

Five and Thrive: Guiding Student-Athletes to Academic Success

by Hamsa Fayed, Brad Fratangelo, Christian Kaschak, Remy Maisel, and Mallory Peterson

Policy Recommendations

Presidential Leadership Academy
The Pennsylvania State University
Spring 2014

Table Of Contents

Title.....	1
Abstract.....	3
Introduction.....	5
<i>History of Intercollegiate Athletics and Governance.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Overview of Contemporary Issues in College Sports.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>What We Can Address.....</i>	<i>12</i>
Previously Proposed Policies.....	14
Recommended Primary Policy.....	22
<i>Raising Academic Standards.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Athletic Scholarships: A Loan Format.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Academic Threshold Scholarships: Tying Athletics to Academic Investment.....</i>	<i>28</i>
Necessary Implementation Procedures.....	31
<i>History of NCAA Regulation.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Problems of the NCAA.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Implementing and Addressing the Problem: Top-Down Structure Policy.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Bridge Committees.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Recruitment Counselors.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Policy Enforcement.....</i>	<i>39</i>
Conclusion.....	41
References (<i>with A Note on Citations</i>).....	45

I. Abstract

The role of collegiate athletics in academia has been in question for over a century now. Multiple issues arose in the the first official university competition, a regatta between Harvard and Yale in 1952, that are still being debated today. As a whole, the American people have created a sporting culture that has extended from the professional level and ‘trickled down’ into places where it does not belong, such as colleges and universities. Academic institutions, like universities, were created to facilitate higher learning, but more recently have had their focus shifted to athletics. There are nearly 900 student-athletes on 31 Varsity sports teams out of Penn State’s 35,000 undergraduate students, yet the first thing that people associate with Penn State is ‘football’ or ‘athletics.’ This is the very reason that our group decided to attack this issue head on.

After examining the history of college athletics and the NCAA, as well as some previously failed policy attempts like student-athlete unions and the promotion of associate degrees, we decided to propose some policies to improve the insufficient system that is currently in place. By raising academic standards for admissions, creating loan scholarships to deal with the one-and-done phenomena, and by tying athletics to academic investment via academic threshold scholarships, we believe the lives of student-athletes will be enriched.

Upon devising a pyramid structure, we hope to capture the ‘trickle-down’ effects from implementing policies at the professional leagues to benefit the student-athlete academically with proposed bridge committees. Recruitment alterations and the employment of regional, or conference-based, ‘guidance counselors’ will better ensure that the student-athlete can

compete on both academic and athletic levels without compromising either one. Further, by tying team's finances (in terms of scholarships) to the graduation success rate and coaches as well as athletic director's bonuses to academic performance of the student-athlete, the focus on academics will be made paramount and success on the field and in the classroom will ensue. With these proposed policies, we hope that we can provide the first steps in changing our sports first culture and shift the attention back on academics.

II. Introduction

“The American culture is so in love with athletics that even though many people know the right thing to do, they can’t do it.”¹ -William Kirwan, speaking to the New York Times

Although the role of organized sports in universities has been questioned for over a century, a number of scandals and crises in recent years have forced the spotlight back onto the culture created by commercialized intercollegiate athletics. The solutions that have been proposed depend on what the authors view as the problem with intercollegiate athletics, and, as such, vary immensely. Some simply argue that so-called “student-athletes” are really functioning as professional athletes, and should be given compensation commensurate with their abilities and contributions. Some believe that players need assistance negotiating contracts, and should be able to receive compensation for the use of their jersey number or likeness for promotional, revenue-gaining purposes. Others argue that paying college sportsmen would undermine the importance of academics in the balance, tipping the scale too far in favor of the “athlete” half of “student-athlete.” Still others think people who debate policies like these are failing to see the forest for the trees. We suggest that if intercollegiate athletics are a forest, then it is suffering a blight, and that the best way to make it healthy again is to remove the damaged trees, one by one. All of the myriad problems with college sports combine to create a toxic culture in big athletic institutions which we have seen enable tragedies like Jerry Sandusky’s long-time sexual abuse of children and the firing of Rutgers basketball coach Mike Rice for his verbal and physical abuse of his players, as well as scandals revolving around financial gifts and benefits given to student-athletes. In this paper, we will

¹<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/07/education/colleges-increasing-spending-on-sports-faster-than-on-academics-report-finds.html>

provide a brief history of the governance and practices of intercollegiate athletics and an overview of the problems that have been identified and the attempts to address those problems, and then we will identify the problems we believe we can address and outline the solutions we see fit.

History of Intercollegiate Athletics and Governance

Intercollegiate athletics was born in scandal in the 1850s (Smith 10). In one of the first-ever intercollegiate sports competitions -- a regatta between Harvard and Yale in 1852 -- Harvard attempted to gain an unfair advantage over Yale by hiring a skilled coxswain who wasn't a student. The sponsorship of the Harvard-Yale regatta by Elkins Railroad Line additionally demonstrates the fact that "the commercialization and propensity to seek unfair advantages existed virtually from the beginning of organized intercollegiate athletics" (Smith 11). This was a fact that was not lost on university presidents in the early years. Organized college sports clubs were growing more numerous and more popular. In 1859, Amherst College and Williams College played the first intercollegiate baseball game (Lewis 228). Princeton University and Rutgers University played the first intercollegiate soccer match in the United States in 1869 (Lewis 229), as well as the first game of intercollegiate football.² Amherst College, Cornell University, and McGill University competed in the first intercollegiate track and field event in 1873 (Lewis 228). By the end of the nineteenth century, there were already fears that athletics were out of control. Robert Smith cites Harvard President Charles William Eliot

² <http://www.scarletknights.com/football/history/first-game.asp>

(1869-1909)³ worrying that amateur contests had been turned into commercial spectacles because of lucrative gate receipts, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology President Francis Amasa Walker (1840-1897)⁴ warning that “[i]f the movement shall continue at the same rate, it will soon be fairly a question of whether the letters B.A. stand more for Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Athletics” (Smith 11). Because it was difficult to govern at the institutional level using combinations of student and faculty oversight, this was the beginning of conferences that were created both to schedule games between institutions and to provide some broader regulatory standards to which individual institutions would be bound (Smith 11). According to Jobyann Renick, student-athletes in the early 1840s were active participants in the administration of all aspects of intercollegiate athletics; today, that level of participation is virtually unheard of (545).

The problem, as the presidents of Harvard and MIT saw it in the late nineteenth century, was the influx of money into sports. Indeed, Smith cites reports that a successful student-athlete at Yale in the late 1800s was compensated with benefits including a suite of rooms, free meals, a scholarship, profits from program sales, an agency arrangement with the American Tobacco Company that gave him a commission on New Haven cigarette sales, and a paid vacation to Cuba (11). Undoubtedly, Hogan mattered to Yale because he was a winner, and that mattered to Yale because winning meant ticket sales. Hogan might not have felt too out-of-place if he found himself at Ohio State University in 2011.

³ <http://www.harvard.edu/history/presidents/eliot>

⁴ <https://libraries.mit.edu/mithistory/institute/offices/office-of-the-mit-president/francis-amasa-walker-1840-1897/>

The huge influx of money into collegiate athletics came, as lucrative opportunities often do, with high costs. In the year 1905 alone, collegiate football resulted in eighteen student-athlete deaths and over a hundred major injuries, garnering the attention of the White House. The problem persisted until New York University Chancellor Henry MacCracken invited delegates from the major college football programs to discuss whether it was possible to regulate college football, or, if not, it would have to be abolished. President Roosevelt sought to have participants in the previous White House conference on the issue of regulating college sports be involved in the process, and it was the combination of the educators invited by MacCracken and the White House delegates who would lead the concerted effort for reform and resulted in the formation of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association (IAA). In 1910, the IAA was reformatted to make rules generalizable to other sports besides football, and was renamed the National Collegiate Athletic Association (Smith 12).

Increased interest in college sports and an increased flow of money into the new industry continues to feed into each other in a damaging cycle that has mostly continued unabated until today. The NCAA takes in revenue of \$10.6 billion dollars, with annual expenses in the (relatively small) range of around \$700 million. The most profitable college football teams - Texas, Georgia, and Penn State - brought in about \$68 million, \$53 million, and \$50 million in profits in a year, according to NCAA data from 2012.⁵ It is no surprise that with the stakes this high, the pressure to maintain profitability is extreme. In terms of college sports, maintaining profitability means putting on a good game, and this means recruiting the best possible athletes. While regulations prevent universities from engaging in the kind of deceit that

⁵ <http://www.statisticbrain.com/ncaa-college-athletics-statistics/>

Harvard did in the first-ever intercollegiate competition against Yale, these regulations are violated in spirit by, for example, the University of North Carolina admitting basketball players who cannot read multisyllabic words.⁶

Overview of Contemporary Issues in College Sports

“You sold your souls, and you’re going to continue selling them...there’s not one of you in this room that’s going to turn down any of our money. You’re going to take it. I can only offer it.” - Sports Marketing Executive Sonny Vaccaro in response to Penn State President Emeritus Bryce Jordan in 2001⁷

Unfortunately, the general issues that have plagued intercollegiate athletics since their inception have remained largely the same in the intervening 160 years. The financial incentive to focus on athletics at the expense of academics has, if anything, increased with the lucrative business opportunity broadcast deals provide in tandem with ever-growing interest in watching college sports. The NCAA made a \$10.8 billion deal with CBS and Turner entertainment to televise the men’s basketball tournament in 2010.⁸ Money is a powerful motivator, and a lot of money an even stronger one. More than any other motivator, money also tends to breed corruption, and the college sports industry is no exception. In an article for *The Atlantic* entitled “The Shame of College Sports,” Taylor Branch writes that:

A litany of scandals in recent years has made the corruption of college sports constant front-page news. We profess outrage each time we learn that yet another student-

⁶ <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/07/us/ncaa-athletes-reading-scores/>

⁷ <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-college-sports/308643/>

⁸ <http://chronicle.com/article/NCAA-Signs-108-Billion-De/65219/>

athlete has been taking money under the table. But the real scandal is the very structure of college sports, wherein student-athletes generate billions of dollars for universities and private companies while earning nothing for themselves.⁹

In fact, a more recent *Atlantic* article by Jordan Weissmann contends in its title that “The Real Crisis in College Sports: It’s Wasted Money, Not Wasted Students.” According to Weissmann, the real issue isn’t that “the fervor for tail-gating, face-painting, and general sports nuttiness is eclipsing the schools’ academic missions”¹⁰ or that, as highlighted by the child rape scandal involving Penn State, a powerful football program can have a “sinister impact”¹¹ on universities, but that the problem is the universities whose sports teams are not profitable, because those are the schools that are taking money from academics to fund sports. Further, Weissmann contends that “We don’t know for sure what the effect of sport’s [sic] on a school’s core educational mission is,”¹² and that even if good football seasons do cause lower GPAs among men, as a University of Oregon study contends, the benefits of more money and more applications justify university presidents’ acceptance of that fact.

We reject this assessment on the grounds that colleges should not primarily be businesses, but institutions of learning. If our goal were to increase application rates, we would certainly side with Mr. Weissmann’s forgiving outlook. Weissmann’s colleague, Branch, was accurate to describe college sports as a “Very Big Business,”¹³ but this is a realistic statement of

⁹ <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-college-sports/308643/>

¹⁰ <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/01/the-real-crisis-in-college-sports-its-wasted-money-not-wasted-students/251922/>

¹¹ <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/01/the-real-crisis-in-college-sports-its-wasted-money-not-wasted-students/251922/>

¹² <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/01/the-real-crisis-in-college-sports-its-wasted-money-not-wasted-students/251922/>

¹³ <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-college-sports/308643/>

the way things are, not an aspirational statement about the way things ought to be. Funds for academic institutions are limited, and by definition, a budget works like a pie, wherein adding more to one section necessarily takes from another. As reported by the *New York Times*, colleges are rapidly increasing funding of college sports academic funding, while academic funding declined or stayed flat. The report, released by the American Association of University Professors, charged that “The spending priority accorded to competitive athletics too easily diverts the focus of our institutions from teaching and learning to scandal and excess.”¹⁴ While our focus is on Division I athletics, it is also important to note that this report found that the problem is worse at Division II and Division III schools. William Kirwan, co-chair of the Knight’s Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, said that “Many of us have had the concern that the out-of-control expenditures in Division I would have a cascading effect, and this report suggests that our worst fears are coming to pass.”¹⁵

In a separate *Times* article, Kirwan said that “We’ve reached a point where big-time intercollegiate athletics is undermining the integrity of our institutions, diverting presidents and institutions from their main purpose.”¹⁶ The article, called “How Big-Time Sports Are College Life,” also reports data from a November 2011 survey by Widmeyer Communications, which found that

“83 percent of 1,000 respondents blamed the “culture of big money” in college sports for Penn State officials’ failure to report suspected child abuse to local law enforcement;

¹⁴<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/07/education/colleges-increasing-spending-on-sports-faster-than-on-academics-report-finds.html>

¹⁵<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/07/education/colleges-increasing-spending-on-sports-faster-than-on-academics-report-finds.html>

¹⁶http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/22/education/edlife/how-big-time-sports-ate-college-life.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

40 percent said they would discourage their child from choosing a Division I institution “that places a strong emphasis on sports,” and 72 percent said Division I sports has “too much influence over college life.”¹⁷

In this article, author Laura Pappano hones in on the problem of student athletics in one word: balance. Pappano collates quotes from academics and watchdogs about the root causes of the imbalance between academics and athletics, which she also summarizes neatly, in one phrase: university athletics are “looking more like independent franchises than university departments.”¹⁸

This institutional imbalance is reflected in the lives of student-athletes, who are asked to perform like professional athletes with none of the perks of that career while performing academically. This is nearly impossible for most student-athletes to achieve, and the decision about which component to skimp on routinely comes down to what the university believes to be more important. Whether spoken or not, at many universities, the clear winner is athletics. After all, for the institution, it is more valuable to have a star athlete who barely passes his classes than it is for said institution to have an athlete who doesn’t perform to his potential because he chose to spend his time in the library rather than on the field. Indeed, student-athletes are rewarded for their athletic ability, whether concretely, with scholarships, or in a more abstract way, in terms of being treated as valued members of the campus.

¹⁷http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/22/education/edlife/how-big-time-sports-ate-college-life.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

¹⁸http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/22/education/edlife/how-big-time-sports-ate-college-life.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

What We Can Address

“Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano.” [You should pray for a sound mind in a healthy body.] - Juvenal, Satire X¹⁹

As we have discussed, the fundamental problem with collegiate athletics is that the balance between student-athlete is tipped in favor of athletics, especially in the case of the major sports like basketball and football. We believe that the original role of collegiate athletics was to provide a competitive athletic environment as a complement to a competitive academic atmosphere and to foster an esprit de corps among entire universities, but that collegiate athletics have deviated from this initial role. The problem is more severe among schools like Penn State, which rely upon the draw of athletics to maintain alumni involvement and funding. Although Penn State also provides academic support to their athletes and has attempted to emphasize academic success in concert with athletic triumph, this has not eradicated the problem entirely, and nor are these practices universal. We want the “student” part of “student-athlete” to mean the same thing for student-athletes as it does for any other student at Penn State. Furthermore, we want to emphasize that the term is “student-athlete” rather than “athlete-student” for a reason. To that end, the main goal is to get them to complete their degrees and graduate in good academic standing. The goal is not to hold student-athletes to a higher academic standard than the rest of the matriculated students at the school, but to hold them to the same standards. More and more students are taking five (or even six) years to

¹⁹ <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/131752-sit-mens-sana-in-corpore-sano-a-healthy-mind-in>

complete undergraduate degrees that have traditionally been considered four-year programs.²⁰ Therefore, we aim to impose an expectation that every student-athlete, especially those who receive funding for their studies, completes their degree, ideally within 5 years. Our policy will address the ways in which universities and governing bodies can shift the scales back toward a balance between academics and athletics, utilizing a combination of regulation and financial incentives to make it not just ideal that student-athletes meet the current NCAA minimum academic standards for eligibility, but imperative that they complete their degrees, preferably within the average time it takes for non-athletes.

We recognize that athletics have value for students as individuals, and universities as a whole, and so we do not wish to see them eradicated. The Ancient Greeks placed as much value on athletic training as they did on academics, making sports a part of the school day (Plato's name was even derived from his love of wrestling). Countless articles also enumerate the benefits of participating in team sports in particular. The problem arises only when athletics begin to eclipse academics. This has happened as a result of the huge influx of money into the industry (none of which goes to the athletes, other than in terms of scholarships), which in turn places undue emphasis on sports, especially profitable ones. We seek to impose a top-down cultural shift by changing the policies that make academic success secondary to athletic success. As the money at stake means universities are unlikely to suddenly choose to value academics over sports -- a sentiment which is mirrored by athletes, like basketball players, who have begun to see universities as a waypoint or stepping stone to the professional leagues -- it is necessary to require it of them. And as the emphasis upon sports has cascaded down from

²⁰ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/specialfeatures/2013/07/25/the-rise-and-fail-of-the-five-year-college-degree/>

university leadership to the student body, so too may a shift to increased balance between “student” and “athlete” from the upper echelons of university administration and sports governance be reflected amongst the student body.

III. Previously Proposed Policies

"Since when do unions belong in college sports? Unions are socialist and communist collectives. Sports are about people coming together as a group, working towards a common goal from each according to his abilities, putting the team ahead of the ...

oh my god." -Jon Stewart on *The Daily Show*, April 10, 2014²¹

The controversies surrounding collegiate athletics have been apparent for quite some time. Ever since, discussions about these problems have taken place. With such discussions come other solutions that have been proposed. Some of the previously proposed solutions do provide a chance to improve the situation for student-athletes and their stressful situations. However, these solutions do not necessarily attack, what we believe to be, the central issues to collegiate athletics. We will look into a couple of these solutions and discuss why they may not fit into our own proposal.

One such proposal is the recent and well-known attempt to gain the right for student-athletes to unionize. Northwestern University is known for driving its athlete hard; especially the university's football players. These student-athletes are known to devote up to fifty hours per week for football; which is apparently above the N.C.A.A. limit. Fifty hours for each week is a huge commitment for student-athletes. When you add in the amount of time needed to attend classes, study, and complete assignments, the schedule begins to fill. Even though

²¹ <http://thedailyshow.cc.com/videos/bwjj0i/sports-disparity>

Northwestern boasts a ninety-seven percent graduation rate for its athletes, such a large commitment to both the academic and athletic schedules can be strenuous for the players.²²

Earlier this year, student-athletes from Northwestern University initiated a movement to initialize unions. Led by Kain Colter, a twenty-one year old quarterback and psychology major from Northwestern University, a substantial amount of football team members began pursuing the goal of starting a union. In the words of Mr. Colter, ""Student athletes don't have a voice. They don't have a seat at the table. The current model resembles a dictatorship with the NCAA putting rules and regulations on students without their input."²³ Colter was able to assemble a team of lawyers and gain support from the National College Players Association in order to set up a case to present to a hearing provided by the National Labor Relations Board. Success would mean a great change to the collegiate athletic landscape.

Kain Colter and the rest of his team, thus, made a great victory as a result of their efforts. On Wednesday, March 26 it was determined by the National Labor Relations Board that "Northwestern University football players on scholarship are employees of the school and therefore entitled to hold an election to decide whether to unionize."²⁴ The decision took multiple circumstances into account, including the lengthy amount of hours athletes had to commit.

"The players spend 50 to 60 hours per week on their football duties during a one-month training camp prior to the start of the academic year and an additional 40 to 50 hours

²² <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/01/opinion/nocera-a-step-toward-justice-in-college-sports.html>

²³ <http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/18/us/northwestern-unionization-attempt/>

²⁴ http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-03-26/business/chi-northwestern-union-bid-20140326_1_labor-law-football-players-college-sports

per week on those duties during the three- or four-month football season,” the ruling said. “Not only is this more hours than many undisputed full-time employees work at their jobs, it is also many more hours than the players spend on their studies.”²⁵

This reasoning allowed the N.L.R.B. to rule in favor of the student-athletes. The ruling will certainly set a precedent for other universities and can lead to further unionization movements. These unions have the potential to give student-athletes more control over their schedules and allow them to manage their, already, busy lives.

While the approval of the National Labor Relations Board is a massive leap forward, the fight for unionization is far from over. The N.C.A.A. will oppose such changes, not surprisingly, and attempt to keep control. Earlier this year, N.C.A.A. chief legal officer, Donald Remy, issued a statement concerning the unionization movement.

This union-backed attempt to turn student-athletes into employees undermines the purpose of college: an education. Student-athletes are not employees, and their participation in college sports is voluntary. We stand for all student-athletes, not just those the unions want to professionalize.

Many student athletes are provided scholarships and many other benefits for their participation. There is no employment relationship between the NCAA, its affiliated institutions or student-athletes.

Student-athletes are not employees within any definition of the National Labor Relations Act or the Fair Labor Standards Act. We are confident the National Labor Relations Board will find in our favor, as there is no right to organize student-athletes.²⁶

²⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/27/sports/ncaafootball/national-labor-relations-board-rules-northwestern-players-are-employees-and-can-unionize.html>

This was not the last of the rhetoric that the N.C.A.A. delivered. They have reached out to the leaders of other universities as well. According to a source in the Huffington Post, they even warned of dangers to the athletic systems if the union trend continues. They stated, or more accurately warned, that “scholarships would be cut or eliminated. The number of championship experiences would be dramatically reduced. Smaller sports would lose funding.”²⁷ While these warnings could just be rhetoric, they show that the N.C.A.A. is determined to stand against the unionization of student-athletes. Such staunch opposition will make things very difficult on the road ahead for the movement started by Colter and his teammates.

There exist other types of proposals; in addition to the revolutionary union effort. While smaller, such changes can still bring about a great deal of change for student-athletes. One of these forms of proposals has to do with compromising for an Associate’s degree. Instead of having to spend four whole years in college, a student-athlete could receive a smaller scholarship and only stay in school until receiving an Associate’s degree instead. This would mean less time on the team; however the athletes would have less academics to concern them with as well.

Another small change is to pay the student athletes. There are claims that pay for student-athletes are artificially suppressed. One justification for this is that student-athletes are being paid with an education. However, others disagree due to the issue when defining student-athletes. One professor explains his thoughts on the situation.

²⁶<http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/press-releases/ncaa-responds-union-proposal>

²⁷http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/14/ncaa-student-athlete-unions_n_5149658.html?utm_hp_ref=college

"People are missing the point on all this," said David Hollander, professor of hospitality, tourism and sports management at New York University. "It's not whether we should pay college athletes but that if you are an employee and your job is to play sports, than you should get paid."

Hollander also said that the U.S. is the only country that uses college athletes as a way to develop players for the professional leagues and that having player development outside of college avoids the "hypocrisy of student-athletes that are really unpaid players."²⁸

It is certainly logical. If a student-athlete is treated as an employee whose job is to play for the university, why not pay them. With this, they would have a better incentive to commit to their rigorous training schedules. Doing so would also support their college lifestyles and living expenses.

While paying student athletes would seem fair, it would be extremely challenging if they are considered as full salary employees. In Mark Koba's article, it is stated from a Drexel University study that an average college football player's salary could be worth \$178,000 per year. Compare that to college basketball players who would be worth a, significantly higher, \$375,000 per year. Such large salaries could very well be unrealistic to accomplish. While Mr. Koba admits that paying student-athletes may be inevitable, he expresses that it will not be easy; especially in the face of the N.C.A.A. which is committed fight against any attempt to change the status quo.²⁹

²⁸ <http://www.cnbc.com/id/101569514>

²⁹ <http://www.cnbc.com/id/101569514>

A much more extreme proposal, which runs opposite to the unionization solution, is to ban collegiate athletics all together. It is a notion that is not new to the discussions. There are many critics to college sports. One of them is Malcolm Gladwell; a staff writer for the *New Yorker* and a best-selling author of the novels 'The Tipping Point' and 'Outliers.' Gladwell is more of a critic of college football. During an interview in the summer of 2013, he compared college football to dog fighting.

In what way is dog fighting any different from football on a certain level, right? I mean you take a young, vulnerable dog who was made vulnerable because of his allegiance to the owner and you ask him to engage in serious sustained physical combat with another dog under the control of another owner, right?

Well, what's football? We take young boys, essentially, and we have them repeatedly, over the course of the season, smash each other in the head, with known neurological consequences.³⁰

While some people would describe Mr. Gladwell's statements as extreme, he does draw logical lines in his rhetoric. It seems that his talking points carry influence as well. In 2012, Gladwell debated in New York over banning college football. Though it could be argued that Gladwell and his debate partner, Buzz Bissinger, lacked proper education on the subject, their arguments had a great impact on the audience. As reported by an ESPN article, only sixteen percent of those who attended the debate thought college football should be banned. By the end of the day, those who supported the banning of college football

³⁰<http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/07/20/gladwell-why-college-football-is-like-dog-fighting/>

increased greatly to fifty-three percent.³¹ Regardless of education on the subject matter, such influence can carry great weight in the public's perception.

There are those, of course, who stand outright against banning college football. One argument sums it up almost perfectly.

We're not going to ban college football, a billion-dollar business that enriches plenty of people and is wildly popular among both live and television viewers. We're not going to ban a game that feeds the \$8 billion professional football business that would wither without the NCAA. A major college like Stanford isn't going to drop football, as Gladwell wishes, at least not until we find out that football is even more dangerous than we already know it is.³²

This argument uses the logic that banning college football, or any college sport, would be extremely unpractical. These entities are practically industries. Imagine if Penn State were to ban football from our community. For one, the opportunities of future student-athletes would diminish. Not to mention the surrounding economy of State College and Centre County would be severely undermined. Tens of thousands of fans come to support the Nittany Lions at every game. Some businesses in State College may not even manage to stay open. Such trends would be similar for other college towns. By banning sports, the surrounding communities would struggle as a result.

Most of these previous examples certainly have the potential to help student-athletes. Unionization of athletes can provide new flexibilities. Such a change can help them control

³¹ http://espn.go.com/college-football/story/_/id/7908395/should-college-football-banned

³² <http://thinkprogress.org/sports/2013/07/30/2381101/the-logic-and-absurdity-behind-malcolm-gladwells-desire-to-ban-college-football/>

their schedules and ensure that they are not being treated unfairly. Unionizing can also help avoid over-commercialization of student-athletes. On the other side, an associate's degree compromise can allow student-athletes to receive some college education while living an athletic lifestyle. Finally, paying student-athletes can help legitimize their athletic schedules. Extra compensation can ensure that they are more fairly treated if they have a heavy schedule.

Even with these changes, the primary underlying issue remains untouched. As we have stated, our group strongly believe that the main issue and controversy on collegiate athletics is the lack of focus on academics. The manifest function of college educations is the delivery of transformational academic pursuits to young men and women. Unionizing student-athletes, while giving them more control, would not affect the lack of academic focus and concerns. The same issues exist with paying them and allowing them to pursue Associate's degrees instead. Of course, banning any sort of college sport is not go happen. We want to improve the situations for student-athletes; not make their lifestyles extinct. Without attacking the root problem, these may not bring about the change we wish to achieve.

IV. Recommended Primary Policy

“College athletics should be for those that are truly interested in pursuing a college education and their sport. Our college participants are students first...”

*-Craig Littlepage, speaking to *The Cavalier Daily*³³*

It seems widely agreed upon that the quandary posed by the current state of collegiate athletics cannot be addressed with one solution. Rather, an extensive list of possible solutions

³³<http://www.cavalierdaily.com/article/2014/04/lawsuit-against-ncaa-college-conferences-seeks-greater-athlete-compensation>

has been proposed, as we have previously discussed. In researching these proposed solutions, we have come across many viable options and have been inspired to devise our own policies. Keeping in mind that our ultimate goal is to return the focus to academics and maintain the validity of the “student” aspect of the student-athlete, we have compiled a series of solutions into one policy plan that we believe provides the most feasible and plausible resolution to the current “problem” of collegiate athletics.

Raising Academic Standards

"College presidents have put in jeopardy the academic credibility of their universities just so we can have this entertainment industry. ... The NCAA continually wants to ignore this fact, but they are admitting students who cannot read."

-Gerald Gurney, speaking to CNN³⁴

³⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/07/us/ncaa-athletes-reading-scores/>

The current academic standards required by the NCAA for a prospective student-athlete to be eligible to play collegiate sports at the Division I level are a 2.0 GPA and a corresponding ACT/SAT math and reading composite score based on the sliding scale shown in Figure 1. To clarify, this sliding scale is characterized by a decreasing SAT composite score/ACT score requirement that correlates with an increasing core GPA. It is very discouraging that the

Division I Sliding Scale for Initial Academic Eligibility		
Core GPA	SAT	Sum ACT
3.550	400	37
3.525	410	38
3.150	560	48
2.025	1000	85
2.000	1010	86

minimum GPA requirement for student-athletes as defined by the NCAA is much lower than the average 3.0 baseline GP required for most college admissions for regular students.³⁵ Admirably, the NCAA has already established that in 2016 the academic standards will be raised to a minimum core GPA of 2.3

and a corresponding 1080 SAT composite math and reading score or a 93 ACT sum

Figure 1: Current Composite Test Score NCAA Requirements³⁶

according to the new sliding scale. Furthermore, the

NCAA has attempted to encourage academic achievement by defining three levels of qualification for incoming freshman student athletes after 2016. The full qualifier can receive a scholarship and participate in competition as well as practice. The academic redshirt cannot engage in competition. Finally, the non qualifier cannot receive any of these benefits during his/her first year.³⁷

While we appreciate that the NCAA recognizes the need to require greater academic accomplishment and capability for aspiring collegiate student-athletes, we do not think that the

³⁵ <http://www.petersons.com/college-search/college-admission-requirements-gpa.aspx>

³⁶ <http://studentathleteconnect.com/resources/Picture1.png>

³⁷ http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Eligibility_Rules/High_School_IE_Standards.pdf

alterations it has promoted are sufficient. We believe that the NCAA is in fact doing student-athletes a disservice by setting the national academic standard at this level. Our reasoning behind this statement is based upon the demand placed upon student-athletes by their athletic schedules and obligations. Universities often admit student-athletes with lower grade point averages and testing scores than their regular admissions standards due to the commercial appeal of increasing athletics revenue or popularity by gaining athletic talent. Therefore, student-athletes commonly enter into an academic environment for which they are inadequately prepared and incapable of prospering in. Furthermore, they are required to commit large amounts of time to their respective sports, which only decreases their ability to cope with the demanding rigors of their institutions' academics. This phenomenon has led to scandals and shocking discoveries throughout the arena of collegiate athletics.

One of the widely publicized scandals that shined light on the academic integrity disparity in collegiate sports was the 2012 incident at UNC involving student athletes receiving grades they didn't deserve.²¹ In close proximity, Mary Willingham, a learning specialist at UNC-Chapel Hill who was designated to help student-athletes acclimate to the academic atmosphere of the university, admitted that she took part in cheating by performing acts such as "pulling a paper"²¹ out of student-athletes who couldn't even read or write. We are extremely alarmed that student-athletes are accepted into universities but are not qualified to undertake a collegiate education. While specialists and tutors such as Willingham are provided, they cannot replace the academic background that is necessary to thrive in collegiate athletics. Following this logic, universities such as UNC and UNC-Chapel Hill are not honoring the contracts they signed with student-athletes offering them an education in return for their athletic talent

because the student-athletes are not capable of taking advantage of that education. Therefore, we propose that academic standards are raised for student-athletes throughout the country.

It is our belief that the NCAA should commit to a policy that includes requiring student-athletes to meet the regular admissions standards of the respective university or college that they wish to play for. This is not a policy intended to lessen the opportunities for student-athletes; instead it is intended to ensure that the institutions they attend are capable of upholding their end of the contract exchanging education for athletic ability. We believe that this policy would encourage universities to once again focus on the student half of the student-athlete and lessen the sacrifice of academic success for commercial gain. It is also our belief that this reallocation of emphasis back on academics would promote greater integrity and lead to less scandals as athletic programs would not have as much incentive or necessity to “cheat” on the behalf of student-athletes. Finally, this policy proposal would ensure that student-athletes were more capable of managing the load of academics as well as athletics. While raising academic standards raises the bar in the classroom, it also raises the bar for success and opportunities after college for student-athletes.

Athletic Scholarships: A Loan Format

“Every player that I’ve recruited, and they will tell you, I say the same thing: ‘Don’t plan on coming to school for one year. You make a huge mistake.’”

-John Calipari, speaking to Sports Illustrated³⁸

³⁸ <http://tracking.si.com/2014/04/07/ncaa-against-one-and-done-rule/>

We believe that an important factor to consider in the current dilemma of the skewed

student-athlete balance is the role of

professional league rules that contribute to

issues such as the “one-and-done”

phenomenon. This phenomenon consists of

student-athlete

basketball players attending college for one year

and then dropping out to declare for the NBA

draft. The NBA rule behind the “one-and-done”

conundrum was implemented in 2005 and required that

Figure 2: Trend in Freshman One-and-Done Collegiate Basketball Players³⁹ players be 19 years of age and one year

removed from high school graduation before they could participate in the NBA.²⁵ We have

found that NCAA and college coaches join us in disapproving of these NBA regulation because

they encourage student-athletes to focus almost exclusively on athletics. Unfortunately, Figure

2 shows that the number of freshman basketball players at the collegiate level who fall prey to

the “one-and-done” spectacle has only increased over recent years. This is a frustrating trend

especially because the NCAA cannot directly impact the NBA’s actions in promoting such a

policy.

The NBA is not the only professional league that encourages student-athletes to leave

college before they have completed their degrees. For instance, the MLB allows collegiate

athletes to enter the draft after completing three years of college (unless they choose to enter

³⁹ <http://www.intrepidmedia.com/column.asp?id=4528>

the draft immediately following graduation of high school or play at a junior college).⁴⁰ The NFL also requires collegiate athletes to complete three complete football seasons before entering into the NFL draft.⁴¹ While this extended three-year period implemented by the MLB and NFL allows student-athletes to commit more to academics, it still encourages student-athletes to sacrifice their degrees and forego a fulfilled educational experience. We believe that the early drafts promoted by professional leagues cause collegiate athletics to be treated as a sort of minor league for some sports. This concept of college as an avenue for professional recruitment directly combats the efforts of the NCAA to enforce the role of college athletics as supplementary and complementary to academics.

In analyzing the issues posed by professional league draft regulations, we recognized that we cannot alter professional policy directly. However, we believe that we can reverse the ramifications of these policies by imposing our own policies at the NCAA level. Our main proposal on this front is to repackage athletic scholarships into a loan format. Student-athletes that finish their degrees would have the “loan” waived and receive the full benefits of their scholarships. However, student-athletes that did not complete their degrees would have to pay back the “loan” initially offered and supplied under the title of an athletic scholarship. We chose this loan format because we foresaw complicated legalities involved with simply taking back a scholarship after awarding it. We predict that this loan format will encourage student-athletes to finish out their degrees and focus on balancing their athletics with academics instead of focusing solely on being drafted early. Furthermore, we envision that this policy will lead to high school graduates pursuing solely an athletic career if that’s their priority, or a

⁴⁰ <http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/draftday/rules.jsp>

⁴¹ <http://lawweb2009.law.villanova.edu/sportslaw/?p=1765>

career as a collegiate-athlete if they truly wish to balance their advancement as students and athletes. We leave it to the professional leagues to facilitate the pathway for high school graduates who wish to focus on their athletic development first and foremost.

In devising this policy strategy for athletic scholarships, we foresaw that extenuating circumstances could cause student-athletes to forego completing their degrees. Our goal with this policy is to discourage student-athletes from leaving a degree program to pursue professional athletics, and therefore we do not believe that extenuating circumstances leading to a lack of degree completion should result in a university refusing to waive a athletic scholarship loan. To accommodate such situations where student-athletes may not be able to finish their degrees, we incorporate provisional boards into this policy proposal. These provisional boards would include NCAA and university representatives that would discuss the student-athlete's justification for leaving a degree program and determine whether the loan should still be waived. In this manner, we allow the loan format of athletic scholarships to remain flexible and malleable as it is put into practice.

Academic Threshold Scholarships: Tying Athletics to Academic Investment

"There's a huge gap between just qualifying for college and pushing yourself to excel in academics as well as athletics, and seeing they can both be linked. It's OK to try to do well in everything that you do. You don't have to choose one over the other."

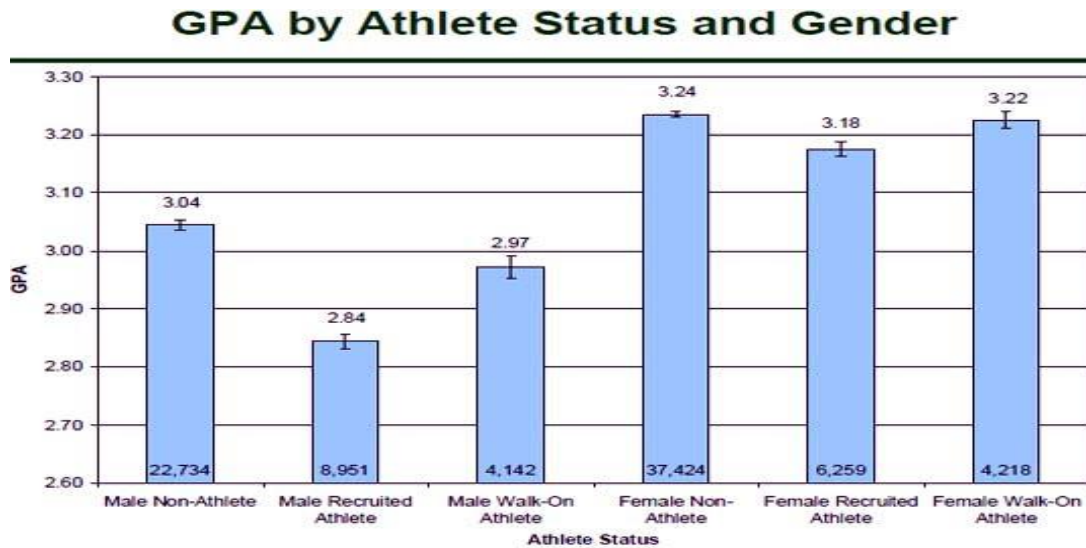
-David Shaw, speaking to ESPN⁴²

⁴²http://espn.go.com/college-football/story/_/id/9277054/stanford-cardinal-others-find-successful-recipe-academics-athletics-college-football

As part of our policy, we would like to not only encourage degree completion, but to encourage academic investment and commitment as well. Therefore, we have incorporated another policy that is contingent upon the athletic scholarship. As discussed previously, we have already reformed athletic scholarships to take on a loan format. However, we would also like to tie athletic scholarships to academic achievement in order to truly emphasize and enforce the balance required between the student and the athlete. In order to accomplish this feat, we have proposed that GPA thresholds be utilized to create scholarship percentages that can be attained by student-athletes. This policy is not intended to establish more hurdles for student-athletes to overcome; instead it is to serve the purpose of keeping student-athletes focused on maintaining the same academic discipline as their regular student peers.

We have determined that the initial athletic scholarship allotted to a promising recruit should be based on the athletic potential that the respective university sees in that recruit (which is in keeping with the current system). Then, according to the GPA that a student-athlete earns, he or she can receive a percentage of that initial scholarship. In order to keep our policy forgiving, we have established that the first year of college be utilized as a trial year, in which the GPA thresholds are not activated. However, after that first year the GPA thresholds will be placed into effect to hold a student-athlete accountable to his or her academic efforts. We believe that using GPA as an indicator for scholarship thresholds is a logical and fair approach because it is a moderately reliable measure of how much someone applies him or herself in the classroom. Furthermore, GPA statistics are readily available and will make determining the thresholds easier to accomplish.

When it comes to establishing the GPA thresholds, we recommend using the average GPA statistics for each individual university as the standards for the thresholds at the individual universities. Furthermore, we suggest that the NCAA commission a committee to analyze current GPA statistics and determine which thresholds would be appropriate. However, we



have looked at national GPA statistics (as seen in Figure 3) and propose example Figure 2: Trend in

Freshman One-and-Done Collegiate Basketball Players⁴³

thresholds that we believe would be effective. Using the 3.04 male non-athlete GPA as a baseline, we believe that a 3.0-4.0 GPA threshold should be concurrent with a 100% scholarship. This percentage would decrease to 75% within a GPA threshold of 2.75-3.0. A threshold of 2.25-2.75 would correspond to 50% of the initial scholarship. Finally, a 2.0-2.25 threshold would result in a 25% scholarship. Anything below a 2.0 GPA would result in no scholarship being awarded.

⁴³ <http://www.intrepidmedia.com/column.asp?id=4528>

While it may seem as though this policy could be hindered by Title IX scholarship requirements, we believe that we can add a nuance that maintains the integrity of the Title IX Act as well as our own policy. According to the U.S. Dept. of Education Office of Civil Rights, “To the extent that a college or university provided athletic scholarships, it is required to provide reasonable opportunities for such awards to members of each sex in proportion to the participation rate of each sex in intercollegiate athletics.”⁴⁴ In order to meet this requirement, any scholarship reduction that is appropriated by our policy will be granted to another deserving member of that same team; therefore the amount of scholarships allocated to each team will not be altered. We believe that the policies we have proposed are not only viable solutions, but rapidly implementable as well. Therefore, we foresee them as having the potential to have a tangible impact on collegiate athletics in the near future. It is our goal that this impact reverses some of the damage caused by the shift in balance from academics to athletics in collegiate athletics and the corporate commercialized culture that encouraged this shift.

VI. Necessary Implementation Procedures

“When values in one environment contradict those in another, growth is limited by confusion and inconsistency.”⁴⁵

History of NCAA Regulation

The National Collegiate Athletics Association or NCAA is a non-profit association that governs and regulates collegiate sports all over the United States. The NCAA is an important

⁴⁴ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/interath.html>

⁴⁵ <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1853/College-Athletics.html>

governing body that sets the guidelines, practices, and procedures of collegiate athletics. To gauge the extent to which the NCAA has fulfilled its regulatory role, our group examined the historical development of the NCAA in regulating and enforcing policies/reforms. Tracking the evolution of the NCAA's decisional role, enabled us to discern what policy areas need reform and further investigative research.

Since our policy has an academic focus, we decided to further limit our investigative search to the examination of NCAA's academic research efforts. Petr and McArdle break down this history of NCAA academic research into "four eras"(McArdle & Petr 28). The NCAA "first era" (1906 - 1980) was very few - and non-systematic- research done on student academic performance (McArdle & Petr 28). The "second era" was also free of research - Proposition 48 was enacted in 1983 in reaction to scandals of illiterate student-athletes and "A Nation at Risk" report that pushed for a "national movement to improve higher education" (McArdle & Petr 28). Proposition 48 is a regulation that requires a minimum high school GPA and test scores of student-athletes. However, the Proposition received feedback that it was biased towards minority and low-income students.⁴⁶ In a Proposition 48 NY Times article in 1988, the Associate Press stated that the national average SAT score was 906 while the NCAA minimum requirement was 700.⁴⁷ However, they found that the average scores for blacks was 728.⁴⁸ If the proper research was conducted prior to this regulation, Proposition 48 might have been altered to account for these variables.

⁴⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/09/sports/blacks-hit-hard-by-proposition-48-survey-shows.html>

⁴⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/09/sports/blacks-hit-hard-by-proposition-48-survey-shows.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/09/sports/blacks-hit-hard-by-proposition-48-survey-shows.html>

In the 1983 NCAA convention, Proposition 48 brought more questions than answers. Additionally, the questions mainly revolved on the prospect of equal access regardless of minority or wealth status. The NCAA formed the Academic Performance Study to gather academic data from colleges, universities, and high schools (McArdle & Petre 29). Considered the “third era,” this was the NCAA’s first effort to collect data. The research collected was used for eligibility requirements. They examined whether grades or standardized tests were measurements that were able to predict college success (McArdle & Petre 30).

The paper’s findings - the “fourth era”- suggests that not only should eligibility be a concern, but also graduation rates should be considered in future research. While we agree with that statement, we find that student-athletes shouldn’t only abide by national standards but we emphasize that they abide by their own school’s eligibility standards/graduation rates. Further NCAA research is needed to investigate the progress of student-athletes in colleges and universities. Pushing for research in student-athlete progress will compel the NCAA to shift to academics as the primary focus rather than athletic success.

Problems of the NCAA

“If the movement shall continue at the same rate, it will soon be fairly a question whether the letters B. A. in the college degree stand more for Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Athletics”

- President Walker of MIT

Collegiate athletic scandals is a problem of implementation and enforcement. The NCAA’s governing body has the proper tools and devices to reform such issues, however they must push for culture-changing reforms. The internal and underlying issues of athletics is

money. The rise in tuition costs in the 1980s prompted the rise in collegiate athletics expenses.⁴⁹ The commercialization of collegiate athletics has enabled the revenue-generating business side of athletics to take prominence over the students' academic successes. There is a clear measure of achievement in athletics - "winning" - while the same cannot be said for academics as there are "various levels of achievement and reward."⁵⁰

Simply, in order to be a student athlete you must be a student, nothing else seems to be expected and there are no institutional incentives put in place for higher academic achievement of student-athletes. For collegiate athletics, the very public measure of success - winning- influences collegiate institutions to put greater emphasis on incentivizing athletic success with scholarships. With this, the "student-athlete" has shifted to an "athlete-student" - making the practice of student-athletics very inconsistent with the theory. In theory, a student-athlete should have a manageable balance of academics and athletics activities that promotes growth in both areas. In practice, they experience overwhelmingly challenging schedules in which they feel pressured to compromise either their academics by pursuing easier majors/classes⁵¹ or athletics participation. Thus, the pressure is on the student to decide which path to choose: "[t]he different measures of excellence for academic and athletics necessitates compromise by those who are placed in both settings."⁵²

Collegiate athletic scandals (like Penn State's Sandusky sexual abuse⁵³ and UNC's illiterate student-athletes⁵⁴) affirm athletic institutions within colleges and universities have a

⁴⁹ <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1853/College-Athletics.html>

⁵⁰ <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1853/College-Athletics.html>

⁵¹ http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/sports/college/2008-11-18-majors-cover_N.htm

⁵² <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1853/College-Athletics.html>

⁵³ <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/26/justice/dottie-sandusky-interview/>

⁵⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/07/us/ncaa-athletes-reading-scores/>

conflict of interest in their regulation. An example of the inconsistency regulation of eligibility standards of collegiate athletics can be seen in this argument:

“[A]t times and in places where academic integrity was the primary consideration, freshman would be ineligible for athletics competition. Conversely, when financial issues were driving policy decisions, freshman would be eligible to compete because schools would be able to field competitive teams less expensively by being able to include freshman on their rosters” (McArdle & Petre 29).

Some athletic institutions work around the system to ensure that their interests of athletic success prevail. Ergo, regulation and discretionary authority needs to be insulated from athletic institutions to ensure that the interest of student progress and academic achievement are well represented.

The NCAA has attempted to be this regulatory body. To combat schools giving monetary benefits to its athletes, in 1948 NCAA enacted a “Sanity Code” which prohibited “all concealed and indirect benefits for college athletes; any money for athletes was to be limited to transparent scholarships awarded solely on financial need.”⁵⁵ However, it wasn’t able to adequately enforce this code and it flopped. However, its failure to successfully implement such a code could be contributive to the general lack of importance of academics at the time. Since then, the NCAA has harnessed some authority through revenue-generating NCAA conferences and other activities.

Implementing and Addressing the Problem: Top-Down Structure Policy

⁵⁵ <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-college-sports/308643/2/>

A cultural shift needs to occur in order to put the integrity back into the student-athlete. NCAA has the authority, power, and funding to take on such reforms. As of April 26, 2014, the NCAA College Revenue is 10.6 Billion, with only a 707.2 million spent in expenses.⁵⁶ This indicates that the NCAA has room to spend on academic and structural reforms for student athletes. The policies that we propose will certainly be tied to additional costs, which is why it is necessary that we construct a committee to re-allocate the available money after expenses and the conference's shares of the overall NCAA profit.

We seek to implement our policy proposals through a top-down structure (Figure 4) where the NCAA works in coordination with the professional leagues to trickle down policy reform to the universities and colleges and eventually

have a significant impact on the individual student-athlete. NCAA has a very important connection with the pro leagues - as collegiate athletics is sometimes utilized as a gateway for student-athletes to become professional athletes. Thus collaboration and proper coordination with the pro leagues will enable the success of policy enforcement and implementation which will aid in accomplishing our paramount objective of focusing the attention from athletics to academic achievement.

We propose that the NCAA should be restructured so that it may be an effective and present authority in collegiate policy enforcement. Restructuring the NCAA so that there is increased regulation and an NCAA presence will enable a "trickle-down" of policies that are

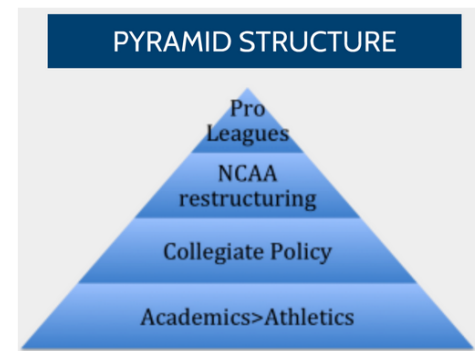


Figure 4: Top-Down Pyramid Structure

⁵⁶ <http://www.statisticbrain.com/ncaa-college-athletics-statistics/>

effective, and efficient, and representative of the interests of students/colleges. Additionally, we propose that this restructuring have an imperative focus on academics. The trickle-down effect would ideally be present originating from the professional level towards the foundation of the pyramid, which emphasizes the individual student-athlete and our focus on our academics first initiative. However, we are well aware that we currently cannot directly control workings at the professional level and therefore propose that bridge committees should be formed.

Bridge Committees, Recruitment Counselors, Policy Enforcement

Bridge Committees

We propose that the collegiate and professional levels should work together in order to promote academic achievement. These bridge committees would meet to discuss, research, and create academic policies that would give support to our pyramid structure. They could discuss issues like the One and Done model in which student-athletes go to a college/university for one year and then get signed to a professional contract in order to abide by the minimum age of 19 years old.⁵⁷ NBA commissioner Adam Silver defends the reform of the One and Done model, "I would like to continue to make my case to the union as to why a minimum age of 20 would be better for the health of the NBA and all of basketball. Increasing the minimum age from 19 to 20 remains high on my list."⁵⁸ However, this still shows that there is a significant disconnect between the professional and college stage. Making the minimum age 20 would do nothing besides make the term One and Done become something of the nature of Two and

⁵⁷ <http://www.newsobserver.com/2014/04/07/3766479/time-to-curb-college-basketballs.html>

⁵⁸ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/24/nba-age-limit_n_4838970.html

Through. More student-athletes would leave after two years than one, creating a more significant issue than the one that currently exists.

Possible policies to reform the One and Done issue and bring the focus back on academics would be to eliminate the age restriction so that prospective professionals would have the ability to turn professional right out of high school or decided to attend college, but be bound to the loan scholarship proposed in section IV. The committee's objectives would be to facilitate policy brainstorming that could, in turn, enhance the NCAA student-athlete's experience as a student-athlete and not an 'athlete-student.' After all, the student-athlete is at an academic institution that is sporting a team, they are not on a team that has an university associated with it and considers the university an afterthought. A collaborative bridge committee could be useful in creating policies that they see fit for both levels, but have an extreme emphasis on the NCAA level backed by ample empirical research.

Recruitment Counselors

We propose that regional 'guidance counselors' be implemented. The NCAA would employ multiple guidance counselors for each conference. The bigger conferences, such as the Big Ten and SEC, would have more counselors than smaller divisions like Conference U.S.A. The counselors would assume the role as a mediator between the prospective student-athlete and their desired school. The mediator's job will be to provide a non-biased explanation into the commitments that the student-athlete would face when deciding upon a school. After extensive training from an advising committee, the counselor will become an expert on the schools within their assigned conference and will be able to provide the prospective student-athlete with invaluable insight into the academic, athletic, and overall environment of the

university of interest. Having one more layer of advising for the student-athlete would provide additional support and comfort that the student-athlete would be choosing a school in which they can excel in all the aforementioned facets.

Currently student-athletes only have academic advisors to rely on to share objective information about the combination of academic, athletic, and social commitments. By no means are we suggesting that these 'guidance counselors' will replace academic advisors. The counselors will solely be used to provide completely objective insight as to whether the student-athlete will be able to "sink or swim" in their desired academic institution that academic advisors cannot provide due to their affiliation and inevitable alliance with the school who hired them. Thus, academic advisors inherently have conflicting interests and act as a secondary source of recruitment for the coaching staff, rather than the protective mechanism that the regional counselors would supply.

Policy Enforcement

The Federal Graduation Rate(FGR) and Graduation Success Rate(GSR) are two measures used to show the percent of student athletes that earn a college degree. These rates are used to hold collegiate athletic teams accountable for student-athlete's academic progression toward a degree. Currently, the minimum team performance thresholds are devised to roughly equate to a 50 percent FGR.⁵⁹ The FGR does not have significantly lower standards than that of Graduation Success Rate (GSR), which was created under the NCAA and accounts for all

⁵⁹<http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2013/02/14/ncaa-academic-reform-has-hurt-higher-eds-integrity-essay#sthash.2yv28kuj.7BLD0VYL.dpbs>

students who start their freshman year with a scholarship and also includes students who transfer in from another institution.⁶⁰

The enforcement measure of Graduation Success Rates do not adequately solve the issue of inconsistency. A team's graduation rate that is approved under either FGR or GSR could still be lower than that of the university's student body. The academical threshold presented by the FGR and GSR is insufficient and does not align with our mission to raise student-athlete's academic standards or hold them accountable to an acceptable level. We feel that student-athletes should be held to the same standards of the general student body. We propose that the team's academic performance thresholds should be devised to equate to the respective college/university's graduation rate. This will better ensure that the students will perform to the standards of the universities they attend. To ensure this policy carries some weight, we propose that the Graduation Success Rate - a slightly more accurately represented measure than FGR - be tied to the team's finances. What is meant by this is that if the GSR is not met, then the team could be impacted drastically by a reduction in scholarships. Penn Staters have seen firsthand the effects of our football team losing scholarships. Thus, it is apparent that having a decrease in the number of scholarships that a team has if the GSR is not met as a penalty will encourage coaches and athletic director's alike to consistently reach (and exceed) the GSR.

Additionally, another policy enforcement that we would like to propose is to align the bonus compensation for coaches and athletic directors with their team's academic performance. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan advocates the following: "The NCAA could

⁶⁰ http://grfx.cstv.com/photos/schools/sdsu/genrel/auto_pdf/what-is-grad-success-rate.pdf

require that any bonuses for athletic achievements — such as winning a conference title or reaching postseason play — be contingent on, or weighted equally with, academic achievement.” This will ensure that academic success is given the same or more importance than athletic success. Ohio State’s Athletic Director, Gene Smith, receives an 18K bonus whenever the Buckeyes win a national team title.⁶¹ Such bonuses can alter the judgment of collegiate athletic staff that are involved in the recruitment procedures. The coaches are enabled to put athletic success over the student’s interests. NCAA policy reform of issues like this can help to shift the athletic focus a bit and promote student academic development.

Policy enforcement goes hand in hand with NCAA collect empirical research. NCAA has ample authority, but being able to support claims with further investigative data analyses will help to make the policy enforcement that much stronger.

VII. Conclusion

Connecting athletics to academics and creating policies to address the sporting culture in which we live was not an easy task. Many facets of the biggest problems facing academia were examined. The core mission was to devise a plan to alter the way collegiate athletics are run in the United States, and to create a link between the NCAA and the professional leagues. On one end of the spectrum, there was discussion about eliminating athletics from universities altogether. Also, an idea arose that there would be no student-athletes in a sense, but instead a team affiliated to the university in no other way besides their logo and mascot. On the other end of the spectrum, there was consideration of having student-athletes be paid and compensated in the same way a job (as a professional) would compensate an employee for

⁶¹<http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidlariviere/2014/04/07/should-athletic-directors-be-paid-when-teams-individuals-win-titles/>

their work. After rummaging through all these issues, the ideas were narrowed to the permanent focus by first asking the question, "What is the role of collegiate athletics?" In a succinct manner, the answer to this question was presented by saying that there is a desire to foster a competitive athletic environment in conjunction with an even more competitive academic atmosphere.

Then, came identification of the problems associated with college athletics and the sporting culture mindset adopted by so many. It was identified that the paramount issue with the NCAA, and college sports in general, is their lack of ability to place the focus on academics (where it should be). It is of the utmost importance to remember that the student-athlete is attending a university with a team, and not playing for a team with a university aspect to it. This goes back to the point that student-athletes are desired, and not athlete-students. The word order is extremely significant. From here, the discussion aimed towards the commercialization of the student-athletes seeming to remove the focus from the students being students, but instead treating them as professionals by exploiting them in various promotional means.

After the main issues were laid out, there was an exploration and examination of previous attempts to resolve some of the NCAA flaws. Most recently, there has been discussions at Northwestern University (and decisions upheld by federal court) to allow for student-athlete unions to form in hopes that the students could protect their 'rights.' Also, there was some battling at the idea of promoting associate degrees for student-athletes. While not all associate degrees lack a degree of high difficulty (in fact, many are very credible), it is our belief that neither unions, nor associate degrees are the answer to this complicated issue due to the attention being removed from the main focus, academics.

After seeing the flaws from the previously proposed solutions, our group tweaked some aspects to create our own policies. Essentially there seemed to be a need to raise academic standards. To accomplish this and weed out other external factors such as one and done, there

was a push to create loan scholarships as well as to make academic scholarship thresholds. To raise academic standards we would like to carry out multiple measures.

For one, we would like to make sure that students can be of adequate competence to the university's standards, so we would like to propose that the student-athlete must be admitted to the school based on their own merits as if they were applying as a regular student. Thus, students would have to meet regular admissions standards, or else they would not be able to compete at that respective school. Also, we would like to raise the NCAA's minimum requirements to compete. As of now, student-athletes must maintain a 2.0 to play. This will be raised to a 2.3 by 2016, but we believe that this is not sufficient enough. There was further examination of GPAs at national averages of student-athletes, and realized that they were not up to par with the general student body. This is concerning and made our group want to increase the standards to play based off of the GPA of the individual university's average GPA instead of the national average or minimum average.

Next, we tried to eliminate another looming problem from one of the NCAA's top revenue-generating sports (basketball), the one-and-done phenomena. The number of student-athletes that have attended only one year of college and then entered the draft has been rapidly increasing and is now a prevalent occurrence. Creating these loan scholarships might prevent this steady influx of student-athletes leaving early to enter the draft after one year of college ball. The loan scholarships would be treated as grants for students that complete their degree, but would have to be paid back in full for students who choose to leave school before a degree is achieved. We realize that extenuating circumstances may occur, which is why we will implement and provisionary council.

Lastly, we would like to tie scholarships to academic performance by creating thresholds. Using the university's GPA averages, we would look into a formula that could determine (up to) what percent of a scholarship that the student-athlete could receive. In turn,

this would create incentive for the student-athlete to strive for success as their college funding depends partially on their achievement in the classroom.

Next we addressed secondary implementation policies. We believe that the Pyramid structure is an effective manner of addressing collegiate athletics because policies implemented at the professional level would have a trickle-down effect. However, we understand that we cannot impact the professional leagues directly, and therefore we have focused our policy at starting the trickle-down effect from the NCAA level toward our base of individual student-athlete focus on academics first. In order to create new avenues of cooperation and communication with professional leagues, bridge committees were proposed.

These bridge committees would include interactions between the NCAA and professional leagues to facilitate policy brainstorming at the professional level that could enhance the NCAA student-athlete's experience as a student-athlete and not an athlete-student. Thus promoting academic achievement from the top level (pro leagues).

We would like to also implement regional NCAA 'guidance counselors' to give unbiased explanations of the commitments student-athletes would be making both academically and athletically (the balance) as opposed to academic advisors hired by university who have conflicting interests when giving objective information to the recruit. Academic advisors tend to recruit student-athletes, but these regional counselors would become experts of all the schools in their conference and be able to give prospective student-athletes more accurate insight.

Currently the NCAA compiles a graduation success rate (GSR) for every college team in the country. Graduation Success Rate: We propose that the team's academic performance thresholds be devised to equate to the respective college/university's average graduation rate. This will better ensure that the students will perform to the standards of the universities that they attend. By tying the GSR to team's finances, they would be impacted in a way such that team scholarships would be decreased if the GSR is not met.

Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, suggests aligning *compensation* for coaches and athletic directors with their teams' academic performance. Coaches that win their conference or NCAA championship will be compensated contingent upon their simultaneous academic success. Thus, coaches and athletic director's alike will only see their bonus if academic success is high, no matter how much athletic success is achieved.

We are aware that our proposed policies will cost additional money. The NCAA is not short on funds, though, and a committee will be needed in order to re-allocate the NCAA's profit in order to obtain academic excellence in student-athletes countrywide. All in all, we understand that this will not be a quick and complete fix, but we believe our policies are the first step in altering the sporting culture mindset that has plagued this country and will place the focus back where it belongs, on academics.

References

- Bates , Bradley J. , John R. Edwards, Rachel M. Madsen, and Suzanne E. Estler. "College Athletics - History Of Athletics In U.s. Colleges And Universities, Academic Support Systems For Athletes - THE ROLE AND SCOPE OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS IN U.S. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES." - *StateUniversity.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 6 May 2014. Retrieved from <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1853/College-Athletics.html>
- Cancino, Alejandra. "Northwestern Football Union: NLRB Gives the O.K." *Chicago Tribune*. N.p., 26 Mar. 2014. Web. 06 May 2014. Retrieved from: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-03-26/business/chi-northwestern-union-bid-2040326_1_labor-law-football-players-college-sports

Ganim, Sara, and CNN Producer Brian Rokus. "Northwestern Football Players Take Union Hopes to Labor Board Hearing." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 18 Feb. 2014. Web. 06 May 2014. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/18/us/northwestern-unionization-attempt/>

Kingkade, Tyler. "NCAA Lobbies College Administrators To Make Student Athlete Unions Sound Awful." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 14 Apr. 2014. Web. 06 May 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/14/ncaa-student-athlete-unions_n_5149658.html?utm_hp_ref=college

Koba, Mark. "Top College Players Could Be worth \$1M on Open Market." *CNBC.com*. CNBC, n.d. Web. 06 May 2014. <<http://www.cnbc.com/id/101569514>>.

Lewis, Guy. "The Beginning of Organized Collegiate Sport." *American Quarterly*. (1970): 224-229.

Miller, Ted. "Should College Football Be banned?" *ESPN*. ESPN Internet Ventures, 09 May 2012. Web. 07 May 2014. <http://espn.go.com/college-football/story/_/id/7908395/should-college-football-banned>.

Miks, Jason. "Gladwell: Why College Football Is like Dog Fighting." *Global Public Square RSS*. CNN, n.d. Web. 07 May 2014. Received from <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/07/20/gladwell-why-college-football-is-like-dog-fighting/>

Nocera, Joe. "A Step Toward Justice in College Sports?" *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 31 Mar. 2014. Web. 06 May 2014. Received from <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/01/opinion/nocera-a-step-toward-justice-in-college-sports.html>

Petre , Todd A. , and John J. McArdle . "Academic Research and Reform: A History of the Empirical Basis for NCAA Academic Policy ." . Journal of Intercollegiate Sport. Human Kinetics Inc., 1 June 2012. Web. 22 Apr. 2014. Retrieved from http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Academic_Research_Reform_History_of_Empirical_Basis_for_NCAA_Academic_Policy_Petr.pdf

Remy, Donald. "NCAA Responds to Union Proposal." *Rpowell*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 May 2014. <<http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/press-releases/ncaa-responds-union-proposal>>.

Renick, Jobyann. "The Use and Misuse of College Athletics." *The Journal of Higher Education* 45.7 (1974): 545-552. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1980793>.

Smith, Rodney K. "A Brief History of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's Role in Regulating Intercollegiate Athletics." *Marquette Sports Law Review* 11.1 (2000): 9-22. Retrieved from <http://scholarship.law.marquette.edu/sportslaw/vol11/iss1/5>

Strauss, Ben, and Steve Eder. "College Players Granted Right to Form Union." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 26 Mar. 2014. Web. 06 May 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/27/sports/ncaafotball/national-labor-relations-board-es-northwestern-players-are-employees-and-can-unionize.html>

Waldron, Travis. "The Logic And Absurdity Behind Malcolm Gladwell's Desire To Ban College Football." *ThinkProgress RSS*. N.p., 30 July 2013. Web. 07 May 2014. <http://thinkprogress.org/sports/2013/07/30/2381101/the-logic-and-absurdity-behind-malcolm-gladwells-desire-to-ban-college-football/>

A Note on Citations:

This paper utilizes the modified MLA format designed by Maisel and McClennen in their unpublished work *Is Satire Saving Our Nation? Mockery and American Politics*. Sources with a web address provide the URL in footnotes within each section, and the reference list contains the full MLA citation of any books, journal articles, or print-only sources, which are also cited parenthetically in-text.