

**INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS:
SHIFTING THE SPOTLIGHT FROM DIVISION I
TO DIVISION III**

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MOTIVATION

Some of my conclusions and recommendations may be viewed by some as drastic. They may say I am “anti-athletics”. Nothing could be further from the truth.

From grades K through 12, I played baseball, basketball, and football on a continual basis year round. In college, I lettered in wrestling and played on the fraternity’s softball, basketball, and football teams. I played full-court basketball until I was 45 years old, and have played softball every year up to the present time.

In Cincinnati, I coached community baseball, basketball, and football for the boys and soccer and softball for the girls every year for fifteen years, for ages seven through eighteen.

I have helped recruit Division I basketball players while a department head at Boston College, a dean at the University of Cincinnati, and president at the University of Hawaii. While in Hawaii, I regularly entertained key university constituents in the President’s box and behind the players’ bench during football games against such schools as Notre Dame, Michigan State, Brigham Young (when they won the national championship), and the Air Force Academy.

Also while president of the University of Hawaii, I served for several years on the NCAA Division I President’s Commission, the top policy-making body within the NCAA.

Nonetheless, while at the University of Hawaii, I expelled, in successive years, the leading tackler on the football team and the best player (a pro prospect) on the basketball team. In each of these two cases, I received front-page coverage (read that vilification) in the Honolulu morning paper and the evening Gannett paper. I also received significant pressure from the Governor, the State Attorney General, certain trustees, and others to reverse those decisions.

Having said that, let me repeat what I said at the outset: I love sports. After scanning the headlines, the first thing I do every morning is read the sports pages of the *Democrat and Chronicle*. Before the day is out, I have read, cover to cover, the sport pages of *USA Today* and the *New York Times*.

However, I have some major concerns about intercollegiate athletics.

NCAA DIVISION I: PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

On January 11, 1994, I presented a paper to the Fortnightly Club called “Form and Substance of Intercollegiate Athletics: Heroes or Villains?”¹ In that paper, I identified, from my perspective and experience, what the problem was with NCAA Division I. Simply stated, I said that it compromised, undermined, and violated the academic integrity and moral foundation of the university, especially in the high profile sports of football and basketball. The problem was growing worse day-by-day, despite (maybe because of) the adulation, celebration, and glorification that surrounded high-profile athletics. The imitating behavior of youngsters and

oldsters from all walks of life across all gender, racial, and socio-economic groups aggravated the problem.

My preferred solution was dramatic. I recommended:

- Abolishing the NCAA in its entirety.
- Forbidding bowl games and tournaments, or any other mechanism, to determine National Champions in the various sports.
- Establishing conferences in which the member schools have comparable admission and graduation standards and in which the academic profile of athletes matches the profile of the student body as a whole. There would be a conference commissioner for each conference to enforce these rules and enhance communication and coordination among member schools. Each school in the conference would have as its goal the championship of the conference. There would be no competition between conferences, for example, to determine a “national champion”.

Of course, I knew how “impractical” that solution was, for a variety of reasons. The driving reason, of course, is financial. The entertainment industry and their advertisers derive immense profits from Division 1 intercollegiate athletics. The high profile sports (defined as football, basketball, and hockey, with baseball and some other sports in close second) need intercollegiate athletics as farm clubs and training centers, which they access free of cost.

IT IS GETTING WORSE

What has happened since my January 11, 1994 paper? As I predicted then, it continues to worsen. Increasingly, there is awareness of the issue and, increasingly, there are honest efforts to correct the issue and save the system.

Increasing Awareness

Consider, for example, the following statements:

- We must “restore the balance between academic values and the appetites of intercollegiate athletics” (Arnold R. Weber, President Emeritus, Northwestern University) ².
- There is an “ever-widening gap between the worlds of athletes and coaches and of students and scholars”. There is a “pervasiveness of this divide, as it spreads to include Division III as well as Division IA institutions, women as well as male athletes, and low profile as well as high profile sports” (Nancy Cantor, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Michigan) ³.

- We have before us evidence which “will move debate about college athletics from the realm of myth and hunch to the realm of fact and evidence” (Michael McPherson, President, Macalester College) ⁴.
- “Too many universities run top sports programs like professional franchises – emphasizing winning and making money before the student athletes’ education – and the trend must end... . In Division I football and basketball especially, there is too much pressure on coaches and players to win games first and worry about education second, which, in the long run, isolates both groups from the academic community... . Intercollegiate athletics is not a free-standing, wholly autonomous enterprise that is located in close proximity to the university. To the degree that athletic programs look and behave like such free-standing enterprises, we have seen the type of drift toward the professional model that in the long run will diminish the value of the program to the university... . Students are in college for degrees first... . College sports were never meant to be anything other than an activity that enhances college life... . We have to recommit to education as the goal of intercollegiate athletics” (Myles Brand, NCAA President and former President of Indiana University) ⁵.

Consequences

It may well be that Division I intercollegiate athletics is a “monster” which has a life of its own which cannot be controlled. In this case, elimination (my solution) is the only option, unless we wish to live with the consequences of today’s (and yesteryear’s) excesses. What consequences, specifically, am I talking about? Let me provide some answers from several events that have occurred over the past couple of months. What I am about to describe is a tiny fraction of what has been reported, which itself is a tiny fraction of what is out there:

- “I am so sorry for the pain I have caused St. Bonaventure University, my family, friends, my colleagues at First Niagara, and my beloved wife, Ann.” ⁶ These were the final words Bill Swan, Chairman of the Board of St. Bonaventure University, penciled in script on the back of an order form for a Christmas flag, prior to his committing suicide on August 20, 2003. He was 55 years old and President and CEO of First Niagara Financial Group. What caused him to commit suicide was the attacks he received in the local media, e-mails from alumni, and on a web-site not affiliated with the school. The problem arose when it was determined, late in the season, that the team had an ineligible player – a junior college transfer who had been admitted and allowed to play with a welding certificate from a community college rather than an associate’s degree. Mr. Swan ousted the university’s president, athletics director, head coach, and assistant coach (who was the president’s son). The Atlantic 10 Conference barred St. Bonaventure from the conference tournament and, in response, the players voted to boycott the season’s final two games. I ask, is there something amiss in the system that creates such pressure on, from all accounts, a wonderful family man, community citizen, loyal alumnus, and community leader?
- Bob Knight, coach of the Texas Tech basketball team, received a reprimand from the university (February 3, 2004) for getting into a public shouting match with the university chancellor in a luncheon cafeteria. While Knight was reprimanded, he neither apologized

nor took any responsibility for his behavior.⁷ He did apologize, however, in December 2003 for an extended outburst of profanity on an ESPN interview of himself and Steve Alford, his former player and assistant coach who is now basketball coach of the University of Iowa. The interviewer asked Steve:

“There was a perception, Steve, when you went to Iowa, that you guys had drifted a little bit. How much was fact? How much was fiction?” Before Alford could utter a word, Knight interrupted and in anger said: “Let me answer that. You know that is an absolute crock of XXX. You know, you XXX people in the news media, all you XXX, dwell on some negative piece of XXX like that. And I don’t know how Steve feels about it, but it just XXX pisses me off. And you don’t have to bleep one single XXX word of this. ... So all you media people can go XXX yourselves...”⁸

Again I ask, is there something wrong with a system that allows the representative of a university and a teacher of young men to make this kind of statement over national TV and to berate the Chancellor of a university loudly in public and still keep his job? Note that I am not bringing up incidences over the past 15 years, which include hitting a Puerto Rican police officer before practice at the Pan American Games; tossing a chair across the court during a Purdue game while a free throw is attempted; saying in an NBC interview: “I think that if rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it”; pretending to bullwhip a black player during practice for the NCAA tournament; choking a player in practice; and grabbing a freshman student at Indiana University after a game after the student had just addressed him as “Knight”.

- The Boulder County District Attorney has stated in court documents that the University of Colorado relies on sex parties, stripper shows, female escorts, and alcohol to recruit top athletes. Three women say they were raped at or after a December 2001 football recruiting party. The suit suggests the university failed to ask about a similar incident in 1997. Other women have come forward alleging rapes by football players, including a woman football player who kicked two extra points (the first woman to score points in a Division I-A football game) in 1999. A Nobel Prize winning physics professor at the University of Colorado wrote, in a newspaper guest column, that his institution is “an academic appendage to a football program”.⁹
- The University of Miami’s top football recruit this year has been chronicling his recruiting experiences in *The Miami Herald*. He talks about steak and lobster dinners in the best restaurants, police escorts, cheerleaders, and private jets. His diaries are circulated on internet fan sites. However, the same day the recruit signed a letter of intent to play for the University of Miami, he was served with three separate complaints stemming from a previous recruiting trip to the University of Florida. In a span of five hours during his recruiting trip, he is accused of hugging a female student without her permission, hitting a man at a bar, and setting off three fire extinguishers in his hotel. These charges constitute a violation of his 18-month probation, handed down after he pleaded no contest to burglary and possession of burglary tools. He has had ten arrests since the age of 14. The recruit led his high school team to a state championship last year, after knocking the opposing quarterback out of the game.¹⁰ This leads me to

question, again, whether winning at any cost is the name of the game, and not education *per se*.

- After losing a basketball game against the University of Pittsburg, six St. John's University basketball players broke their team curfew rule and left the hotel. They showed up at a strip club at about 2:30 a.m. Allegedly, they promised a stripper \$1000 for sex as they enticed her to return to the team hotel room. After having sex, the players refused to pay her the \$1000. She then accused them of gang-rape. She is being prosecuted for prostitution. St. John's has disciplined the six players. One was expelled from the university, a second, about to be expelled, withdrew from the university. Two other players were permanently suspended from the team and may be expelled from the university. Two other players were suspended from the team. The president of the university, in a press conference describing the situation, blamed the "culture" of the men's basketball team for the incident. Since the six players were all African American, the president, a Catholic priest, was accused of racism and that statement has caused a major furor across the campus and in the press. He has offered a public apology for any troubling misconceptions his remarks may have created.¹¹
- At Baylor University, a basketball player allegedly murdered his teammate and attempted to hide the body. There are allegations of drug deals, financial payments, improper drug testing, and preferential treatment for athletes outside of NCAA regulations. The basketball coach allegedly lied publicly about these issues and asked his players to lie as well in an attempted cover-up. The coach and athletic director have been fired and the president's job is insecure. I cannot help but ask how these events relate to the university's stated mission of promoting "spiritual maturity, strength of character and moral virtue".¹²
- At the University of Georgia, Assistant Basketball Coach Jim Harrick Jr. is the son of Jim Harrick Sr., the Head Basketball Coach. Harrick Jr. in 2001 taught a course "Coaching Principles and Strategies of Basketball". There was one exam in the course, the final exam, which was comprised of 20 questions, most of them multiple choice. The NCAA just concluded that Harrick Jr. "fraudulently awarded grades of A to three men's basketball student-athletes" who were taking the course, allowing them to miss class and tests. All students in the class were given A's. Some of the questions asked on the final exam are¹³:
 - How many goals are on a basketball court?
 - How many players are allowed to play at one time on any one team in a regulation game?
 - In what league do the Georgia Bulldogs compete?
 - What is the name of the coliseum where the Georgia Bulldogs play?
 - How many halves are in a college basketball game?
 - How many quarters are in a high school basketball game?
 - How many points does a 3-point field goal account for in a basketball game?
 - What basic color are the uniforms the Georgia Bulldogs wear in home games?
 - What basic color are the uniforms the Georgia Bulldogs wear in away games?

- How many minutes are played in a college basketball contest?
- Diagram the 3-point line.
- Diagram the half-court line.
- How many fouls is a player allowed to have in one basketball game before fouling out in that game?

In the examples just given, we have seen the Chairman of the Board of a university commit suicide and the president of that university fired (St. Bonaventure), a Chancellor of a university system publicly humiliated (Texas Tech), and the president of a university compelled to make a public apology (St. John's). We have seen the values and morality of these seven universities impinged. We have seen irreparable harm done to student athletes. We have seen horrific negative role models displayed in the media for primary and secondary school students. I leave it to you to draw further conclusions from these examples.

This is a system that motivates consistently over time numerous universities to be involved in murder, assault, suicide, rape, sexual favors, felonies, drugs, gambling, violations of established rules, subverting of academic standards and procedures, and unprofessional public behavior, on the part of student athletes and their coaches and academic administrators. This kind of system needs more than just fine tuning. The very existence of a several-inch-high NCAA volume of rules and regulations, requiring specialists and attorneys to interpret, to attempt to provide order to what should be an educational experience is by itself damning evidence of the need to either abort or at least reinvent the system.

Finances

Earlier, I suggested that financial considerations play a very significant role in defining the problem. Let me pursue that a little bit. The fact of the matter is that the finances involved are extraordinary:

- Athletics budgets at Division I universities increased, on average, by 25% between 1995 and 2001 (after inflation) while university overall budgets increased, on average, by 10%.¹⁴
- From the TV rights to the Men's Basketball Tournament, the NCAA averages more than half a billion dollars per year.¹⁵
- From the 28 football bowls, the NCAA receives more than \$184 million, which are then distributed to the football conferences.¹⁶
- With regard to Division IA expenditures and revenues, football receives 66% of the revenue and accounts for 42% of the expenditures, men's basketball accounts for 22% of the revenue and 13% of the expenditures, other men's sports account for 5% of the revenue and 15% of the expenditures, and women's sports account for 7% of the revenue and 30% of the expenditures. We see that, in general, football and basketball pay for the rest of the intercollegiate sports. However, a large number of Division I football and basketball programs individually lose money, so that intercollegiate sports, as a whole, require

substantial university subsidy (at the expense of academic and extracurricular programs). For example, in 2000-01, 65% of Division IA universities' athletics budgets were in deficit, 92% of Division IAA budgets, and 93% of Division IAAA budgets. To balance their athletics budgets, subsidies for each team (on average) of \$3.9 million, \$3.2 million, and \$3.4 million were required, respectively, for Divisions IA, IAA, and IAAA.¹⁷

- The cash cow is football. However, one out of three football programs loses money; these programs lost an average of \$1.3 million in 2001, with a high of \$3.6 million.¹⁸
- In the 1998-99 academic year, the university of Michigan's athletics department shared the Big Ten football title, won the Citrus Bowl, and was ranked 12th in the nation at the end of the season. The men's ice hockey team (having won the national championship the year before) made it to the second round of the NCAA Tournament. The women's basketball team went 18-11, the men's gymnastic team won the national championship, and the university finished 6th in the Sears Cup competition (which is an annual ranking and compares all the schools in the country on the basis of the success of their men's and women's programs). The university received TV revenues when it played on TV (basketball and football) and when other teams in the conference played on TV. They also received bowl receipts and shared in the bowl receipts of other teams in the conference. The football team set a national attendance record with an average of 110,965 fans attending each of six home games. The previous year, revenue from apparel sales (sweatshirts, hats, umbrellas) generated \$5.7 million. Nonetheless, putting it all together, when the 1998-99 academic year ended, the operating budget had a deficit of \$2.8 million; when capital expenditures and transfers were included, the shortfall was \$3.8 million. In this particular case, the University of Michigan was fortunate enough to have a reserve fund that had been built up over the years which could cover the deficit. Other universities, without such a reserve fund and without the revenue generating capability of the University of Michigan, had to make up their budgets by drawing money from academic and other extracurricular programs.¹⁹
- Texas A&M lured Alabama's football coach with a nine-year \$15.3 million contract. Ohio State just signed a six-year contract with its football coach for between \$1.3 million and \$1.8 million annually. The University of Georgia hopes to hang on to its football coach with a \$1.5 million per year deal. Louisiana State University's football coach signed in February 2004 a seven-year contract that guarantees at least \$2.3 million salary for this year and up to \$3.4 million annually at the end of his contract.²⁰
- North Carolina State just built a 4-floor, \$26 million football center complete with a 70-yard-long weight room and state-of-the-art sports medicine facility – the latter featuring an aquatic area with a 4-foot hot-and-cold plunge pool, 24-foot-long lap pool, and a treadmill pool with video feeds to trainers' offices.²¹
- At the University of Oregon, a new locker room was constructed that features separate ventilation systems for each locker, internet hookups, and a trio of 60-inch plasma-screen video monitors.²²

This sampling of expenditures raises the question of priorities. The universities do not pay these kinds of salaries for faculty and academic staff. They do not build these kinds of luxurious facilities for students and academic programs. In fact, to the extent that the intercollegiate athletics program is subsidized from the general university operating budget and donor and endowment funds, academic and student-oriented programs have less funding than would be the case if intercollegiate athletics did not require significant subsidies. Of course, intercollegiate athletics are subsidized at the NCAA Division III level, as are many other extracurricular programs deemed to be of value to students (for example, the student newspaper, student government, student debate society, and various student clubs and other activities). However, we are talking about the extent of the subsidy and the opportunity costs associated with them.

The discussion until now is different in content but similar in tone and conclusion to my 1994 paper. What is completely new are my observations with regard to NCAA Division III intercollegiate sports, and I turn to that next.

To begin the discussion of Division III, it will be useful to distinguish among NCAA Divisions I, II, and III.

DISTINCTIONS AMONG THE DIVISIONS

In total, 1,025 colleges and universities are active members of the NCAA. Division I has 326 members, with 117 belonging to Division IA, 121 to Division IAA, and 88 to Division IAAA. Division II has 279 colleges and universities, and 420 belong to Division III.

The number of student athletes participating in the NCAA is 361,175 (210,989 men and 150,196 women). Division I is made up of 148,614 students, Division II is made up of 74,807 students, and Division III is made up of 137,754 students.

Division I member institutions have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women), with two team sports for each gender. Each playing season has to be represented by each gender. Schools that have football are classified as Division IA or IAA. Division IAAA schools do not have football. Division IA teams have to have 30,000 permanent seats in their stadium and average 17,000 people in attendance at each home game, or average 20,000 for all football games over the last four years. Division IAA teams do not need to meet these minimum attendance requirements. Division I schools offer full athletic scholarships for student athletes, with a maximum number of scholarships specified for each sport.

Division II institutions have to sponsor at least four sports for men and four for women. There are no attendance requirements for football or arena game requirements for basketball. Athletic scholarships are awarded with a maximum specified for each sport. Division II teams usually feature local or in-state student athletes. Division II student athletes rely on a combination of scholarship money, grants, student loans, and employment earnings to finance their education (they are not given the full ride that Division I athletes are given). Division II

athletic programs are financed in the institution's budget like other academic departments or extracurricular programs.

Division III institutions have to sponsor at least five sports for men and five for women. Division III athletes receive no athletic scholarships or financial aid related to their athletic ability. Athletics departments are staffed and funded like any other department in the university. Division III athletics departments place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators. Primary emphasis is placed on regional, in-season, and conference competition. This is in contrast to Division I where athletes are expected to work year round on their sport (conditioning and special camps in the off season) and to compete nationally with significant contests outside of their conference.²³

Let us now turn to Division III specifically.

NCAA DIVISION III DRIFT

Increasingly, colleges and universities are concerned about a drift of Division III athletics toward the negative aspects of Division I athletics. They worry that Division III athletes are being pressured to spend too much time in the sports, cutting them off from their studies and other aspects of college life.

Accordingly, at the annual NCAA Convention in January 2004, the following rule changes were adopted:²⁴

- Eliminate “red shirting” (the practice of allowing athletes to sit out a year and still be eligible for four years of competition).
- Reduce the length of seasons of competition.
- Limit practices and competition in “nonchampionship” seasons (e.g., fall for baseball and spring for soccer).
- Require submittal of annual audits comparing financial-aid packages of athletes and other students.

I believe much more has to change in Division III. If appropriate change does not occur, the academic culture and campus ethos could be altered in seriously negative directions. This belief is supported, in large measure, by the comprehensive 2001 study by Shulman and Bowen, *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values*²⁵ and the follow-up 2003 study by Bowen and Levin, *Reclaiming the Game: College Sports and Educational Values*.²⁶ Bowen is the president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and formerly president of Princeton University. The data provided in these studies are the basis of the following discussion.

SURPRISING (DISTURBING) DATA AND TRENDS FOR DIVISION III

Thirty colleges and universities were analyzed in great detail in the 2001 study. Figure 1 lists these institutions. These institutions are organized under the headings of:

- Division IA Private Universities
- Division IA Public Universities
- Division IAA Ivy League Universities
- Division III Universities
- Division III Coed Liberal Arts Colleges
- Division III Women's Colleges

Thirty-three institutions were analyzed in the 2003 study, 17 of which are included in the 2001 study. Figure 2 lists these institutions. These institutions are organized under the headings of:

- Ivy League Universities
- University Athletic Association Universities (UAA)
- New England Small College Athletic Conference Colleges (NESCAC)
- Women's Colleges
- Coed Liberal Arts Colleges

Except for the Ivy League Universities, all of these institutions belong to Division III.

I find the data and trends surprising and, in some cases, disturbing. Each of the following sections will deal with a particular finding of interest.

Impact of Athletes on the Campus Culture

One might suppose that at a Division IA university, with its tremendous emphasis on high profile sports such as football, basketball, and hockey, the campus ethos would be impacted significantly by the “big-time” athletes. The reverse is true.

For example, according to the 2001 study, at high profile Division IA universities athletes may make up only 5% of the male student body, whereas in Division III schools they represent a much higher percentage. Figure 3 shows these percentages by university division over time. The 2003 study shows that in the 1995 entering cohort, an average of 43% of the students at NESCAC colleges were male athletes. An athlete is defined as a student who, at one time or another during their collegiate career, has been on a team that participated in intercollegiate athletics.

You might ask why the percentages are so much higher at the Division III schools. One answer is that since the students are not on an athletic scholarship, they can decide to drop the sport at any time and still be able to finance their education. At the Division IA schools, the students' scholarship is fully dependent upon their willingness to participate in the sport for which they have been recruited. As a consequence, at Division III schools, the coach needs to

recruit more players for each position to be sure there are enough players to field the team, given that the students are much more free to leave the team at any time for whatever reason. In particular, you could argue that since the athletes at Division III schools, on average, are more focused on their academic programs and other extracurricular activities than students, on average, at a Division IA school, they are more likely to be drawn away from the athletic team somewhere along the way.

There are other reasons for the significantly higher percentage of athletes in the student body at Division III schools. For example, these schools typically have smaller enrollments, may offer more sports, and may have larger squads.

The Opportunity Cost

For those Division III schools (and Ivy League Schools in Division IAA), for which applications from quality students greatly exceed the number of available openings in the freshman class, admitting so many athletes means that many non-athletes, who would otherwise be admitted, are excluded. If the athletes admitted have the same academic, leadership, and extracurricular talents and attributes as the non-athletes, then there is no problem. However, if the athletes, on average, have lower academic potential and are less inclined to contribute to music, theater, debate, governance, or other extracurricular activities, then the campus as a whole suffers an opportunity cost. In fact, this is precisely what happens, and this is the feature of the data which disturbs me the most with regard to selective admission schools in Division III.

The nature of the problem is captured in the following quote, from the Director of Admissions at Amherst College who was formally Director of Admissions at Williams College:

“It’s the same for everybody in the conference. If one school can field a ‘nickel package’, we all have to. Here we are with only 400 slots and I am not just looking for a football player or a linebacker with scores that are respectable, I am looking for a left outside linebacker who can blitz.”

To find that degree of athletic specialization, it may well be necessary that a compromise has to be made on academic credentials. That is to say, a student who is not a linebacker, but who possesses significantly higher academic credentials than the linebacker, may be (and actually is in many, many cases) denied admission in order to feed the football machine. Over time, when athletes represent as much as 40% and higher of the student body (as they do at Williams College), this can have an impact on the academic and overall campus ethos and culture.

The data presented in the 2001 study analyzes cohort groups in three separate years – 1951, 1976, and 1989. A strong argument can be made that in 1951, students were accepted to academically selective colleges and then they “ended up” playing intercollegiate sports, in contrast to the current situation in which the same percentage of students plays sports at the same schools but they are, on average, “sought out” to come to the school to play sports. If this argument holds – and many people believe it does – then the athletes who are recruited (today) may differ in significant ways from the non-athlete student body currently while the students

who were not heavily recruited (1951) were more closely representative of the student body as a whole. To take another quote, Duffy Daugherty, when he was head football coach of Michigan State, was reputed to have said: “Sure, I believe in need-based financial aid. If I need a nose tackle, I get one.”

Another way to look at this is to note that in the 2001 study an athlete is defined as a student who earns at least one award (a letter). However, in the Ivy League and Division III schools, the number of students who are admitted because they are athletes is significantly more than shown in Figure 3. This is because some of the students recruited and admitted because they are athletes do not actually earn a letter.

To put some numbers to this, in Division IA, the NCAA limits the number of scholarships in football to 85 and caps the number of first-year awards in football at 25. Since Division III schools offer no athletic scholarships, they can admit as many athletes as they wish in each sport. The Ivy League has a rule which prescribes a maximum of 35 freshmen slots each year to football players. This is the number that Ivy League schools typically recruit. Over four years, that means that 140 athletes are recruited to play football. If we look at Columbia University, where there are only 630 undergraduate men in each class, this 35-person limit ensures that 6% of the freshmen will be football players. That is just one sport. If you take this approach and apply it to all the other sports offered at Columbia University and other Ivy League universities, the 27% figure shown in Figure 3 is significantly understated.

What is the Athletic Advantage in Admissions?

To answer the question of whether athletes have an advantage in admissions, a detailed study of one non-scholarship school in the 2001 study was analyzed. Four groups of students were looked at:

- Students-at-large (non-athletes)
- Legacy students (students whose parents, grandparents, or siblings attended the university)
- Minority students
- Athletes recruited by coaches

The analysis was conducted after controlling for differences in SAT scores. In other words, the students with similar SAT scores were statistically grouped together so that differences could not be attributable to variation in SAT scores. The study included data on all applicants, not just those who were accepted.

Figure 4 shows the results of this study. In this case, we do not have data for 1951, but we do have data for 1999. The results are remarkable.

In 1999, athletes have a 48% higher probability of being admitted than non-athletes. This is almost twice the probability advantage of a legacy student, and almost three times the

probability advantage of a minority student. Legacies had a 25% higher probability of being admitted than non-legacy students, and minority students had an 18% higher probability of being admitted than non-minority students. These results are after adjusting for differences in SAT scores.

Note the complete reversal of the pattern from 1976. 1989 is a transition year between the dramatically different results of 1976 and 1999.

The 2003 study provides a more comprehensive view. A “recruited athlete” is defined as a student who was on a coach’s list (made available to the admissions office) prior to the time at which admissions decisions were being made. For the 1999 pools of applicants, data from 23 schools are available. We find:

<u>Institution</u>	<u>% of Applicants Admitted</u>	
	<u>On Coach’s List</u>	<u>All Other Applicants</u>
Ivy	59	16
NESCAC	67	31
Coed Liberal Arts & Women’s Colleges	67	50

These results are all the more dramatic when we note that recruited athletes are, on average, less academically able than other students (as measured by SAT scores). Figures 5A and 5B show the admissions advantage for athletes across all SAT levels for Ivy League and NESCAC institutions. For example, for Ivy League institutions, recruited male athletes scoring 1300-1399 on the SAT have a 62% chance of being accepted while other students have a 10% probability; women athletes enjoy a 69% rate while other women have a 14% rate.

A separate analysis shows (see Figure 6) that, after statistically adjusting for differences in SAT scores, minority status, and legacy status, the recruited male athlete, for example, at an Ivy League school has a 51% higher probability of being admitted than a non-recruited athlete. Since, on average, students who are non-recruited athletes have a 15% chance of being admitted, the recruited athlete has a $51\% + 15\% = 66\%$ chance of being admitted. This is 66% divided by $15\% = 4.4$ times as high a chance of being admitted as a non-recruited athlete. The chances of admission are even greater (56% divided by $15\% = 4.7$) for recruited female athletes at Ivy League schools.

We hear a lot in the literature about the advantages, through Affirmative Action, that minorities have in the admission process and, increasingly, about the advantage that legacy students have. These advantages pale in comparison to the advantages that a student athlete has.

The next section continues the discussion of academic qualifications.

Academic Qualifications

Figure 7 shows the difference in SAT scores of non-athletes (students-at-large), high-profile athletes (athletes playing football, basketball, or hockey), and low-profile athletes (students playing all other sports). The pattern is clear. On average, at all four categories of universities, athletes are less well-prepared for academic work as measured by SAT scores. Moreover, athletes in lower-profile sports are significantly better prepared than athletes in high-profile sports.

Figure 8 shows that the gap for Division III schools is increasing over time. The reason for the decrease in 1989 among Ivy League universities is because of a special rule (the “Academic Index”) those schools put in at that time to specifically arrest the problem.

Figure 9 shows the marked difference in SAT scores among recruited athletes, “walk-on” athletes (athletes on teams who were not on the coaches’ recruiting lists), and students-at-large. For example, in 1995 for Ivy League schools, there was a 165 point difference in SAT scores between recruited male athletes in high profile sports and non athletes, with walk-on’s scoring significantly better than recruited athletes.

Enrollment of African Americans

It has been argued that intercollegiate athletics, particularly high-profile sports, increases minority representation at the universities and that is a desirable social as well as university goal. What are the facts?

Figure 10 shows that African Americans make up an extremely high percentage of the athletes in the high-profile sports across all four categories of universities and colleges. However, enhancing diversity is not a strong argument for giving preference to student athletes. First of all, in the low-profile sports, it has relatively little impact (students-at-large and lower-profile athletes are in approximately the same proportions). Second, in the high-profile sports, if we reduce the effect of race (for example, by assuming that the percentage of African American athletes is the same as the percentage of all other athletes), the overall number of African Americans in the student population on average decreases by only 1%.

Graduation Rates

One of the major criticisms of student athletes is that they do not graduate. This is the case, clearly, for many Division IA universities which are not selective. But for the universities in this study, the reverse is true. Figure 11 shows very high graduations rates for athletes, consistently in the 80% range, even for the high-profile sports. Interestingly, the lowest graduation rates are for students who participate in neither athletics nor other extracurricular activities, with the highest rate consistently being for those students who participate in extracurricular activities (aside from athletics).

However, a note of caution is in order. The latest data for Ivy League schools show that their graduation rate has been steadily declining from the 1951 through the 1995 cohort groups, the erosion amounting to 18% (from being 13% above the students-at-large to being 5% below).²⁷

We also should note that our study refers to the select groups of 30 universities described in Figure 1 and 33 universities in Figure 2. A recent NCAA study found that the overall graduation rate for Division IA male athletes was 58%, with only 41% of male basketball players in Division IA graduating (within six years of entry) and 51% of football players. The graduation rate for African American athletes was appreciably lower. All graduation rates have been declining over time for Division IA as a whole.²⁸ The graduation rates for the selective admission universities in the study being reported are in a different world from the other universities in Division IA.

Grades

Figure 12 shows, for example, that the average grade point average in 1989 for high-profile athletes as a group is at the 25th percentile of their class, and these grades have been declining over time.

Figure 13 shows that, in 1989, 72% of high-profile athletes ranked in the bottom third of their class, and that percentage has been increasing over time. Figure 14 shows similar results for Ivy League and NESCAC schools in the 1995 entering cohort.

Actual Versus Predicted Performance

Not only do athletes, on average, perform significantly poorer than non-athletes, but even more significantly, they perform significantly less than they would be expected to perform based on their academic preparation coming into higher education.

Statistically taking into account differences in SAT scores, in majoring in social sciences and business (which is what athletes typically do) rather than physical sciences, engineering, and humanities, and in family socio-economic status, we can predict what students' grades would be because of the culture surrounding athletics. For the 2001 study, Figure 15 shows that, consistently across university categories, high-profile and low-profile athletes perform less than they would be expected to perform.

For example, Figure 15 shows that at Ivy League universities, the typical high-profile athlete had a rank in class that was 10.8 percentile points lower than the rank in class of a non-athlete who had the same SAT score, majored in the same field, and came from the same family background. The shaded area around the -10.8 shows the plus and minus 1 standard error range, meaning that two-thirds of the athletes were between 8.8 and 12.8 percentile points below what they would have scored if they were not athletes.

For the 2003 study, Figure 16A and 16B show similar results for Ivy League and NESCAC schools. For example, recruited male athletes in high profile sports at Ivy League

universities earned a percentile rank-in-class of 19 percentile points lower than students-at-large with the same race, field of study, and individual SAT score, after adjusting for the average overall SAT score of each university as a whole (Figure 16A). The vertical line around -19.0 in Figure 16A shows the ± 1.96 standard deviation range, so that 95% of the athletes will be between 14.9 and 23.0 points lower.

This result concerns me greatly. It appears (and this is confirmed in two studies in some detail) that an athletic “culture”, separate from the student-at-large culture, exists at all university classifications, and this athletic culture works against the academic performance of the athletes.

RIT

This paper is dealing with a general topic – the status and role of Division III intercollegiate athletics in general. How does RIT fit into this discussion? We will have an analysis of RIT’s status at a later time. For now, I am attempting simply to establish some of the context.

However, some basic statistics for RIT (and some benchmark schools) will give a quick and preliminary sense of where we might be:

- Total RIT undergraduate enrollment is 8,943, 33% of which is represented by women.
- Total number of RIT athletes is 502, 43% of whom are women.
- 6% of the RIT student body is made up of intercollegiate athletes.
- RIT offers 24 intercollegiate sports, 12 women sports and 12 men sports.
- At RIT, high-profile football is not one of the sports, although high-profile men’s and women’s hockey and men’s and women’s basketball are.
- The RIT intercollegiate budget is \$1.4 million.
- In fiscal year 1997-8, the average budget for Division III programs in the 2001 study is \$1.5 million, for Ivy League schools it is \$10 million, and for Division IA schools it is \$30 million (The University of Michigan budget exceeded \$47 million).²⁹
- The overall grade point average for RIT intercollegiate athletes is 3.13. The average for the campus as a whole is 3.03.
- The two high-profile men’s sports of basketball and hockey at RIT have a GPA of 2.71 and 2.60, respectively.
- The above data is for the academic year 2002-03.
- During a five-day period (February 17-21, 2004):

- RIT removed its NCAA faculty representative (an RIT academic department head who had served in this capacity for many years) and prohibited him from attending RIT athletic contests for the rest of the current academic year. The faculty member was judged to have used abusive language and exhibited unacceptable behavior towards a Nazareth College basketball player and Nazareth staff member, who served as scorekeeper/time keeper, at the conclusion of an RIT-Nazareth basketball game on the Nazareth campus.
- In the second half of a basketball game between Nazareth College and Fisher College on the Fisher campus, an “ugly brawl” broke out between the teams. A video tape of the game shows that a Nazareth player stepped on a Fisher player’s hand. The Fisher player then pushed the Nazareth player and, less than a minute later, the Fisher player’s brother elbowed and punched the Nazareth player, at which point an out-of-uniform (dressed in shirt and tie) Nazareth player rushed from the Nazareth bench and hit the Fisher player’s brother. The Fisher player’s brother was then punched by the previously elbowed Nazareth player, sustaining injuries which required stitches in the lip and jaw area. Both benches emptied, fans left the stands and were all over the court, blood spots were on the floor, and eleven police cars were summoned to restore order. Prior to the brawl, Fisher fans (led by the “Cardinal Crazies”) were so boisterous, profane, belligerent, and personally insulting that Nazareth did their half-time lay-up drill from one side of the gym in order to avoid contact with the Fisher fans on the other side. At the end of the game, the Fisher coach said, “We just won the league championship, and it was just a horrible feeling”. The night before at a Fisher-RIT game on the Fisher campus, the “Crazies” repeatedly chanted “You can’t hear this” (in reference to RIT’s deaf students from NTID) and chanted a derogatory term relating to a person’s sexual preference when an RIT player was shooting a foul shot.³⁰ Interestingly, the new basketball coach at Baylor University now requires players and coaches to do push-ups if any profanity is used in practices or games (recall our reference to Baylor earlier in this paper).
- One step forward, one step backward: Ironically, while the events described in the above two bullets were occurring, I received notice that the Commissioner of the Empire 8 Conference, in which the three universities mentioned immediately above are members, received the Sports Ethics Fellow award. To improve sportsmanship within the Empire 8 Conference, he initiated a program in which the number of yellow and red cards given in soccer and the number of technical fouls assessed in basketball are recorded throughout the season. By making teams aware of the program, the number of such penalties recorded fell by 20% over the previous season. He has received a grant by the NCAA to implement this program across Division III institutions, with the expectation that, if successful, it could be introduced at the Division I level. The reduction in poor sportsmanship penalties in the Empire 8 Conference is good. However,

it appears that the underlying culture which fosters poor sportsmanship remains – at least for now.

On a number of attributes (e.g., grade point average of athletes across all sports), RIT is not in the dangerous territory cited for Division III schools in general. However, our two high-profile men's sports appear to be in that territory. I am asking the RIT Student Affairs Division to develop data comparable to that presented in this paper to determine how we compare to the colleges and universities examined in the two studies cited in this paper, and to determine whether any trends are evident. Given the examples cited immediately above, the RIT Athletics Department will reemphasize the importance of sportsmanship and monitor conduct among all athletes, coaches, and fans.

CONCLUSION

I firmly believe that intercollegiate athletics at the Division III level can be a tremendously positive force in the overall educational experience of undergraduate students. The Division III athletes are students first. They are students who happen to play athletics. Other students may decide to become involved in student government, the university magazine or newspaper, the debate society, a fraternity/sorority, or some other extracurricular activity. In this way, all students have a chance to broaden their academic experience and develop leadership, socialization, and communication skills. The lessons often taught by athletics – teamwork, sportsmanship, discipline, hard work, and goal-setting – are valuable lessons in life.

However, I feel strongly that Division IA, as currently constituted and implemented, is a plague upon higher education. To quote a current researcher on the topic:

“An athletics scholarship is essentially a one-year contract for athletic performance, renewed or canceled every July, usually at the behest of the coach. Therefore, the athletes are vocational students, working their way through college at extremely demanding jobs. The athletics department and the coaches control the players' lives. They arrange their room and board, steer them to majors and courses, and structure their time. The National Collegiate Athletic Association requires that athletics departments keep time charts on their players, and the coaches know where those players are most hours of the day. In addition, although a major Division IA football team like Colorado's has as many as 125 players (85 on scholarship, the rest walk-ons), it also has about 15 coaches, a similar number of trainers and medical-staff members, and close to a dozen student managers.

Driving all of those people and their activities is one goal: to win as many games as possible. But the best coaches in the world cannot win without recruiting blue-chip high-school athletes – whose number, in any year, is small. Thus, a university will charter a plane to bring a prime football prospect to the campus, house him in a penthouse suite, feed him the most expensive meals and – surprise – provide him with female companionship.”³¹

I am concerned that Division III (and Division IAA) universities and colleges may be drifting in the direction of Division IA as a whole. I am concerned that low-profile sports are drifting inappropriately towards the negative aspects of high-profile sports. I am concerned that women's athletics programs are drifting towards the negative aspects of men's athletics programs.

There is time, certainly, to arrest this appearingly accelerating drift. At the same time, I know that there are important issues to be resolved. For example, I would propose, as I did for Division I, that the Division III schools belong to a conference made up of schools with comparable admission and graduation requirements, and that the academic profiles of athletes and students-at-large are similar. I would propose that they do not play outside of their conference, that there be no "national championship", and that there be a commissioner to coordinate and monitor what goes on.

Having said this, I understand that there are challenges. For example, what if a university can only find comparable universities over a geographical area which makes transportation costs inhibitive? What if a university which has a strong desire and tradition in, for example, ice hockey, cannot find academically comparable universities who have a hockey program? What if conferences composed of academically comparable universities with hockey programs already are filled up and have no room for an additional university? And the list can go on.

Nonetheless, it is important that we in Division III work in these directions. We have to be sure that we do not increase the divide between the two worlds: the one world of ever more intense athletics activity, emphasizing specialized athletic talent, commercialization, and a set of norms and values that constitute a "culture of sports"; the other world of core teaching and research with its charge to promote educational values such as learning for its own sake, educational opportunity for those who will take full advantage of it, and the development of intellectual capital which will improve society as a whole. Rather, I would like to see the two worlds become one.³²

The opportunity costs associated with too heavy an emphasis on athletics at Division III schools can work to water down the intellectual enterprise and also to separate the campus into two groups – the athletes and the non-athletes. Clearly, that is not what we want. We want a campus in which students, of course, will vary in terms of academic ability and talent, but will vary within a prescribed and acceptable range. Some of the students in that range play ball and some play the clarinet. All are equally valued and major in comparable academic programs. Athletes support the orchestra and campus symphony, and the campus musicians attend the basketball games. Each takes pride in the accomplishments of the other. The faculty and staff rejoice in the balanced campus experience of the entire student body.³³

I believe these are wonderful aspirations. However, again it is necessary to reflect upon the current reality. To quote the 2003 study, qualitatively (and not statistically) for a change, as it relates to Division III:

"College sports, once heralded as a means of unifying the campus and building school spirit, have become much less important in this regard as athletes and other students have

come to see less and less of each other, as attendance by students-at-large at athletic events has declined (in part because these students are less likely to feel a bond with players than students of other generations did with their classmates who were star athletes), and as academic pursuits, including greater emphasis on independent work, and other extracurricular activities have become more compelling claimants on time and attention. The ironic twist on this turn of events is that, in some settings at least, athletics programs not only fail to tie elements of a campus community together; they actually are a *divisive* force. ...The claim that athletics unifies the student body collides with evidence that varsity athletics is resented by many of our top students.”³⁴

Finally, “balance” deserves some comment here. Fifty years ago, admissions officers sought to attract “balanced” *individuals*. Currently, they seek to build a “balanced” *student body* taken as a whole. The “balanced student body” concept is what fosters specialization (e.g., in athletics) and can lead to the “two worlds”. I believe we should return to a stronger emphasis on the balanced individual student.

I am submitting this paper for consideration by the Strategic Planning task forces on Student Success and Community. There has been continual and vigorous (but not unduly so) pressure (serious questions raised) each year (for twelve years) to have RIT reintroduce football and to move totally to Division IA or, at the minimum, to move at least to Division IA in men’s hockey. The “pressure” comes from some current students, some alumni, all sports columnists and reporters, and some members of the Rochester community-at-large. My response consistently has been “no”. This paper sketches some of the data and analysis leading to my position. This paper also sounds a loud alarm on Division III in general and an early alarm on RIT in particular.

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