institutional advancement strategy, whether it is with institutional identification, positive institutional image, or using athletics as an identity point in conjunction with other institutions (Toma, 1998). This concept also coexists with the contention that intercollegiate athletics are significant in defining the essence of the American college and university (Toma, 1999). This also provides a connection to the variety of roles that intercollegiate athletics involve.

Intercollegiate athletics as a marketing tool is well documented and supports the institutional advancement concepts presented by Toma (1998). Koller (1993) presents an

argument for the role of a senior marketing executive in managing intercollegiate athletics. The success of athletic programs at private universities such as St. Mary's and Pepperdine and the impact their success had upon the university image is highly valued with this approach (Koller). "Its brand identification, you have built a very strong brand identification through winning" says Barbara Brooks, the President at The Strategy Group, a sports marketing consulting firm (Dodd, 1997).

There is also evidence that success in high profile sports such as football can result in increased applications for admissions. A study compares the winning of football championships in NCAA Divisions I,I-AA, II, and III with financial and academic benefits for the institution. The results showed important variances as to level of competition and amount of exposure produced by the championship. For some institutions there were increases in donations, athletic revenue, and the quality of admission applicants. However these results were not consistent throughout the study (Daughtrey, 1998). Another study showed that improvement in a university's winning football or basketball record appeared to boost an institution's advertising in a way that produced an increased number of applicants to that school (Murphy and Trandel, 1994). The results of this study are supported by the findings of Chressanthis and Grimes (1993). USA Today (July 11, 1997; p.1) reported that many private universities in NCAA Division I reported application increases after major athletic success in football and men's basketball. This is often referred to as the "Flutie Factor" after the increase in admissions that Boston College received during the football season that Doug Flutie won the Heisman Trophy and led his team to a major bowl game (Dodd, 1997). Private institutions use this exposure from intercollegiate athletics to attract students far beyond

their traditional geographic audiences. The downside of this is the negative publicity received through athletic scandals such as those that occurred at Southern Methodist University and the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. However even with the negative publicity these institutions did not experience significant decreases in admissions applications (Dodd). Whether or not negative publicity has a significant statistical impact on applications is a question posed by Cross and Toma (1998) for further research. One result of the increase in applications might be that a school could be more selective in admitting students (Murphy and Trandel, 1994). This process of increasing a more selective applicant pool is one method of connecting the intercollegiate athletic mission to the academic mission of an institution. This athletic and academic connection has also been studied by Cross and Toma (1998). Their findings show that the public may be more aware of the academic reputation of an institution through high profile intercollegiate athletics.

There is a large body of literature on the external roles of intercollegiate athletics in enhancing an institution's donor base and donor generosity (Baade and Sundberg, 1996; Coughlin and Erekson, 1984; Daughtrey, 1998; Duronio and Loessin, 1990; and Gaski, 1982). While the effect of athletic success upon university donor generosity is not a subject of this study, there is an implied effect in the positive experiences and perceptions of intercollegiate athletics that current students may have for future alumni donation levels. Baade and Sundberg (1996) found that alumni giving is determined by an interaction of all elements of a university culture, implying a role for athletics having an effect upon future donations. This study also included small private universities and liberal arts colleges. They found that the average alumni gift at private universities

exceeded the average public university gift. Their findings are supported by the research of Duronio and Loessin (1990). Research does not show that winning percentages in football and basketball were a significant determinant of unrestricted alumni giving (Baade and Sundberg; Coughlin and Erekson; Sigelman and Bookheimer, 1983). There is also evidence attendance at athletic events is highly correlated with athletic donor giving (Coughlin and Erekson) and attendance at post-season athletic events correlates highly with unrestricted alumni giving (Baade and Sundberg). These findings imply that the roles private institutions assign to intercollegiate athletics may be significant in the cultivation of the current general student population for future alumni giving.

Internal Roles for Intercollegiate Athletics

Internal roles can be defined as those roles which deal with student-athlete welfare and the enhancement of the campus community through intercollegiate athletics. One of the key focuses of this study is the enhancement of campus community through athletics. This role of community building for intercollegiate athletics supports the concept of "The Collegiate Ideal"(Toma, 1999). The importance that intercollegiate athletics assumes in community building allows athletics to be a messenger and part of the overall message (Toma, 1999). The strength of positive connections that people form with organizations are a factor of the attractiveness of what they perceive to be distinctive and enduring about the organization. This level of positive connection has both implications for internal and external roles of intercollegiate athletics (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquil, 1994).

Institutions run a risk in allowing intercollegiate athletics to enhance campus community. The messenger may become the message and when scandals arise it shows a disconnect between intercollegiate athletics and the fundamental academic purpose of the university (Toma, 1999). The Beller and Stoll (as cited in Gerdy, 1997) study showed that revenue producing athletes, whether NAIA, NCAA Division I, II, or III, are significantly lower in moral development than their peer group. This is supported by similar research by Steiner (1991) who found that intercollegiate athletes had psychological traits that, while enhancing their ability in competition, put them at greater risk for alcohol, academic, or personal problems. These studies imply that problems with intercollegiate athletic programs could alienate the campus community as opposed to enhancing it.

The image of intercollegiate athletics and its ability to help build campus community has direct implications for retention of current students. The ability to create a sense of community and a positive connection with the general student population has not generated much discussion in the literature on intercollegiate athletics. Research has shown that bonding with a university through student life is associated with a more positive impression of student services (Stanifer, 1994). This obviously implies that a positive impression of intercollegiate athletics by the general student population can play a role in student satisfaction and retention. Another study on organizational identity found that this identity is based on subjective human interactions that are affected by both conscious and prereflectively unconscious thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that in turn influenced decisions and actions (Diamond, 1988). Understanding organizational identity assists in understanding personal motives and actions. Many of these feelings and

perceptions by the general student population may be directly or indirectly influenced by a positive image of intercollegiate athletics. This in turn is a justification of intercollegiate athletics by creating student identity with the organizational unit, the university. Obviously this identity has value for the positive connection and sense of community by students to assist in retention.

Research on student-athletes in a community college setting supports the contention that the stronger the relationship between the student and the institution, the greater the likelihood of student retention. This relationship was also one of several factors influencing student-athlete academic success. While the Berson (1996) study dealt with student-athletes, other researchers drew similar conclusions for the general student population's relationship with the university and subsequent academic performance (Dale, 1995; Walke, 1968). According to Bok (1986) the key characteristic of American higher education is the ability to be responsive to the needs of society and to do so through teaching, research, and service. The objective of academic success for each student helps fulfill this responsibility (Gerdy, 1997). The conclusion drawn from this is that intercollegiate athletics has a connection to the academic mission of an institution. This is so if athletics is a tool that creates identity and establishes relationships that help foster academic success by the general student population.

Other Related Studies

Another factor affecting a student's college choice or retention is the status of the institution. One study explored the relationship between global and local status in student choice. The researcher defined global status as student concern over programs or

institutions that would lead to higher paying jobs or long-term career advancement. Local status was defined as student concern over their academic and social standing with their immediate circle of friends and classmates. Heath (1993) contends that students face a trade-off over status in college choice and retention. The results of this study show that students value both global and local status and will trade one against the other in choosing a college. Heath also found that retention could be improved if accurate information were available concerning an institution's global status. The concepts of global or local status could have implications for intercollegiate athletics in regard to the level of competition (NAIA, NCAA Division I, II, or III). Drawing a conclusion that competing at the NCAA Division I level is analogous to global status one could infer that there is a trade-off between both athletic status and academic status in college choice and retention. This creates implications for study as to the effects of athletic status on college choice and retention. Does the level of competition or who the competition is have an effect on student interest or perceptions?

The demographics of the general student population and their relationship to students' sense of community and bonding with the university were studied by Stanifer (1994). The author divided students from one school at a university into "affiliated" or "non-affiliated" based on the number campus activities reported by the student. The research demographics included age, gender, and residence. The study compared the demographic factors, campus activity level, and student satisfaction with student services at the university. The demographic factors were found not to be statistically significant. The "affiliated" status group was found to have a significantly greater level of satisfaction

with student services. Stanifer's study was one that offered insights for the proposed hypotheses and methodology of this study.

Summary

The related literature on intercollegiate athletics in private institutions is rather limited. However the literature did provide a historical and philosophical basis for intercollegiate athletics with the "Collegiate Ideal" concept (Toma, 1999). The various roles of intercollegiate athletics may be external and/or internal in nature. The balance between external and internal roles has created much conflict in academe as to the appropriate roles of intercollegiate athletics (Gerdy, 1997; Sperber, 1990; Thelin and Wiseman, 1989). Internal roles include participation, physical fitness, student involvement, and campus spirit. External roles may include institutional exposure, enrollment, revenue production, and alumni giving. The integration and balance of these roles can be illustrated through the four athletic mission paradigms (Potter, 2000). Other related studies dealt with global and local status in regards to student choice (Heath, 1993) and campus bonding by students based on campus involvement (Stanifer, 1994). These studies were valuable for the examination of student retention. The roles of student choice in enrollment, retention, and interest will be the focus of this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Instrument Development

A pilot study was conducted to develop an instrument to examine the questions of interest in this study using a sample (n = 99) from the general education Wellness classes at a private university in central Oklahoma. The instrument comprised 12 questions that addressed various issues of student interest and perceptions of intercollegiate athletics. A five point Likert scale (1 = low, 5 = high) was used for each question. The scales assessed interest or agreement with the questions. Survey participants were also asked to provide information about academic classification, age, gender, campus residency, international student status, and varsity athlete status. Face and content validity were established by the researcher and the internal consistency reliability of the 12 item scale was 0.83 (coefficient alpha). There were no apparent problems with test administration, readability, or appropriateness. Significant differences were obtained with many of the independent variables lending credence to the research direction postulated in this study.

Preliminary Procedures

Instrument Revision. The statements on the pilot instrument were designed to assess the interest in and perceptions of intercollegiate athletics by students. The instrument was revised based on the results of the pilot study. One question was changed in its

entirety and several others were reworded to provide additional clarity. One additional variable, permanent in-state residency, was added.

The final instrument was reviewed and judged for content validity by a panel of five experts. Each member of the panel has served as an athletic director, coach, and an administrator in areas related to campus life at small-moderate sized private church-related universities. This significant experience in intercollegiate athletics and higher education administration provided unique insight into purposes of this study. After individual review each panel member felt that the instrument was valid for the purposes of this study. Face validity was determined by the researcher. Reliability of the final instrument was established through the test-retest with the pilot study and the actual study.

Subject Selection. Based upon the results of the pilot study it was decided to study three relatively homogenous small to moderate sized private church-related universities. Each of these universities had athletic departments similar in scope, competed in the same athletic conference, very similar undergraduate enrollments, and did not play football. The subjects were students who were required to enroll in general education wellness classes at each of the universities. It was anticipated that at each university the sample would be representative of the overall undergraduate student population and that the sample size would be over 100 students.

Operational Procedures

Approval for the study was obtained from the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board. Approval was also granted at each of the three private universities by the

Chairs of the respective Health and Physical Education Departments, after consultation with the appropriate Dean, for the administration of the instrument in the classes. None of the three universities involved in the study had an Institutional Review Board. The instrument was administered in each wellness class using the same procedures. The researcher administered the instrument at one of the universities. One faculty member, trained by the researcher, at each of the other two universities administered the instrument to their respective wellness classes. The instrument was administered at each university over a two day period in early April, 2000, and required approximately 15 minutes for each student to complete.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated using each level of the seven independent variables for each of the 12 questions. One-way analysis of variance tests were conducted separately for the independent variables of academic classification and age for each of the 12 questions. Independent t-tests were conducted for the independent variables of gender, international student status, campus residence, varsity athlete status, and permanent in-state residency status for each of the 12 questions. Since the primary focus of this study was upon the general student population, the t-tests were repeated while controlling for varsity athlete status. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the amount of shared variance between selected pairs of questions. The level of significance for all statistical tests was set at 0.05.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to explore the differences and similarities in student interest and perceptions of intercollegiate athletics at three different private universities. The demographics for each independent variable are presented in Table I.

TABLE I

DEMOGRAPHICS FOR THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	FREQUENCY
Classification	
Freshman	161
Sophomore	79
Junior	44
Senior	43
Other	2
Residence	
On-campus	243
Off-campus	86
Varsity Athlete	
Athlete	40
Non-athlete	289
International Student Status	
Yes-International student	28
No-International student	301
Gender	
Male	134
Female	195
Permanent Oklahoma Resident	
Yes-Permanent Oklahoma resident	162
Non-Permanent Oklahoma resident	167

Questionnaires were administered to a sample composed of 329 students in general education wellness classes at the universities.

Means and standard deviations for each question are presented in Table II.

TABLE II

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	3.158	1.181
2	3.131	1.221
3	2.541	1.446
4	2.723	1.239
5	2.818	1.420
6	3.322	1.392
7	1.723	1.179
8	1.985	1.203
9	3.668	1.129
10	3.199	1.129
11	3.562	1.383
12	1.793	1.249

Results for Individual Questions

Question #1: Rate your personal interest (as a fan) in the University's athletic program. None of the independent variables of campus residency, gender, academic classification, age, international student status, or permanent Oklahoma residency showed significance. The only significant results for question #1 are presented in Table III.

TABLE III

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR A SIGNIFICANT VARIABLE ON QUESTION 1

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Varsity Athlete Status*		
Athlete (N=40)	3.88	1.159
Non-athlete (N=289)	3.06	1.152

* probability < .05

Only one independent variable, Varsity athlete status, showed a significant difference. Varsity athletes showed greater interest as fans than non-athletes ($t = 4.20$, $p < .05$) Athletes are naturally going to have a higher interest in an activity in which they participate. The means for both categories (shown in Table II) would indicate a reasonably high level of interest in intercollegiate athletics by the students.

Question #2: How aware are you of home athletic events? The independent variables of campus residency and varsity athlete status showed significant differences for question #2 and are presented in Table IV.

TABLE IV

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES ON QUESTION 2

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Campus Residency*		
On-campus (N=243)	3.2881	1.202
Off-campus (N=86)	2.686	1.171
Varsity Athlete Status*		
Athlete (N=40)	3.70	1.285
Non-athlete (N=289)	3.0519	1.193

* probability < .05

The independent variable of campus residency showed significant differences (t-value=4.02, $p < .05$) using a t-test comparing the means. This result implies that there is a communication problem in awareness of home events for off-campus students. Analysis by a t-test also showed a significant difference (t-value=3.19, $p < .05$) between athletes and non-athletes for this question. It is obvious that athletes would have better knowledge of home events, particularly in their own sports.

Question #3: How often do you read the sports section of the campus newspaper? The independent variables of gender and varsity athlete status showed significant differences through analysis by t-tests. These significant differences are presented in Table V. With gender (t-value=2.54, $p < .05$), this significant difference could be explained by differing levels of interest by gender, which was not shown in question #1. This also might be explained by different levels of interest in reading the campus paper by gender. However the low overall mean for this question indicates low interest in the sports section of the newspaper. This has implications for the use of the campus paper as a communication tool for home athletic events. The differences between athletes and non-athletes (t-value=6.07, $p < 05$) could be explained by the fact that students are more likely to read the paper when it regularly covers activities that they are involved in. These differences have implications about the effectiveness of the campus paper as a communication or promotional tool for intercollegiate athletics. The moderate to high variability for each of these categories would indicate a large degree of heterogeneity in readership frequency and the low mean for non-athletes would indicate that the paper may not be an effective means of communication as regards to athletic events.

TABLE V

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES ON QUESTION 3

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Gender*		
Males (N=134)	2.7836	1.528
Females (N=195)	2.3744	1.365
Varsity Athlete Status*		
Athlete (N=40)	3.775	1.476
Non-athlete (N=289)	2.3702	1.358

* probability < .05

Question #4: How often do you attend University athletic events? The independent variables that showed significant differences were campus residency and varsity athlete status. The significant variables for question #4 are presented in Table VI. Using t-tests the variables of campus residence and varsity athlete status showed significant differences between the means of each category. The convenience of campus activities may explain this difference for the campus residency variable (t-value=2.89, $p < .05$). This difference can also be supported by the significant differences in awareness of athletic events by residence classification shown in question #2. The significance of on-campus residency for question #4 supports the findings previously mentioned in Chapter 2 regarding student involvement in campus activities. The differences in varsity athletic status (t-value=3.76, $p < .05$) are obviously explained by athletes' level of interest and involvement in athletics. This question also showed a high significant correlation of .7254 ($p < .05$) when correlated with question #1. This significance would be obvious in that interest would often dictate attendance at athletic events. This question also significantly correlated with every question except #10. The strongest relationships, after

the correlation with question #1, involved question #2, awareness of home athletic events (r=.6301, $p < .05$), and question #5, the importance of playing local rivals (r=.5153, $p < .05$). This could have implications for an examination of student attendance patterns at athletic events.

TABLE VI

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES ON QUESTION 4

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Campus Residency*		
On-campus (N=243)	2.8395	1.221
Off-campus (N=86)	2.3953	1.239
Varsity Athlete Status*		
Athlete (N=40)	3.40	1.317
Non-athlete (N=289)	2.6298	1.201

* probability < .05

Question #5: Does the importance of playing local rivals (Sooner Athletic Conference teams) have an effect upon your attendance at athletic events? The overall mean of 2.818 would indicate a rather neutral position by students upon the importance of playing local rivals however the variability indicated by the standard deviation would show a diverse opinion by students. The significant independent variables of gender and varsity athlete status for question #5 are presented in Table VII. Analysis of the means by t-tests showed gender and varsity athlete status having significant differences. The differences in the means for gender (t-value=2.67, $p < .05$), which are similar to the differences and variability reported for question #3, could reflect the depth of individual interest in intercollegiate athletics. This depth of interest could

also explain the differences between varsity athletes and non-athletes (t-value=2.92, $p <$ .05)

TABLE VII

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES ON QUESTION 5

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Gender*		
Males (N=134)	3.0672	1.405
Females (N=195)	2.6462	1.408
Varsity Athlete Status*		
Athlete (N=40)	3.425	1.357
Non-athlete (N=289)	2.7336	1.410

* probability < .05

Question #6: Does a personal friendship or relationship influence whether you have an interest in the athletic program? The overall mean of 3.322 would seem to indicate that friendship or relationships play an important role in interest. Two independent variables, campus residency and permanent Oklahoma resident status, showed significant differences for question #6 and are presented in Table VIII. The differences between on-campus residents and off campus residents (t-value=2.24, $p < .05$) can be explained by the fact that on-campus residents would have an easier time in developing friendships and relationship with other students. The differences between permanent Oklahoma residents and non-Oklahoma residents (t-value=-2.09, $p < .05$) might be explained by the fact that the non-Oklahomans are less likely to have local family or friends which would possibly occupy time and lessen interest in athletics.

TABLE VIII

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES ON QUESTION 6

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Campus Residency*		
On-campus (N=243)	3.4239	1.360
Off-campus (N=86)	3.0349	1.451
Permanent Oklahoma* Resident		
In-state (N=162)	3.1605	1.431
Out-of-state (N=167)	3.4790	1.339

* probability < .05

Question #7: How important was the reputation of the athletic program on your choosing to attend this university? The overall mean of 1.723 would seem to indicate that athletics does not play a significant role in attracting students to attend their university. However the amount of variability indicated by the standard deviation would show some differences. Table IX presents the results for the significant independent variables of varsity athlete status and international student status for question #7. Using t-tests two variables showed significant differences, varsity athlete status and international student status. Varsity athletes would obviously value the athletic reputation more than non-athletes (t-value=13.05, $p < .05$). The lack of importance that athletic reputation plays in non-athlete college choice is highlighted by both the low mean and the limited amount of variability shown through the standard deviation. International student status also showed significant differences in the importance of athletic reputation on college choice (t-value=3.36, $p < .05$). It would seem surprising that international non-athlete students would be highly aware of a university's athletic

reputation at this level of athletic competition. The level of athletic competition at the universities in this study does not generate much visibility beyond local coverage.

TABLE IX

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES ON QUESTION 7

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Varsity Athlete Status*		
Athlete (N=40)	3.575	1.551
Non-athlete (N=289)	1.467	1.467
International Student Status*		
International (N=28)	2.4286	1.399
Non-international (N=301)	1.6578	1.137

* probability < .05

Question #8: Whether or not you attend athletic events does the level of competition of the athletic program affect your decision to attend any university or college. The overall mean of 1.985 would indicate that the level of athletic competition has a limited effect on college choice. However three independent variables; gender, international student status, and varsity athlete status, showed significant differences for question #8. These significant variables are presented in Table X. The three significant variables; gender, international student status, and varsity athlete status, showed significant differences in the means after analysis by t-tests. As regards to gender, males showed a greater effect than females (t-value=4.82, $p < .05$). However the male mean is still rather low with fairly large amount of variability indicating this is a major factor for minority of males.

TABLE X

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES ON QUESTION 8

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Gender*		
Males (N=134)	2.3582	1.346
Females (N=195)	1.7282	1.022
International Student Status*		
International (N=28)	2.4286	1.317
Non-international (N=301)	1.9435	1.186
Varsity Athlete Status*		
Athlete (N=40)	3.25	1.235
Non-athlete (N=289)	1.81	1.091

* probability < .05

International student status also showed significant differences with international students having a greater mean than non-international students (t-value=2.05, $p < .05$). The international student mean is also rather low with a large amount of variability which shows a degree of heterogeneity among the responses. Another possible explanation could be that international students may be somewhat aware of major American university athletic programs. The significance of the differences of the means between varsity athletes and non-athletes (t-value=7.70, $p < .05$) is not surprising in that most athletes could be expected to attend a university with a higher level of athletic competition if given the opportunity. The surprise is that even after attending their current university, knowing its level of athletic competition, that the level of competition would still have an effect upon college choice.

Question #9: Do you feel that intercollegiate athletics play an important role in campus life and spirit? The high overall mean of 3.668 and moderate amount of variability would seem to indicate rather strong support of this question by students. The only independent variable showing a significant difference was varsity athlete status. Table XI presents the results of varsity athlete status.

TABLE XI

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR A SIGNIFICANT VARIABLE ON QUESTION 9

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Varsity Athlete Status*		
Athlete (N=40)	4.525	.877
Non-athlete (N=288)	3.549	1.110

* probability < .05

There were no significant differences across the variables except for varsity athlete status (t-value=5.34, $p < .05$). Varsity athletes, as would be expected, showed extremely strong positive support for the roles their programs fulfill on campus. Non-athletes showed less but still very positive support for the campus life roles of athletic programs.

Question #10: How do you rate the emphasis that upper level administration places on athletics at this university? An overall mean of 3.199 and a standard deviation of .900 would indicate that the student population in general views the emphasis on athletics as appropriate. There were no significant differences across the variables. It is interesting to note that varsity athletes had a mean of 3.00 (SD=1.013) with moderate variability indicating that they do not appear to feel that their programs are under-emphasized.

Question #11: Would a football team at this university improve campus life and spirit? The overall mean of 3.562 would appear to indicate a rather strong degree in interest in having a football program by the student population. The only independent variable showing a significant difference was campus residency status. The results of the campus residency variable for question #11 are presented in Table XII.

TABLE XII

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR A SIGNIFICANT VARIABLE ON QUESTION 11

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Campus Residency*		
On-campus (N=243)	3.6584	1.349
Off-campus (N=86)	3.2907	1.446

* probability < .05

The independent variables; gender, varsity athlete status, international student status, age, and permanent Oklahoma resident status; showed no significant differences. The variable campus residency was significant (t-value=2.13, $p < .05$). This could illustrate the value of activities enhancing campus residential life. It would appear that a football program could play a positive role in campus life. The rather high amount of variability is reflective of the wide range of responses to this question indicating a degree of heterogeneity on this question.

The independent variable of academic classification showed significant differences through a One-way Analysis of Variance test. The descriptive statistics for the classification variable are presented in Table XIII and the analysis of variance results for the classification variable are presented in Table XIV.

TABLE XIII

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR CLASSIFICATION VARIABLE

GROUP	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Freshman (N=159)	3.7329*	1.3265
Sophomore (N=78)	3.6076	1.2549
Junior (N=44)	3.2955	1.4400
Senior (N=42)	3.1163*	1.6649

* significance difference between these two groups, probability < .05

TABLE XIV

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: QUESTION 11 BY CLASSIFICATION VARIABLE

SOURCE	D.F.	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARES	F RATIO	F PROB.
Between Groups	3	16.5362	5.5121	2.9190*	.0343
Within Groups	323	609.9287	1.8883		
Total	326	626.4648			

* probability < .05

Using a One-way Analysis of Variance test comparing the means of the four classification categories, a significant difference was found between freshmen and seniors. A post-hoc test using Tukey's HSD test supported the significant difference. This significant difference could be explained by the fact freshmen tend to be more involved in campus life while seniors are more anxious to prepare for careers. This difference also has implications for the recruitment of new students and retention programs. The large degree of variability for seniors also illustrated the wide range of responses by this group.

Question #12: Does the athletic program play a role in your decision to continue enrollment at this university? With an overall mean of 1.793 (SD=1.249) athletics does

not appear to play a strong role in retention. However two independent variables, international student status and varsity athlete status, showed significant differences after statistical analysis of the variables. The results of the two significant variables for question #12 are presented in Table XV.

TABLE XV

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES ON QUESTION 12

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
International Student Status*		
International (N=28)	2.50	1.401
Non-international (N=301)	1.73	1.216
Varsity Athlete Status*		
Athlete (N=40)	3.80	1.418
Non-athlete (N=289)	1.52	.932

* probability < .05

Two variables showed significant differences in t-tests, international student status and varsity athlete status. Once again the significance of international student status (t-value=3.17, $p < .05$) was surprising, implying that athletics may play a major role in retention for this group of students. The role that athletic participation plays in retention helps explain the significant differences of the means in a t-test (t-value=13.51, $p < .05$) of the varsity athlete category. There is also a high correlation coefficient of .7104 ($p < .05$) between question #12 and question #7 indicating a significant relationship between college choice and retention. The overall mean of 1.793 would seem to indicate that athletics does not appear to play a strong role in retention except in regards to variables of varsity athlete and international students.

Further Statistical Analysis

Since the primary focus of the study was to determine the interest and perceptions of the general student population, t-tests were conducted using the independent variables of gender, campus residency, and international student status while controlling for varsity athlete status by eliminating the responses of varsity athletes from the analysis. Results varying from the previous analysis using the entire sample, significant differences, controlling for varsity athlete status, were found for the following questions:

Question #2: When controlling for varsity athlete status the campus residency variable was also significant (t-value=4.00, $p < .05$). The results for the significant variable of campus residency are presented in Table XVI.

Table XVI

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR A SIGNIFICANT VARIABLE ON QUESTION 2

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Campus Residency*		
On-campus (N=212)	3.217	1.176
Off-campus (N=77)	2.597	1.127

* probability < .05

This significant finding supports literature in Chapter 2 on the value of on-campus residency for involvement in student activities. This involvement is logical in that on-campus residents will naturally be more aware of athletic events.

Question #3: When controlling for varsity athlete status the gender variable was also significant (t-value=2.16, $p < .05$). The results for the significant gender variable of question #3 are shown in Table XVII.

Table XVII

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR A SIGNIFICANT VARIABLE ON QUESTION 3

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Gender*		
Males (N=113)	2.584	1.480
Females (N=176)	2.233	1.259

* probability < .05

Question 4: When controlling for varsity athlete status the campus residency variable was also significant. The results for the significant campus residency variable in question #4 are presented in Table XVIII.

Table XVIII

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR A SIGNIFICANT VARIABLE ON QUESTION 4

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Campus Residency*		
On-campus (N=212)	2.750	1.358
Off-campus (N=77)	2.299	1.361

* probability < .05

This significance (t-value=2.86, $p < .05$) is important in that it supports previous literature illustrating the value of campus residency on attendance at campus events even when controlling for those (varsity athletes) that are likely to have greater interest.

Question 5: When controlling for varsity athlete status the gender variable is not significant. This is a difference from the t-test using the entire sample and can be explained by the fact that male varsity athletes placed greater value on playing local rivals and are now removed from the sample.

Question 6: When controlling for varsity athlete status the campus residency variable is not significant, the gender variable is now significant. The results for the campus residency and gender variables for question #6 are presented in Table XIX.

Table XIX

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR VARIABLES ON QUESTION 6

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Gender*		
Males (N=113)	3.062	1.378
Females (N=176)	3.443	1.376
Campus Residency		
On-campus (N=212)	3.387	1.353
Off-campus (N=77)	3.039	1.455

* probability < .05

The significance of gender (t-value=-2.30, $p < .05$) could illustrate differences in interest by gender. Men may more likely have a deeper interest in athletics and females may be more interested in the social benefits of athletic interest. Despite the lack of significance, the means of campus residency categories once again illustrates the ability of on-campus students to be more involved in campus life and form stronger influential relationships.

Question 7: When controlling for varsity athlete status the international student variable was also significant. The results for the significant international student variable on question #7 are shown in Table XX. The means shown in Table XX do not appear to indicate that athletics would play a strong role in student choice of universities. The significance (t-value=5.76, $p < .05$) of international student status would however indicate that a university's athletic reputation would play at least a moderate role for international student choice.

Table XX

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR A SIGNIFICANT VARIABLE ON QUESTION 7

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
International Student Status*		
International (N=23)	2.391	1.340
Non-international (N=266)	1.387	.740

* probability < .05

Question 8: When controlling for varsity athlete status the international student and gender variables were also significant. The results for these significant variables on question #8 are presented in Table XXI.

Table XXI

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES ON QUESTION 8

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
International Student Status*		
International (N=23)	2.435	1.273
Non-international (N=266)	1.756	1.059
Gender*		
Males (N=113)	2.159	1.286
Females (N=176)	1.585	.877

* probability < .05

As with the analysis of statistical tests run on the entire sample the significant difference of the means of the levels of international student status (t-value=2.90, $p < .05$) and gender (t-value=4.51, $p < .05$) would indicate that the level of athletic competition on

college choice has at least some value for these two variables. However the means would also indicate that the level of athletic competition is not a major factor in college choice for many students.

Question 11: When controlling for varsity athlete status the campus residency variable is not significant. These statistics and changes for question #11 are presented in Table XXII.

Table XXII

COMPARISON OF THE MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE ENTIRE SAMPLE AND CONTROLLED SAMPLE ON QUESTION 11

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATON
Campus Residency		
On-campus		
(entire sample, N=243)*	3.658	1.349
(control sample, N=212)	3.646	1.357
Off-campus		
(entire sample, N=86)*	3.291	1.446
(control sample, N=77)	3.390	1.397

* probability < .05

This difference can be explained by the slight increase in the mean for off-campus residents, from 3.291 (entire sample) to 3.390 (controlling for varsity athlete status). The on-campus mean and the standard deviations showed virtually no changes. This would indicate that athletes tend to feel less strongly about a football program's ability to improve campus life and spirit. Also it indicates that a large percentage of athletes live off-campus.

Question 12: When controlling for varsity athlete status the international student variable was also significant. The results for this significant variable in question # 12 are presented in Table XXIII.

Table XXIII

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR A SIGNIFICANT VARIABLE ON QUESTION 12

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
International Student Status*		
International (N=23)	2.522	1.310
Non-international (N=266)	1.429	.840

* probability < .05

The significance difference (t-value=5.68, $p < .05$) of the international student mean from the non-international mean is consistent with the significant findings on enrollment (questions #7 and 8) for the international student variable. The mean for non-international students would indicate that athletics play a limited role in retention while the international student mean would suggest at least a moderate role for athletics in retention.

Discussion

The results would indicate a moderate to strong interest in intercollegiate athletics by the general student population. This was illustrated by the results in question #1 (student interest) and supported by the findings in question #9 (campus life and spirit).

One variable that showed surprisingly strong levels of interest was the international student status. It appears international students have a stronger interest in intercollegiate athletics than what the researcher hypothesized. This interest is implied by the significance of international student status on questions #7, #8, and #12. These questions all deal with enrollment and retention. International fascination with American culture

may account for some of this interest. Another explanation could be the terminology used in the instrument may not be clear to some of the international students. The impact of intercollegiate athletics upon international student recruitment and retention may be very underestimated. Further research could help to define this interest and help universities use it as a marketing tool.

The study also supported previous research showing higher levels of campus involvement by on-campus residents. The significance of the campus residency variable for questions #2 (awareness of home athletic events), #4 (attendance at athletic events), #6 (relationships influencing athletic interest) and #11 (football team improving campus life and spirit) illustrate this concept. This also supports the emphasis that each of the three universities place on residential life. The significant correlation between question #2 and #4 suggest that on-campus residency has a strong effect upon attendance at athletic events. When promoting athletic events universities would be wise to target specific groups that tend to show greater interest in athletics. The value of having on-campus athletic events can be inferred by the potential of increased attendance and resulting increases in student involvement in campus life. The data from question #11 showed a relatively strong interest by the general student population in football. This data and the results showing the value of campus residential life would seem to indicate a strong effect for intercollegiate athletics on retention.

The results of question #12 on retention would seem to indicate that athletics has little influence on retention. Questions #7 and #8, determining student enrollment choice effects, would indicate that athletics play a limited role on enrollment by non-athletes. However when looking at the significant variables on questions #7 and #8 it would seem

that athletics has a strong effect on enrollment and retention for specific campus groups such as athletes, males, and international students. The results of questions #9 (athletics role in campus life and spirit) and #11 (football improving campus life and spirit) when compared with question #12 (retention) would appear to contradict each other when looking at the overall means. However this might be explained by the fact that students do not feel the universities are responsive to their interests and respond negatively on question #12.

The effects of gender were significant for questions #3 (readership of the campus newspaper), #5 (importance of playing local rivals), and #8 (effect of level of competition upon student enrollment choice). The results of these questions would indicate that females may be less likely to have the same depth or type of interest as males possess in intercollegiate athletics. Also the results of question #8 would indicate that females do not use the level of athletic competition as an enrollment choice factor to same extent as males.

The variables of on-campus residence, international student status, and gender have the largest influences upon the questions posed by this researcher. International student status is the surprise variable not anticipated in this research. Permanent Oklahoma residence status was significant only on one question (#6). Classification was also significant on only one question (#11) while age was not a significant factor on any of the questions. Varsity athletic status was significant on ten questions but this was anticipated and built into the hypotheses. Based upon these findings, intercollegiate athletics at these three universities would appear to have recruitment and retention value only upon specific target populations. Based upon both the descriptive and inferential statistics

football would appear to have positive value for campus life and by implication: retention.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences and similarities of student interest in and perceptions of intercollegiate athletics at three small-moderate sized private church-related universities in Oklahoma (n = 329). This study sought to determine if intercollegiate athletics played an important role in campus life, enrollment, and retention. The study also sought to determine which, if any, variables had a significant effect upon student interest, enrollment, and retention.

Findings

Hypothesis #1: there are no significant differences in general student population interest in intercollegiate athletics among the various categories, is accepted. This hypothesis is accepted due to the fact there were no differences across the variables other than varsity athlete status. Since the hypothesis was based on the general student population the significance of varsity athlete interest had no effect upon the findings.

Hypothesis #2: there are no significant differences by variables in the effects of intercollegiate athletics upon initial enrollment by the general student population, is rejected. This hypothesis is rejected because international student status was significantly different for question #7 and gender and international student status were significantly different for question #8.

Hypothesis #3: there are no significant differences by variables in the effects of intercollegiate athletics upon retention by the general student population, is rejected. This hypothesis is rejected because international student status had significant differences for question #12.

Hypothesis #4: there are no significant differences in the variables that affect attendance at intercollegiate athletic events, is rejected. This hypothesis is rejected due to campus residency having significant differences on question #4 and gender having significant differences for question #5.

Hypothesis #5: there are no significant differences by variables in the level of competition influencing enrollment at any university, is rejected. This hypothesis is rejected since both the gender and international student status variables show significant differences for question #8.

Hypothesis #6: there are no significant differences by variables in the students' perception of a football team improving campus life and spirit. This hypothesis is rejected due to significant differences shown by the variable of international student status on question #11.

Hypothesis #7: there are no significant correlations between question #4 (athletic event attendance) and any of the other questions, is rejected. This hypothesis is rejected since question #4 significantly correlates with question #1, question #2, and question #5.

Conclusions

Based upon the findings of this study the following conclusions were reached:

1. Intercollegiate athletics play an important role in campus life at these three small-moderate sized private church-related universities. There is a high degree of student interest in and support for the athletic programs.
2. A varsity football program has the ability to be a very positive contribution to campus life and spirit at these universities. A football program could also have a positive effect upon enrollment and retention.
3. The key variable in athletic interest, support, and attendance is on-campus residency. This supports the emphasis that each of these universities places on residential life. This conclusion also has implications for housing and activities that are available to on-campus residents.
4. Based on their interest in intercollegiate athletics, groups such as male students and international students could be target markets for enrollment and retention programs.

Recommendations

The surprising degrees of significance with international student status could pose several interesting questions for research. One might be the question of degree of understanding of the international students of the language used to describe intercollegiate athletic activities by this researcher. Another area of interest might be if the emphasizing of intercollegiate athletics in the recruitment of international students would be effective.

The significance of gender and its relationship to other variables could provide some research questions. The differences in level of interest, either direct or implied, could have implication for Title IX issues. The depth of interest and the effect upon student attendance at home athletic events could be also be an item for study.

The impact of intercollegiate athletics upon on-campus residency could be an important factor in the justification of athletic programs and the implications for retention. These issues are particularly vital for tuition-driven private universities. The lack of research on these issues at small-moderate private institutions has created a demand for more information on the relationship of intercollegiate athletics to the overall university mission and functions.

The research instrument could be used to examine student interests and perceptions at specific universities. The use of this instrument along with a student satisfaction inventory could provide valuable information for recruitment and retention programs at a specific university. Also this instrument, or a version of it, could be used to compare student interests and perceptions at different universities.

The most valuable recommendation may be that universities have a clear and defined mission and roles for intercollegiate athletic programs. There is value in redefining the athletic mission to strategically position the athletic program to maximize its ability to support the overall mission of each institution.

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APPENDIX

Survey of Student Interest and Perceptions of Intercollegiate Athletics

This survey is for individual research purposes and is not conducted by an administrative office at this university.

Please darken in the circle on the answer sheet that best describes you on the scale for each question. Please answer each question and do not skip 13 through 19. **Do Not Mark On This Questionnaire.**

1. Rate your personal interest (as a fan) in the University's athletic program.

No Interest ← ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ → Very high Interest

2. How aware are you of home athletic events?

Totally Unaware ← ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ → Highly Aware

3. How often do you read the sports section of the campus newspaper?

Not at all ← ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ → All the time(weekly)

4. How often do you attend University athletic events?

Not at all ← ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ → All the time(weekly)

5. Does the importance of playing local rivals (Sooner Athletic Conference teams) have an effect upon your attendance at athletic events?

Not Important ← ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ → Highly Important

6. Does a personal friendship or relationship influence whether you have an interest in the athletic program? (do you go because a friend attends or participates)

Not Important ← ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ → Highly Important

7. How important was the reputation of the athletic program on your choosing to attend this university?

Not Important ← ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ → Highly Important

8. Whether or not you attend athletic events does the level of competition (major college or small college) of the athletic program affect your decision to attend any university or college.

Not Important ←——① ② ③ ④ ⑤——→ Highly Important

9. Do you feel that intercollegiate athletics play an important role in campus life and spirit?

Not Important ←——① ② ③ ④ ⑤——→ Highly Important

10. How do you rate the emphasis that upper level administration places on athletics at this university?

Too Low ←——① ② ③ ④ ⑤——→ Too High

11. Would a football team at this university improve campus life and spirit?

Not at all ←——① ② ③ ④ ⑤——→ A lot

12. Does the athletic program play a role in your decision to continue enrollment at this university?

Not at all ←——① ② ③ ④ ⑤——→ A lot

13. **Academic Classification** 1=Fr 2=So 3=Jr 4=Sr

14. **Student Residence**: 1=On-campus 2=Off-campus

15. **Current Varsity Athlete** 1=Yes 2=No

16. **International Student (hold an I-20 visa):** 1=Yes 2=No

17. **Permanent Oklahoma Resident:** 1=Yes 2=No

18. **Gender:** 1=Male 2=Female

19. **Age:** Place age in "SEC" column, write both age in blank boxes and darken circles

Thanks for your assistance.

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: April 4, 2000 IRB #: ED-00-233

Proposal Title: "A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STUDENT INTEREST AND PERCEPTION OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS"

Principal Investigator(s): Steve Edwards
Jeff Potter

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Signature:

Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance — April 4, 2000 Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modification to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Jeff D. Potter

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A STUDY OF STUDENT INTEREST IN AND PERCEPTIONS OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Major Field: Applied Educational Studies

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the son of Jeff and Barbara Potter

Education: Graduated from Bartlesville Sooner High School, Bartlesville, Oklahoma in May, 1970: received Bachelor of Arts degree in Physical Education from Oklahoma Baptist University in May, 1974; received Master of Education in Physical Education in July, 1978. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Health and Human Performance in July, 2000.

Experience: Employed as a graduate assistant coach at Cameron University, Lawton, Oklahoma; public school teacher in Shawnee, Oklahoma; Track and Field coach at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma; Administrator and teacher at Riverside Christian High School, Riverside, California; Coach and instructor at Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, California; Coach and instructor at California State University, Fullerton, Fullerton, California; Coach and instructor at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma; Coach at University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska; Coach and Faculty at California Baptist College, Riverside, California; Faculty at Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.