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ANNOTATION

Fennern, Nicole. "The Relationship Between Academic Profile and Athletic Department Competitive Success at National Collegiate Athletic Association Division III Private Colleges and Universities." EdD dissertation, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2017. 149 pp.

The author's intent of this research was to focus on examining the relationship (94) between institutional academic profile and athletic department competitive success. Academic profile was measured through institutional selectivity (acceptance rates), caliber of incoming students (ACT/SAT scores), four-year graduation rates (99), and retention rates (first to second year of enrollment). Athletic department competitive success was measured by the institution's placement in the Learfield Sports Directors Cup (LSDC). Spearman rank correlation (78) was used to examine each independent variable against the institution's points earned in the LSDC. Positive relationships were found between each independent variable and points earned in the LSDC – ranging from .306 to .551. (106). These positive relationships present various implications and considerations for institutional administration and coaches to consider in recruiting student-athletes and setting expectations for competitive success.

As there is little scholarly research conducted examining the factors contributing to athletic department competitive success in NCAA Division III intercollegiate athletics, this research was significant (129) to better understand what is and is not occurring and could invoke a sharing of best practices.

Several studies have linked student-athlete institutional choice factors to academic factors, (138) while Division III student-athletes have indicated that both athletic and academic programs are important in their college choice (Goss, Jubenville, & Oregon, 2006; Konnert & Giese, 1987; National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2008; National Collegiate Athletic Association Research, 2011; National Collegiate Athletic Association Research, 2016). The NCAA Division III philosophy states that student-athletes should be integrated into the whole of the institution, not treated differently than non-student-athletes, and that admissions standards should be the same for student-athletes as they are for non-student-athletes (Stubbeman & Cooper, 2014) (38).

The review of the literature focused on various aspects of the NCAA, NCAA Division III athletics, measuring athletic department competitive success, (36) and measuring institutional academic profile (41). In addition, an analysis of how athletic department success and academic reputation are measured was discussed, as well as a comparison of the top athletic performing institutions to various AP indicators. This discussion posed several questions on the link between athletic department success and academic reputation.

Fennern found in her study, a positive relationship between athletic department overall competitive success academic profile (AP) as measured through five independent variables – institutional selectivity, 75th percentile SAT scores of incoming students, 75th percentile ACT scores of incoming students, four-year graduation rates, and student retention rates (133). Each of these variables was shown to have a positive relationship with overall athletic department competitive success as measured by institution points earned in the Learfield Sports Directors Cup (LSDC) standings.

The analysis of all data collected results in the acceptance of each of the hypotheses linking each independent variable to the dependent variable of points earned in the LSDC. For 75th percentile SAT and ACT, four-year graduation rates, and retention rates – as plotted on their respective scatter plots – data tended to follow the line of fit in the lower left quadrant of lesser points earned and lower measure of academic profile. As the data moved to the middle of graphs (mid-points of points earned in the LSDC and mid-points of academic profile), data points tended to fall more below the line of fit. The most obvious outliers tended to be predominately at the upper right of the graph – indicating highest points earned in the LSDC and highest measure of academic profile. This may be attributed to the non-normal distribution of points earned in the LSDC. This trend is also true for selectivity. However, the negative correlation coefficient shows a general following of the line of fit in the lower right quadrant (lower selectivity as measured by a higher number of applicants accepted and lower points scored in LSDC) (88). As data move to the upper left, the mid-points were spread further from the line of fit. The upper left of this scatter plot has the most obvious outliers as these were the highest points earned in the LSDC and were the most selective (lower number of applicants accepted). Each of these relationships tell a story that may be utilized by institutional administration in the consideration of athletic success.

When describing the results, Fennern presented several implications for college and university administrators (presidents, vice presidents, and athletic directors) and coaches of athletic teams (133). These implications and recommendations may serve to assist these constituents in evaluating the relationship between athletic department competitive success and AP.

In addition, these results assist setting expectations for coaches and athletic departments and effective recruitment of student-athletes (133). While several limitations of the study were acknowledged, these limitations were accepted as this research is among the first of its kind for NCAA Division III intercollegiate athletics. These limitations, along with the extensive number of additional variables that could also be examined, give numerous options for further research on the variables associated with overall athletic department competitive success.