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Introduction to Intercollegiate Athletics

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Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics

Introduction to Intercollegiate Athletics

Edited by Eddie Comeaux. Published 2015 by Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD. (416 pages).

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Introduction to Intercollegiate Athletics presents a practical teaching tool to enhance one's knowledge of intercollegiate athletics. As an edited text, each chapter is written by an expert in the field of college sports. The book is divided into eight parts: (a) Historical analysis, governance and leadership, and ethics; (b) Theoretical perspectives on higher education and athletics; (c) The college athlete experience; (d) The business enterprise of college athletics; (e) The significance of race and ethnicity issues; (f) Gender equity and compliance issues; (g) NCAA and member institution policy concerns; and (h) Academic reform movement. Each chapter offers supplementary support to further enhance foundational knowledge including clear definitions of key terms, a sports stakeholder reflection, a case study, and questions for discussion.

Part I (chapters 1 through 4) provides insight into the complexities of intercollegiate athletics. Chapter 1 is a commentary on the transformation of media coverage in college sports. Specifically, the author highlights the media's ability to expose and commercialize the finances of athletics programs and scandals that have shaken higher education institutions. Chapter 2 dissects the NCAA's role, structure, and member institutions. The author addresses the NCAA's "16 Principles of Conduct" and the "Power Five," two topics that further educate the reader in understanding the governance of the NCAA. Chapter 3 introduces different stakeholder groups - college presidents, athletic directors, faculty, and coaches - that help lead an intercollegiate athletics program. The authors of this chapter express the importance of each stakeholder and the implications of their leadership in an athletic department. Chapter 4 addresses ethical issues faced by administrators, coaches, and student-athletes in intercollegiate athletics. Ethical issues include academic integrity, excessive commercialism, and winning at all costs. The interesting part of this chapter is the 10 recommendations an athletic department should implement in order to combat the unethical practices discussed in the chapter.

Part II contains chapter 5 and introduces the reader to major bodies of theories. Erikson (1968) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) are used to describe psychosocial theories that help an athletic administrator understand how "individuals accomplish specific developmental tasks" (p. 63). Several cognitive-structural theories are discussed like Piaget (1952), Perry (1968), and

Gillian (1982 & 1993) which allow the reader to understand the “. . . intellectual development of college students” (p. 64). Schlossberg’s Transition theory (1989) is used to discuss the different transitions, “moving in, moving through, and moving out. . .” (p. 66), college athletes experience while participating in athletics. Social identity theories are also reviewed and include: racial/ethnic identity development, sexual and gender identity, and college athlete identity. The chapter concludes with discussion on college impact models, critical theory, organizational theory, and a campus climate framework. These theories provide a deeper understanding into the many facets and experiences of college athletes.

Part III (chapters 6 through 8) focuses on the college athlete experience. Chapter 6 outlines the challenges faced by student-athletes, including balancing academics with sport team responsibilities and graduating in a timely manner. Additionally, the author discusses the pay-for-play dilemma. The case study in this chapter asks students whether student-athletes should be paid to play and how much they should be compensated. Chapter 7 examines community college athletes, student success and four year transfer predictors. It should be noted this chapter’s case study also contains discussion questions, something missing from the majority of other case studies in the text. Chapter 8 introduces intercollegiate athletics climate (IAC) and how it affects campus and athletic administrators, faculty, and the general student population.

Part IV (chapters 9 through 12) explores the business enterprise of college athletics. Chapter 9 examines the tax privileges athletics departments receive. The author debates whether “. . . commercialized intercollegiate athletics is functionally related to the educational mission of U.S. colleges and universities” (p. 129). Chapter 10 focuses on athletic department spending decisions and how it relates to the academic mission of the school. Discussion is restricted to financial decisions within big-time college sports programs; instructors or individuals wanting information on mid-majors or lower will have to find supplement material. Chapter 11 describes the business model of intercollegiate athletics at the Division I level which nicely segues into Chapter 12, a discussion of college coaching compensation.

Part V (chapters 13 through 16) explores race and ethnicity issues. Chapter 13 introduces the reader to several diversity-related research studies on college athletes and their non-athletic peers. The authors use the studies to express current campus racial climate. Strategies are offered for coaches and student affairs professionals to help “. . . improve the interaction and communication of athletes across racial groups” (p. 184). In Chapter 14, the author connects the Critical Race Theory to his own experiences “. . . as a black male, former aspiring athlete, university summer bridge program advisor and academic mentor, college professor, and scholar” (p. 193) to explain the miseducation of African-American male college athletes. The reader then transitions from African-American male athlete experiences to African-American female athlete experiences within college sport in Chapter 15. Chapter 16 discusses the potential effects of conference realignment on the academic missions of colleges as well as the exploitation of African-American athletes.

Part VI (chapters 17 through 20) explores gender equity and compliance issues. Nancy Lough, the author of chapter 17 points out, “. . . Title IX is the most important step towards gender equity, beyond the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the right to vote” (p. 234) and as such, Part VI of the text is devoted to its legislation. In Chapter 17 the reader learns the origins of Title IX and its ramifications to women’s and men’s collegiate sports programs. Court cases are used to educate the reader on the resistance, marginalization, advocacy, and backlash of Title IX. Chapter 18 highlights several court cases impacting the progression of Title IX including: *Cohen v. Brown University*, *Blair v. Washington State University*, *Kellmeyer et al. v. National*

Education Association et al., *Stanley v. University of Southern California*, *Biediger v. Quinnipiac University*, and *Richards v. United States Tennis Association*. Chapter 19 looks at the standards athletics departments must meet in order to avoid compliance issues with regard to Title IX. Other topics of importance in the chapter include sexual harassment and sexual violence and Title IX enforcement. Chapter 20 rounds out the discussion on Title IX focusing on the barriers women still face with obtaining leadership roles in college sports. Overall, the book addresses the topic of Title IX well and the reader will come away with a solid foundation of knowledge.

Part VII (chapters 21 through 25) explores NCAA and member institution policy concerns. Chapter 21 discusses the restrictions imposed on student-athletes while Chapter 22 examines the recruiting process of student-athletes. Maintaining amateur status prior to and during an intercollegiate playing career is essential. Chapter 23 addresses the origins of amateurism, how the NCAA has modified the term, and how it applies to the student-athlete. Chapter 24 provides an overview of policies, bylaws, and legislation with regard to social media within athletic departments throughout the US and the NCAA. In Chapter 25, the author examines the National Letter of Intent (NLI). The strength of this chapter revolves around the author's argument that the NLI and the Financial Aid Agreement (FAA), a contract all athletes must sign in order to participate in intercollegiate athletics, ". . . disproportionately favor colleges and universities" (p. 338).

Part VIII (chapters 26 through 28) explores the academic reform movement. Chapter 26 highlights academic progress rate (APR) reform initiatives as well as offers suggestions for additional academic support for student-athletes. Chapter 27 presents an in-depth look into the Scholar Baller Program. Chapter 28 focuses on student-athlete career transition and what programs professionals can implement in order to enhance success.

The book succeeds in being a useful guide to enhancing one's knowledge of intercollegiate athletics. Topics are presented in logical order and theories and concepts are easily understood. Real life examples are used to present foundational knowledge, application, and integration into the field of college sports, which is essential for individuals not familiar with the subject as well as instructors who do not have a strong intercollegiate athletic background. It would have been helpful if discussion questions followed all case studies and group exercises were included at the end of each chapter; this would help foster more classroom dialogue. This book is intended for undergraduates in sport management programs pursuing a career as an administrator, academic advisor, or coach in a college athletic department. Additionally, individual chapters can be used as supplemental reading for other sport management undergraduate courses including, but not limited to: introduction to sport management, sport sociology, sport ethics, and sport governance.