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## SCHOLARSHIPS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: BENEFITS OF ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS AT SIU - CARBONDALE

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Public Administration

> Department of Political Science in the Graduate School Southern Illinois University Carbondale August 2011

#### RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

# SCHOLARSHIPS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: BENEFITS OF ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS AT SIU - CARBONDALE

By

Alicia Nicole Woods

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Public Administration

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#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
LIST OF FIGURES	iii
Introduction	1
Framework of Analysis	2
Literature Review	3
Department of Athletics at SIU	22
Statement of Limitations	26
Results and Implication of Educational Experiences	26
Conclusion	28
Recommendations	31
REFERENCES	34
VITA	46

#### LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	27
Figure 2	29
Figure 3	30

#### Introduction

Athletic scholarships are a form of financial assistance given to students based predominately on their athletic abilities. These athletic scholarships afford numerous students the opportunity to attend colleges and universities. It is important to understanding how athletic scholarships give student-athletes an opportunity to not only graduate, but give back to their university. This study will assess the effectiveness of athletic scholarships and determine whether the funds are providing for schools working to achieve higher GPAs and graduation rates.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the major governing body of athletics in collegiate sports. The NCAA statement indicates that student-athletes be amateurs and designate that student-athlete motivation for participating is to achieve a higher education. Some could, however, agree that university athletic department's main goal is to generate money (Murphy & Pace, 1994). The NCAA generates millions from dollars from the participation of student-athletes. The question of whether education or saving money comes first epitomizes the current state of the NCAA as a dual culture organization. The NCAA is essentially two organizations wrapped into one. Consequently, this duality affects a portion of the funding for athletic scholarships.

Colleges and university athletic departments nationwide battle with some academic administrators who feel that the money spent on athletic programs can find better uses in the university. Athletics can be assets to universities if used correctly. Like many colleges and universities in the United States, SIUC invests a substantial amount of time, money, and effort into their athletic programs, including athletic scholarships. This

paper attempts to address the following research question: What are the benefits of providing athletic scholarships to student-athletes at SIUC?

In order to provide information on the research question, this study first provides an in-depth literature review on collegiate sports. The review of academic literature on this subject allows us to identify relevant factors that have an impact on student-athletes' academic performance. Next, a brief analysis of data pertaining to sports at Southern Illinois University – Carbondale (SIUC) will provide insight on particular individual and institutional benefits. Finally, recognizing the inherent limitations of this approach as outlined later, the conclusion section will address recommendations to strengthen these findings.

#### Framework of Analysis

The first step is an identification of the differences between revenue and non-revenue generating sports and how they affect the university as a whole. Once these differences are highlighted, follows then there is an assessment of the distribution of resources based on the distributive justice theory will be made. An assessment of the athletics and academic battle differences of opinion regarding intercollegiate athletics then frames the importance of the athletic scholarship and its place in the university.

The second step is an assessment of the institutional benefits and disadvantages of athletic scholarships at colleges and universities. Seeing different perspectives of athletic scholarships and their effect on the university allows the reader to make generalizations regarding the results. These generalizations are then broken down further to the individual student-athletes.

The third step is geared to the student-athletes in terms of benefits and disadvantages. Student-athletes are directly affected by athletic scholarships both negatively and positively. Discussing both sides describes the academic advantages and disadvantages scholarship student-athletes receive. Generalizations are made based off graduation rates in particular as that is the ultimate goal of universities.

The final step is to breakdown the impact of athletic scholarships by gender and then race. After the Title IX legislation passed, women were mandated the same amount of resources, scholarships included, as men. It is important to see how women benefit from the legislation. A further analysis of the race variable then looks at the African American community and its connection to athletic scholarships. Comparisons will then be made between revenue student-athletes and non-revenue student-athletes based on their main academic predictors, GPA and graduation rates. These comparisons allow forming generalizations to complement the literature review.

#### **Literature Review**

#### **NCAA Student-Athlete Recruitment Standards**

SIUC's women basketball team rule book (2010) highlights that the NCAA requires student athletes to maintain a GPA of 2.0 in order to remain eligible for athletic competition. Sports teams may set higher eligibility goals but cannot go below a 2.0 GPA for athletic eligibility. In order to be a prospective student-athlete, prospective student-athlete must complete 16 core courses in 8 semesters. According to NCAA Eligibility Center (NCAAEC) (n.d.) additionally prospective student-athletes need a combined SAT/ACT score that matches the grade point average on a sliding scale.

High school core classes, GPAs, and other factors contribute to this systematic assessment of an individual student's eligibility. If student-athletes do not meet these standards, they fall into the category of non-qualifiers. A prospective student-athlete non-qualifier cannot practice or compete with the team nor receive any athletic scholarship money. However, money other than athletic scholarships, such as need based financial aid is available to non-qualifiers.

The core classes, GPA, and SAT/ACT scores are just the NCAA minimum standards. Each prospective student-athlete must apply to the institution of their choice and meet college/university guidelines for admission as well. SIUC and other NCAA schools use the eligibility variables when awarding athletic scholarships to potential student athletes. In short, SIUC must responsibly choose a potential student-athlete who is academically and athletically ready to compete at the collegiate level. However, not all sports are created equal.

#### Revenue Sports

Some NCAA athletics teams have the potential to generate enough revenue to be self-sustaining. These sports, mainly men's basketball and football, generate enough resources to generate revenue over and beyond their expenses. The revenue generating sports attract the most public attention and have coaches who are often the highest paid employees in the university. A recurring theme in intercollegiate athletics is the tension between universities emphasizing revenue generating sports as opposed to the non-revenue generating sports (Patrick, Mahony, Petrosko, 2008).

Most other men and women's sports programs typically fall in the category of non-revenue generating sports. There are some exceptions. Some Baseball and Hockey

programs produce revenue and Women's Basketball programs, but the majority of the other sports do not generate revenue. Instead, monies from non-revenue generating sports come from a combination of profits from the revenue generating programs, student fees, and general university resources (Sack, 1988; Schneider, 2001). Non-revenue generating sport coaches are paid more at the level of university faculty and personnel and are likely to have lower academic problems with their student-athletes. This sends the message to students that athletics pays more and is the more viable option. But there are questions as to whether the general student body should subsidize the education and athletic participation of a few students whose sports do not sell many tickets. Some debate as to whether revenue generating sports should receive more resources than nonrevenue generating sports since they bring more revenue into the institution (Mahony et al., 2006) and whether the undergraduate student body should pay for the non-revenue generating sports. Non-revenue generating sports in large Division I institutions are supported by revenue generating sports. Ticket sales produce revenue that fuels the other sports programs. Unfortunately, this is not the case at smaller institutions such as Southern Illinois University as their main sports do not generate revenue. This debate continues as student-athletes in non-revenue generating sports lead to perform academically higher in the classroom in comparison to revenue generating sports (Schneider, 2001).

Hums and Chelladurai (1994) define distributive justice as "the fairness, or justice, of the distribution of resources to participants" (p. 201). In terms of intercollegiate athletics, three possible criteria dictate the distribution of resources: equity, need, and revenue production (Hums & Chelladural, 1994; Mahony et al; Mahony

& Pastore, 1998; Patrick, Mahony & Petrosko, 2008). Equity entails distributing the most resources to the group that makes the greatest contribution. Need involves assigning the largest distribution of resources to the group that needs the resources the most. Finally, revenue production distributes resources depending on which group produces the most revenue. It is very difficult to observe all principles at all times when distributing resources to intercollegiate sports.

Oftentimes, administrators have a difficult time determining which method is best in terms of distributing resources. One reason for such difficulty is a lack of agreement on the goals. Controversy heightens when resources are limited. The NCAA argues the overall goal is development of student-athletes which suggests equality or need (Mahony et al., 2006). Coaches and administrators selected equity and need as the fairest treatment (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994; Mahony & Petrosko, 2008; Mahony et al., 2006) suggest that need is more than likely used at universities when making actual distributions. The NCAA, coaches, nor administrators chose revenue generation as the main criteria, however that is used when determining the distribution of resources in intercollegiate athletics (Mahony & Pastore, 1998; Patrick, et al., Mahony & Petrosko, 2008; Mahony et al., 2006).

Mahony and Pastore (1998) outline the criteria to incorporate distributive justice into a three-step strategy to describe actually what happens. First, men's revenue generating sports will continue to receive the largest portion of the resources and will continue to receive most of the financial support in which they ask. Second, women's sports will receive just enough resources to satisfy Title IX requirements. Last, the

remaining resources go to the men's non revenue generating sports. This strategy reflects the reality of the manner of distribution of resources in intercollegiate athletics.

After the distribution of resources to the respective sports, colleges and universities have an entirely different issue: compensation of student-athletes (Murphy & Pace, 1994; Sack, 1988; Schneider, 2001). Murphy and Pace (1994) compiled a compensation plan for student-athletes. They highlighted the NCAA statutes that make providing monetary payments to student-athletes against the rules and suggested ways to remain in compliance and provide benefits. The failure to compensate student-athletes in a sense puts them at a disadvantage in comparison to non-athlete students. Studentathletes cannot use their talent or abilities to receive any compensation; however a student can write a best-selling novel and have no restrictions on receipt of profits. The Murphy-Pace plan calls for compensation to the student-athlete in hopes of reducing the financial incentives to leave school early for the professional leagues. This might make it easier for student-athletes to stay in school. Under the plan, payments would not come from the universities as they have to keep in line with the amateur status of studentathletes instead. Some possible revenue streams are endorsements and television contracts. Student-athletes would receive a portion of endorsements, be able to have an agent, get paid to play in the off season, and receive compensation from tournament and bowl games. Student-athletes have even requested workers' compensation, typically for injured employees, for injuries received during athletic competition (Porto, 1985; Sack, 1985).

Schneider's (2001) survey of college student's views on the compensation of student-athletes found that 54% were in favor of compensation. Students believe that this

would minimize the illegal payments and NCAA violations and those student-athletes deserve payment as they generate large amounts of revenue to the university. Ironically, 24% of students were fine with tuition increases to pay for college athletes. Generally speaking, college students support payment of student-athletes according to this study.

Some argue that providing student athletes with a free education is sufficient compensation for their services (Murphy & Pace, 1994; Schneider, 2001). Others point to the dismal financial outlays of many athletic departments as not being in a place to pay student-athletes (Schneider, 2001). The compensation argument is for revenue generating sports as they attract attention and money to the university. Now that we have established the issues between revenue and non-revenue generating sports, it is important to look at the constant battle between academics and athletics.

#### Academics vs. Athletics

Colleges and universities struggle with balancing educational and athletic components of their institutions (Brand, 2006; Buer, 2009; Goff, 2000; Knorr, 2004; Mahoney & Pine, 2010; Riemer, Breeding, & Hums, 2006; Ward Jr., 2008). Putler and Wolfe (1999) said that the public perception is that university athletic programs are out of control. There are opposing points of views. Despite the viewpoint taken, athletics provides opportunities for increased institutional benefits such as: national exposure, increased enrollment and revenue, and more diversity. These benefits encourage athletic directors and academic administrators to promote athletics, and some would argue at the expense of traditional students (Yasser, 1993). Opponents of athletics use phrases such as "malignancy on campus" and "beer and circus" academy to characterize the athletics

department (Benford, 2007; Sperber, 2000). Such strong words, however, do not begin to explain the extremes at which academia and athletics operate.

One main criticism is that intercollegiate athletics corrupts higher education (Benford, 2007; Brand, 2006; Eitzen, 1987; Eitzen & Purdy, 1986; Yasser, 1993). Eitzen (1987) sums up the feelings of staff and administrators in regards to athletics:

The worst scandal does not involve cash or convertibles. It involves slipping academically unqualified young men in the back doors of academic institutions, insulating them from academic expectations, wringing them dry of their athletic – commercial usefulness, then slinging them out the back door even less suited to society than they were when they were when they entered. They are less suited because they have spent four years acquiring the idea that they are exempt from normal standards (p. 15).

Myles Brand (2006), Executive Director of the (NCAA), National Collegiate

Athletic Association, discussed the standard and integrated view of athletics. The

standard view sees athletics as an extracurricular activity. On the other hand, the

integrated view shows athletics is not part of the academic experience. According to

Brand (2006) universities recruit both athletic and academic students for a variety of

reasons. For example, institutions recruit and award scholarships to student-athletes and

performing arts students based on their talent, and they both must put excessive amounts

of time in their respective fields. Student-athletes are under a microscope because their

program consumes numerous additional resources. Performing arts students also receive

many of the same benefits but not as much of the scrutiny.

Benford (2007) argues further that there is an imbalance in resources and energy spent on the athletics side. Recruitment of professors does not happen with the same vigor as recruitment of Division I basketball and football coaches. Benford also questions the resources given to student-athletes and why equivalent resources are not available to the academic side of the university.

According to Yasser (1993) the term student-athlete is an oxymoron. The fact that student comes first gives the notion that academics comes first in the life of the student-athlete. Benford (2007) seeks to retire the term as it seeks to deceive and deflect attention from the actual experiences of student-athletes. The first athletic competition was a rowing race between Harvard and Yale in 1852 (Benford, 2007). Students administered early college sports. Shortly after, school administration assumed control with their interests in mind. This marked the downslide of amateurism and hence a skewed definition of a student-athlete. Given the views academics have of athletics, a review of the claimed benefits and disadvantages of university athletics is in order. *Institutional Benefits* 

Gerdy (2006) describes a direct benefit of athletics to institutions as "indeed, we must accept the notion that as long as we have athletics, commercialism will be a part of it" (p. 4). The two go hand and hand. Commercialism emphasizes making a profit.

Generally speaking, the aim of universities is to equip students with the tools needed to be productive citizens and yet profit is a major component. Where does profit come into the picture?

Athletic departments with profitable revenue-generating sports can spread money from these sports across the athletics department to support a variety of sports programs. In terms of commercialism, the urge of universities to focus more on profit comes from financial pressures (Sack, 1987). Athletics is simply big business. According to the NCAA (2010), annual budgets of NCAA intercollegiate athletics programs reach \$10.5 billion. Indystar (2010) records the University of Texas as producing revenues of over \$89 million and SIUC at \$11 million. NCAA (2010) reports average revenues and

expenses for Football Bowl Subdivisions across 120 schools as \$32.3 and \$45.9 respectively. Commercialism dollars help student-athletes reap benefits of athletic participation in the part of the collegiate experience. These funds reduce institutional reliance upon other funds to support athletics, thus freeing dollars for other purposes.

Universities seek to find ways to increase revenues through the use of their athletic departments. Television is the main reason for the shift towards commercialism. For example, CBS and Turner Broadcasting sports signed a deal with the NCAA for \$10.8 billion over 14 years. Of this amount \$740 million annually is funneled down to member affiliated teams (Wolverton, 2010). Sponsorships for these events increase university revenue. Colleges and universities build large stadiums and arenas to attract attention to their school. Benford (2006) calls this the "college athletics arms race" (p. 10). For example, Southern Illinois University Carbondale builds an arena or football stadium, and the following year Evansville, Indiana does the same to stay on par with the competition. Even smaller colleges seek to add sports teams or climb up a level in order to reap the benefits of athletic exposure such as increased advertising and revenue.

Athletic departments frequently bare the label of "front porch" of the university (Buer, 2009; Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Suggs, 2009). A benefit of having athletic programs is the exposure of the university to a wide variety of people, some of whom enjoy sports and others who appreciate other areas of the university. Name recognition alone, gets you recognized. The majority of university publicity, good and bad, comes from the athletics department. Public exposure via athletics, benefits the overall university, not just the athletics program.

Goff (2000) describes the relationship between athletics and exposure as follows: "Athletics is an integral source of name exposure for almost every university and often the only frequent source of exposure for schools possessing little in the way of academic reputation" (p. 91). This epitomizes the "front porch" theory, mainly for revenue generating sports.

A study on Northwestern University looked into the connection between athletic success and exposure of the university. Newspaper articles regarding Northwestern University jumped 185% during 1995 prior to its Rose Bowl visit. Even in years without special success, athletics articles consisted of 70% of university coverage (Goff, 2000). Some studies show that major athletic achievements lead to an academically improved pool of entering students, and spark the interest of additional students who ordinarily would not consider that particular institution (Clopton, 2009; Goff, 2000; Putler & Wolfe, 1999). This directly affects the academic side of the university in a positive manner.

Enrollment is the best gauge of the effect athletics has on student interest in public universities (Goff, 2000). Public universities with open admission policies have trouble attracting applicants who are academically skilled (Ferris et al., 2004; Suggs, 2009). But some argue positive athletic exposure affords institutions a chance at these potential applicants and some evidence shows that athletics has positive or no effect on university outcomes, such as increased enrollment and donor contributions, which is contrary to the negative perception of athletics (Goff, 2000). Moreover, controversy and difficulty exist when determining whether a donor gave due to their passion for academics, athletics, or both. In short, commercialism exposes people to the universities in hopes of the institution receiving positive benefits.

Another institutional benefit that athletic scholarships bring to universities is a more diverse student body. Teams consist of variety of different individuals from a variety of backgrounds. In turn, people from all walks of life then come to see these student-athletes participate in their respective sporting events. This contributes to a sense of community within an institution (Heere & James, 2007, p. 319). Spending time with people at sporting events may help establish a sense of comfort around the people in attendance and increase in institutional unity and loyalty (Goff, 2000).

#### Institutional Disadvantages

In 1929, the Carnegie Foundation coined commercialism as the source of cheating and financial scandals in collegiate sports (Benford, 2007). Exposure opens the university to negative press as well. Sack (1987) talks about slush funds that are large amounts of money universities or boosters give to student-athletes. Paying athletes is against NCAA rules and subjects student-athletes and universities to punishment (Benford, 2007; NCAA, 2010; Suggs, 2009). Such incidents give the university a bad reputation. Athletic departments harm the university when they break the rules, especially if NCAA imposes sanctions as a consequence (Goff, 2000). NCAA sanctions limit the institutions competitiveness in recruiting promising athletes and donors.

The financial state of the athletic department has the potential to burden the university as a whole. The NCAA Division I philosophy statement: "a member of Division I strives to finance its athletic programs insofar as possible from revenues generated by the program itself" (Brand, 2006, p. 15). But athletic departments frequently operate in the red. A study of 109 NCAA Division I universities shows that 16% of schools lose money and 29% earn less than \$1 million in profit (Goff, 2000).

Only 15% of Division I and II institutions operate in the black (Knorr, 2004). According to the NCAA (2010) only about two dozen university athletic departments are self-sustaining. University budgets use student fees, annual subsidies from a general fund, and money from state funds to keep athletics departments running (Benford, 2007; Padilla & Boucher, 1987; Suggs, 2009). In trying to fuel athletics, universities in turn burden traditional students and their parents with fee increases. The majority of students do not have a problem funding revenue generating sports but take issue with funding non-revenue generating sports, especially at the lower Division I, Division II, and Division III levels. Benford (2007) suggests finding external sources to fund athletics. But, in short, athletics is likely to cost the institution monetarily.

Yasser (1993) suggests a way to avoid everything described above. He calls it the athletic scholarship disarmament. Researchers such as Gerdy (2006) agree with this drastic reform. This proposal would cut 50% of athletic scholarships across the board for men. These funds would then go to expand academic scholarships for disadvantaged academically motivated youth. The message today is that athletic ability is a free ticket to college (Knorr, 2004). This change would send the message that academic ability is predominant over athletic ability. The playing field across the nation evens out as other universities are now able to compete with the powerhouses. Also, the new academic scholarships potentially benefit Black and minority students who exhibit a strong academic appetite. This would appease the academic community and still give athletics enough scholarships to compete with nationally.

Institutional benefits and disadvantages eventually trickle down and affect the individual student-athletes. Student-athletes are in a very unique position. These student-athletes receive a lot of benefits, but have a lot of stress as well.

#### Individual Benefits

Student-athletes themselves fuel the athletics versus academics controversy. They directly reap the benefits of athletic scholarships. Athletic scholarships give some students an opportunity to attend college who otherwise may forgo higher learning, African Americans in particular (Benford, 2007). The most common performance indicators of student academic performance are Grade Point Average (GPA) and graduation rates. A common misconception of student-athletes is that they perform poorly in the classroom (Eckard, 2010). The ultimate goal of universities is to educate students adequately and to equip them with tools to use in the real world. Athletics strengthens their case towards larger budgets and commercialization when their athletes perform well in the classroom (Sack, 1987). The NCAA passed legislation to ensure incoming student-athletes remain academically sound.

Proposition 48 is a legislation, passed in 1986 by the NCAA, stating that incoming student-athletes have a 2.0 GPA and a minimum of 700 on the SAT or 15 on the ACT for the majority of student-athletes (Eitzen, 1987). Student-athletes have access to learning centers, in which they have tutors and learning labs at their convenience (Sack, 1987). This structured study environment gives them an advantage over traditional students. Rishe (2003) concludes that higher graduation rates among student athletes are a result of the structured academic environment to which they are held, such as mandatory class attendance, study sessions, and specialized academic advising.

Depending on the institution and sport, student-athletes are mandated to use learning labs a set amount of hours per week.

According to Sack (1987) student-athletes at the University of Minnesota had slightly higher GPAs than students that are not athletes. Other studies show no difference in GPAs between student athletes and traditional students (Davis & Berger, 1973). GPAs are a short-term measure of academic achievement; however the ultimate goal is graduation.

"NCAA student-athletes are completing their bachelor's degrees at rates higher than the American college student population at large... the academic achievement of our student-athletes continue to improve" (NCAA, 2010, p. 17). Myles Brand said it best; athletes graduate at a higher rate and continue to improve. Michigan State University recorded a 71% graduation rate of student-athletes in comparison to 53% of traditional students (Eitzen, 1987).

Rishe (2003) studied the impact of athletic success on graduation rates by comparing student athletes to the general undergraduate student population over a six-year period at 252 colleges and universities. The results showed that the aggregate graduation rate of student-athletes was 58.2% while that of the undergraduate population was 54.6%. This indicates that student athletes perform at a slightly higher rate than their peers in terms of graduation success. The federal government, the NCAA, and the general public utilize graduation rates in general to measure the success or failure of collegiate programs.

Studies show that participation in intercollegiate athletics enhances learning and character development (Hirko, 2009). Skills such as interpersonal skills, discipline,

dedication, personal health, and life lessons are just a few of the things learned through athletics (Shulman & Bowman, 2002). Brand (2006) lists perseverance, sportsmanship, hard work, resilience, and striving for excellence as values intercollegiate athletics displays. Athletic scholarships afford young people the opportunity to develop these values and characteristics in order to implement into the working world.

#### Individual Disadvantages

"The pressures on athletes, especially those in big time, revenue – producing sports, are well known – physical exhaustion, mental fatigue, media attention, and demanding coaches" (Eitzen, 1987, p. 22). Student-athletes face numerous pressures on both the academic and athletics side. The NCAA has a 20 hour limit on athletic related activities while in season. This limit is on actual practice time and any other activity used for preparation such as practice and weight training. Once taking into account travel and personal study time on the opposing team during the season can add 50 hours per week for basketball players and 60 hours per week for football players (Eitzen, 1987). For example, SIU Women's basketball team play two games while on the road. Those games are on Thursday and Saturday. In order to be there in a timely matter they leave for competition on Wednesday afternoon. They travel to the games and stay overnight in hotels away from the institution. Once competition is complete on that Saturday they travel back via bus up to 6 hours for conference games or possibly stay another night if they have a return flight the next morning. The amount of time they spend traveling and staying in hotel room is not considered in the 20 hour rule and is therefore, understated In short, the official limit does not take into account the other time dedicated to their respective sport.

As mentioned before, athletics dominate student-athletes' lives (Eitzen, 1987). Research shows athletes' excitement about school upon arrival, but their hectic schedule forces them to disengage their focus from academics gradually (Miller & Kerr, 2002). The student-athlete is often confused as to whether they are a student or an athlete first. The term student-athlete suggests that they are students first, yet the majority of their time goes towards athletics (Sack, 1987).

Student-athletes and coaches experience intense scrutiny in all facets of their lives. Turning on the television set and tuning to sports media outlets shows the ongoing investigations into alleged wrongdoing. Sack (1987) compares student-athletes to professional entertainers. America is the only country that intertwines athletics and academia to this defense (Benford, 2007; Miller & Kerr, 2002).

Commercialization exposes student-athletes to numerous temptations. Cheating stems from this commercialization. Benford (2007) talks about the shared experiences of student-athletes in this topic: "the athletes are cheated out of the one thing they were promised in return for their athletic performance: an education" (p. 15). This fuels the claim of scholars regarding the exploitation of the student-athlete (Benford, 2007; Buer, 2009; Eitzen & Purdy, 1986; Singer, 2008). According to Benford (2007) student-athletes are the "new plantation" referring to exploitation of slaves used to make a profit for their masters. This gives the suggestion that student-athletes are the servants to the university. Schools sell uniforms with player's names on the jerseys and yet the players receive no monetary benefit. This quote by Benford (2007) fittingly frames the above argument:

Colleges that recruit young men with the expressed objective of educating them have no such intention. Colleges rob athletes: first by not educating them; and second by not sharing with them a portion of the money they bring into college budgets. The substitute is liquor and early sex. And the ultimate modern intoxication – a gladiator's adult adulation (p. 15).

The NCAA strives to produce quality student-athletes. Universities provide resources to student-athletes via athletic scholarships. These resources may come to undermine that very philosophy. Intercollegiate athletics, in a sense, enable student-athletes with all the extra resources (Benford, 2007; Eitzen & Purdy, 1986). Their respective sport teaches student-athletes discipline; however, coaches also check to see if student-athletes attend classes. Benford (2007) calls this learned helplessness. Student-athletes are separated from the general student body, babysat, and then thrown into a world in which they have to survive. They have to adjust to a world of being a normal person, which is a shock to student-athletes.

Race

Moreover, African Americans compete on an uneven playing field still in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Leach & Smith, 2007). According to Leach & Smith (2007), going as far back as the 1600s, when the Maryland Segregation policy suggested that Blacks be socially excluded from society, a system of inequality was established. After this event many others followed such as the Civil War, slavery, and *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case that established the separate but equal in many areas of life, notably education. Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 later desegregated schools, yet still the education system is unequal.

Pino and Smith (2004) said that the Black-White educational achievement gap "remains a defining mark of racial inequality in public education today" (p. 113). Many socioeconomic factors influence the academic achievement of students. In the case of African American students, parental education, inadequate academic preparedness, parental occupation attitudes toward higher education and neighborhoods in which they live all have an effect on the educational expectation and achievement of the student (Seller, 1992). This study suggests that many African American students, in general, are not prepared for the reality of college.

Predictors of academic achievement among student athletes include high school GPA and family income. The fact that African Americans do not have the same resources as their White counterparts puts a strain on the African American child and results in poor students. Even African Americans who do have the same resources and neighborhoods as their White counterparts do not perform at the same level academically (Pino & Smith, 2004).

The increase of African Americans in athletics gives teams the opportunities to bond despite their differences. Team uniformity trumps all of their differences. Hirko (2009) reports athletics as an important component of university diversity. Rishe (2003) noted that minority student athletes tend to graduate at significantly higher rates – 15% higher for Black male athletes and 30% higher for Black female athletes – than their non-athletic peers. Athletic exposure gives potential student-athletes visual representation of someone that looks like them making it on the collegiate level. This puts the idea of possibly attending that school in the person's mind (Hirko, 2009). The creation of this

athletic community, if nothing else, allows the student-athletes a chance to understand and tolerate different cultures. This is a major benefit of athletic scholarships.

#### Gender Comparative

Title IX is a federal law passed that mandates colleges and universities that receive federal funding to provide men and women with "equitable sport participation opportunities, equitable scholarships, and equitable treatment" (Yiamouyiannis, 2009, p. 44). This legislation, proposed to the Senate by Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, sought to give women equal opportunity and resources to obtain an education and subsequently find higher employment opportunities (Adams, 2009). Yiamouyiannis (2009) goes on to talk about the three prong test. The U.S Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights uses the three pronged test to ensure that colleges and universities provide equal opportunities. To comply, institutions only have to pass one of the three tests.

The first prong is that the percentage of male and females student athletes should reflect that of the university. For example, if the university is 55% male and 45% female, then the athletics department's percentages have to be virtually the same, give or take 1-2% percentage points. SIUC follows this prong to ensure they are in compliance with Title IX legislation. The funding amount to each respective gender is to be equal in order to be in compliance with this prong.

The second prong is that the university must have a history of expanding the underrepresented gender. Today, at the national level, female undergraduates are about 57% of the population and yet only 41% of the student athletes (Kennedy, 2007). The third prong is that the college must accommodate the underrepresented group, which may mean adding another sport or strengthening certain areas.

According to Videon (2002) prior to 1972, 294,015 women participated in collegiate female sports. After Title IX passed, in 1972, that number jumped to 2,675,874. Videon (2002) talked about socializing girls into sports at a young age. Still the ratio is 2 to 3 in comparing female to male. The fact that playing sports for males is more of a rite of passage still exists. Females have cultural conflicts that keep some from participating. Nevertheless, females do participate in college athletics due to Title IX legislation. According to Southern Illinois University (2010) females graduation rates are 72% in comparison to 57% for male athletes. Generally speaking, female athletes not only participate but graduate at higher rates than males. After reviewing the literature on collegiate sports, it is pertinent to discuss the factors and elements present at SIUC.

#### **Department of Athletics at SIUC**

SIUC is one of hundreds of institutions of higher education in the United States that actively support and promote athletic competition. According to SIUC's Department of Athletics (n.d. a), the university currently maintains 16 sports teams, eight of which are male and eight of which are female. Some sports offer full scholarships and some offer partials. Full scholarships consist of aid for tuition, room, and board, student fees, and books. Partial scholarships consist of student-athletes receiving some assistance for cost of education but not in its entirety. This study is focusing solely on the aggregate number of athletic scholarships. Collectively speaking, these teams compete within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the Missouri Valley Conference, the Missouri Valley Football Conference, and the Mid-American Conference. SIUC's Department of Athletics (n.d. b) maintains a staff that ensures compliance with all applicable rules and regulations of these organizations.

SIUC's athletics department is a diversified unit within the university. According to the SIUC graduation rate data (2010) of the 304 scholarship student athletes 181 were White. The other 123 student athletes are of a different race. In short, 40.5% of the student athletes are minorities. Minorities are defined as all groups that are not Caucasian. The overall student population, on the other hand, has a total of 13,622 undergraduate students, 9019 were White and 4603 are minorities. Minorities consist of 34% of SIUC's overall student population. Generally speaking, the athletics department has a greater percentage of minorities than the overall undergraduate population, especially since they are included in the overall undergraduate population percentage. SIUC's athletic mission statement ranks diversity high in importance.

As with many institutions of higher education in the United States, SIUC also undertakes certain actions to remain competitive in the world of college sports. For instance, the university has undertaken Saluki Way in recent years. Saluki Way was a comprehensive \$83 million capital project that included a new football stadium, upgrading the basketball arena, and adding a support facility to house the football, men's basketball, and women's basketball teams (SIUC, Department of Athletics, n.d. c). Of the \$83 million raised for this capital project, student fees account for \$41.5 million, the City of Carbondale and private donations provided \$20 million and \$17.9 million respectively, and football suite revenues generated \$3.6 million (SIUC, Department of Athletics, n.d. d). The explicit purpose for investing in such facilities and resources were used to recruit top student athletes to SIUC as well as to remain on par in terms of infrastructure quality with peer institutions in the Missouri Valley Conference (SIUC, Department of Athletics, n.d. e). In addition to capital expenditures, SIUC invests

general revenue funds into its athletic programs. Athletic scholarships are the premier example of the use of general revenue funds.

According to the NCAA (2010, March), SIUC is one of approximately 335 universities and colleges classified as Division I members, and as such, it must offer a specific minimum amount of financial aid to student athletes in order to help promote their academic development and progress. The Department of Athletics awarded 204 athletic scholarships during the 2009/2010 academic year (K. Therriault, SIUC Associate Athletics Director for Academic Services, personal correspondence, November 10, 2010). This number comes from the 1993-1994 cohort of freshmen that graduated within six years. The scholarships include both direct and indirect costs to the university.

Direct costs include items such as monthly stipends given to the student athletes, while indirect costs include items such as tuition waivers. Based on the 2009/2010 academic year data, a full scholarship for an in-state student athlete represented a value of approximately \$19,153.00, and a scholarship for an out-of-state student athlete represented a value of approximately \$30,088.03 (K. Therriault, 2010). Aggregately speaking, the 204 athletic scholarships represented a value of at least \$3.9 million. This, a conservative figure, comes from multiplying the in-state rate of \$19,153.00 with the total number of athletic scholarships; naturally this rate increases once considering out-of-state rates.

Once the Department of Athletics has identified a willing recruit for a sports program, it provides that student athlete with a National Letter of Intent (NLI) as well as an Athletics Financial Aid Agreement Form (AFA). The NLI outlines the terms of a yearly arrangement between SIUC and that individual student athlete, while the AFA

informs the student of the awarded scholarship value in dollar figures. By signing the NFI and the AFA, the student athlete agrees with the terms of the contractual arrangement and demonstrates his or her desire to accept the financial aid package as a result (SIUC, Department of Athletics, 2010).

As reflected in its mission statement, SIUC's Department of Athletics (n.d. f) generally expresses the desire for a balanced life for the student athlete, a culture of excellence for the SIUC community, and a successful athletics program to maintain support for the institution. The mission statement's main focus is on the student-athlete: "In keeping with the University's mission, the primary purpose of intercollegiate athletics is to sponsor a broad-based, fiscally and ethically responsible athletics program designed to promote each student-athlete's academic, athletic and personal well-being and development" (para. 1). In essence, this is the governing philosophy by which SIUC awards its athletic scholarships. It promotes the three general areas of education, physical fitness, and personal development.

At this point, this study will address the value in awarding athletic scholarships at SIUC. More specifically, is the annual value of such scholarships, such as the minimum \$3.9 million during the 2009/2010 academic year, meaningfully reflected in the student's academic progress? Academic performance is the primary means by which to measure the progress of student athletes who receive scholarships. While the departmental mission statement reflects three areas of general interest in the student athletes' overall progress, their academic progress is most essential because it is the fundamental purpose for attending an institution of higher education such as SIUC.

#### **Statement of Limitations**

The primary source of data was the SIUC Department of Athletics. The Associate Athletic Director of Academic Services provided much of the data. However, individualized data were not available for this study. Aggregate data made it possible to make comparisons between groups and to discuss some generalizations, but conducting tests of significance is not possible to corroborate the descriptive findings.

Data included GPAs, broken down by semester, sport, and ethnicity. Graduation rates are categorized by year. Some data were not available, most notable GPA data for the 2004 fall semester, 2005 spring semester, the 2006 fall semester, and the 2006 spring semester. In order to address this limitation in the discussion of results, this study utilized two charts, one for the time period before the missing data and one for the time period after it. Also GPAs and graduation rates of student-athletes only consist of scholarship student athletes. This figure does not include walk-on student-athletes.

#### Results and Implications for the Educational Experience of Student-Athletes

After looking at the various factors that influence student-athlete's academic performance, some generalizations were found. First, the academic achievement of student-athletes in terms of GPAs and graduation rates is an important performance indicator of academic standing. A comparison between student-athletes and the undergraduate population at SIUC produces data that adds to the growing body of knowledge in terms of the university and athletics relationship. Second, Title IX legislation gives females proportional numbers of scholarships and access to facilities as men. This is a direct benefit to female student-athletes, as they now receive equal funding and access to higher education.

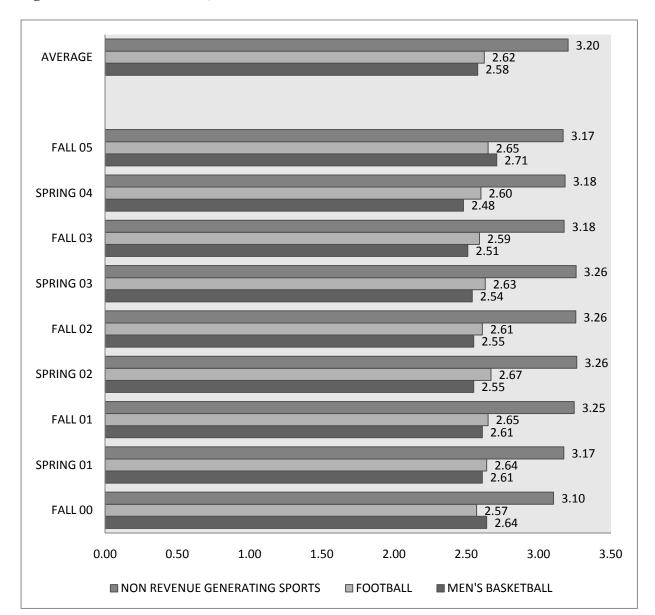


Figure 1. Cumulative GPAs, Years 2000-2005.

Above, figure 1compares the GPAs of student-athletes from 2000-2005 between the two main revenue generating sports (men's basketball and football) with the non-revenue generating sports. Non-revenue generating sports student-athletes had higher GPAs than revenue generating sports. Men's basketball average GPAs were 2.58 and football 2.62. The non-revenue generating sports had a 3.20 GPA, which are .62 and .58 points higher than men's basketball and football respectively.

According to Schneider (2001) distributive justice theory gives different criteria on which resources are distributed but none of them incorporate outstanding academic performance. Based off this comparison distribution based on academic performance needs to be considered in order to increase the GPAs in the revenue-generating sports. Findings presented in Figure 1 point out the higher GPAs achieved by student-athletes in non-revenue generating sports, which provide some evidence on the deficiency regarding academic performance of the distributive justice system theory presented in the literature.

Figure 2 demonstrate a GPA pattern for years 2007-2009 that is very similar to 2000-2005. Non-revenue generating sports had an average of 3.23 GPA and men's basketball and football had GPAs of 3.00 and 2.75 respectively. The same conclusions are drawn from this comparison as well. Non-revenue sport student-athletes perform higher than men's basketball and football by .23 and .48 respectively. This is consistent with other findings. Patrick et al. (2008) studied the academic performance of student-athletes for non-revenue generating sports and revenue generating sports. The findings in depicted in Figure 2 are consistent with those authors' when they explained that athletes in non-revenue generating sports achieve higher GPAs than student-athletes of revenue generating sports.

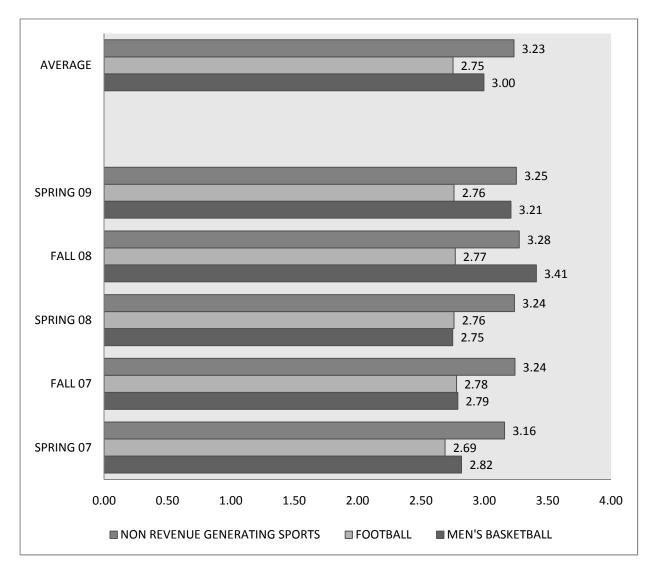
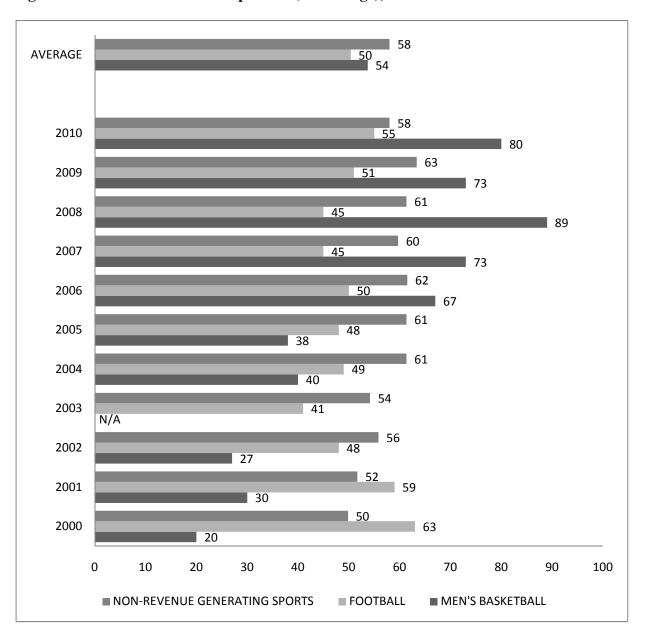


Figure 2. GPA Comparison, Years 2007-2009.

As Figure 3 shows, based off the 2000-2010 comparison of the non-revenue generating sports in comparison to the revenue generating sports, men's basketball and football the graduation rates were higher for non-revenue generating sports. Men's basketball had a graduation rate of 54%, football 50%, and non-revenue generating sports 58%. Eckard (2010) talked about the misconception in student-athlete's attention to their academic work. Non-revenue student-athletes do not have as much of the pressures and stresses that revenue generating student-athletes endure (Eitzen, 1987; Miller & Kerr,

2002). Generally speaking, non-revenue student athletes graduate at higher rates than revenue student-athletes.

Figure 3. Graduation Rates Comparison (Percentage), Years 2000-2010.



\*\*2003 Men's Basketball rate N/A was suppressed by the FERPA privacy act and was not available\*\*\*

### **Conclusions**

What are the benefits of providing athletic scholarships to students at SIUC? This question guided the research behind this entire paper. In hindsight, a few things are clear. Athletic scholarships provide student-athletes with funding to pursue higher education. Scholars argue over the legitimacy of the commercialization of student-athletes. Non-revenue student-athletes at SIUC perform at higher rates than revenue generating student-athletes. This comparison shows that the commercialization factor that revenue generated sports have an influence on academic achievement of revenue generating sport student athletes. Student-athletes use their academic and athletic abilities to earn aid to attend school. Universities use these student-athletes as the "front-porch" of the school. The relationship is a mutual benefit and disadvantage for both.

The SIU mission statement places emphasis on providing a balanced life for student-athletes. The literature review showed that student-athletes have very little balance, and the majority of time is placed on athletics. SIUC's graduation rates are also higher than the national average. Title IX gave female student-athletes an opportunity to receive a college education that now puts them at an advantage in the job market. Female student-athletes achieved higher GPAs and graduation rates than males strengthening the Title IX legislation. This shows that Title IX had some immediate benefits that SIUC and females receive.

Children are taught at young ages that athletics is their way to make it in this world. In actuality, less than 1% of student-athletes make it in professional sports.

Generally speaking, student-athletes have a higher probability of being successful in life through getting an education than having a professional sports career. The NCAA

currently has a commercial that talks about their athletes going pro in something other than sports. Many of these athletes do go pro in their respective academic fields. More jobs are available in the working world, as there are few job opportunities in professional sports. It is important to emphasize academics from day one so that there is not such a large class difference in terms of academic performance. SIU has a large African American population in the revenue generating sports and yet still are low in terms of academic achievement.

This happens because the professional sports world is such a lucrative industry. Americans are all about getting rich and getting rich quick. This is the fastest way to make the most money in a short amount of time. Professional sports are the legal way to make money quick and steer away from the drug industry. Reality is the educational system and society as a whole fail to keep student-athletes grounded knowing there is slim to no chance of their professional dreams coming to fruition. Fort the less than 1% of student-athletes that do make it pro, many of them have problems finding work after they retire. Many struggle to find work as they compete with everyone in the real world and find it very difficult. Very few jobs pay the same as the professional sports industry and therefore pose many problems for retired athletes.

African American student-athletes at SIUC benefit the most from the athletic scholarships. GPAs and graduation rates for African American student-athletes are double of that of the African American undergraduate population. African American males are not just at SIUC because they have hopes of becoming professional athletes. African American male athletes graduate at a 32 percentage point higher rate than

African American undergraduate male students. This rate suggests the fact that the athletics department is nurturing the student first and then the athlete.

The aim of universities as a whole is to equip students with the tool to be productive citizens. This music teacher from Wesleyan College speaks of a student athlete in her class, that plays volleyball – non-revenue generating sport:

This student was a member of the volleyball team who decided that, in addition to her major, she wanted to pursue a minor in music. She was as serious about her academic studies as she was about her responsibilities as a member of the team, and that commitment was evident to me. Because of the discipline she learned through athletics, she was a much more productive music student and was able to reap the benefits of music study much faster than her peers. Her ability to perform under pressure during a volleyball tournament allowed her the poise to perform music in front of a discriminating audience. Of course, all of the body training that was required of her for the volleyball team was an added bonus for her as a singer — a physically fit singer tends to be able to learn new skills, modify behavior, and progress much more quickly and successfully than a singer who does not follow an athletic regime. I left the university before my student graduated, but because of her abilities and record of successes, the head of the voice department accepted her as a student. (Phi Alpha Phi Forum, 2004, p. 14).

I believe this quote embodies what SIUC attempts to do with their studentathletes. Non-revenue student-athletes are not just exemplary in their respective sports,
but also in the classroom on average. SIUC athletics department wants the benefit of
their labor to have faculty compliment them on how hard their students work in the
classroom. SIUC wants faculty who leave the university before a student-athlete
graduates to know that student-athlete is destined to make something of their lives. SIUC
wants to continue to have the confidence in the decisions they make to invest in athletics.
What are the benefits of providing athletic scholarships to students at SIUC? Athletic
scholarships provide students with an opportunity to further their education free of charge
and take advantage of this benefit. Certain groups benefit more than others due to factors

such as Title IX and socioeconomic indicators. African Americans far exceed their undergraduate counterparts academically and continue to improve every year. This study shows the importance of athletic scholarship to student-athletes at SIUC.

#### Recommendations

First, my recommendation is to expand this study. SIUC is the only university assessed in this research project. I am an avid fan. I played NCAA Division II Basketball and received an athletic scholarship; therefore I have a biased view toward athletics. A neutral party who has no affiliation to either athletics or academics doing the exact same study could add to the body of knowledge.

An extensive approach that studies multiple institutions comparable to SIUC would strengthen the legitimacy of the findings. Raw data was not available for this study, only a summary of that information. A further study should find a way to obtain the raw data and conduct significance tests on the graduation rates and GPAs of SIUC students and student-athletes. Significance tests done on graduation rates and GPAs may produce glaring discrepancies in the academic production of one or the other. These numbers can strengthen the arguments towards revenue producing sports getting more because such sports generate revenue.

My final recommendation is that the academic administration and athletics department figure out a way to finally agree on goals. This discussion would consist of other ways to generate revenue to the university, whether licensing fees or private contributions, instead of the student fees and any other ways to come to an agreement. Wilson (1989) spoke of critical tasks and the importance of dealing with the main issue. In this case, the critical task is coming to a compromise on the funding received via

athletics and the university as a whole. Wilson (1989) then goes on to talk about how organizations place emphasis on goals and not tasks. The task is most important. Administrators can incorporate athletics into their mission statements, but would be a mute point if those same principles are not a part of day to day operation. Operators, the people carrying out the daily tasks, have to do what they are supposed to do in order to see a change. Change begins from the bottom up. As coaches and administrators it starts with all of us. We have to take control of all of these situations and do the right things so the student-athletes have good role models to mimic.

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