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Abstract

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College sports are a huge deal in today's society and the struggle we are seeing is the graduation of these student athletes. At the Division I level there are two things that keep these teams on track. One is the graduation success rate, which shows the proportion of student athletes on any given team who earn a degree, and the Academic Progress Rates, which are team-based metrics that account for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete, for each term. These two things make sure that teams are doing well academically. At the Division III level these things do not exist so these rates are not known to the public. There is no literature in this space so finding out the retention rate of these schools and would shed some light on how well they are actually doing. For the coaching side, coaches want all their athletes to succeed in and out of the class room. If students are lacking in their retention rate this may lead the coaches in a new direction towards doing something to raise their low retention rates.

The purpose of this study was to show how some schools are struggling to keep their retention rate up year to year. Also if there was a difference in the retention rates based on the type of institution and if there was a connection between the retention rate and the type of school. In this study the research question is, "How do retention rates of Division III football programs differ based on the type of institution?" After this study is complete my hope is that it will shed a light on those different schools that are lacking great retention rates, and encourage them to try to come up with a strategy to increase these rates which will then in turn increase the graduation rates of their student athletes.

Literature Review

The Role of Athletics on Academics

Every year when college football season ends and bowl season begins Lapchick, Donovan, and Pierson (2013) get together and compile a longitudinal study of academic records of bowl bound college football teams. Lapchick, Donovan, and Pierson (2013) examined the Graduation Success Rates: Designed to show the proportion of student athletes on any given team who earn a degree (GSR), and Academic Progress Rates: team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete, each term (APR) of all seventy teams who were bowl bound in the post season. The samples that were used were college football players on the teams who played in a bowl game in the 2013-2014 season. The process that was used was to take the academic records of each player and find the graduation rates of the teams and compare them to teams in the post season and also previous years (Lapchick, Donovan & Pierson, 2013). The results of this past year's findings were positive as a whole, with an increase from sixty eight to seventy percent in GSR of all seventy teams (Lapchick et al., 2013). The negative results were the gap of nineteen percent in GSR between Caucasian players and African American players. Also Nine out of the seventy teams GSR for African Americans were below fifty percent Lapchick et al., 2013). The benefit of this research was that with the trouble going on with Division I schools there could possibly be a similar problem going on at the Division III level.

The next article corresponds with first article by showing that with these troubling GSR of the different football. Some students are able to be specially admitted into school, even though they are not academically prepared to transition into college classes. To be considered

special admittance they have to eligible by the NCAA standards but not meet the requirements of the school. In the fall of 2012, Winters and Gurney (2012) did a study to examine the different criteria admissions offices used for student athletes who are candidates for special admissions. Winters and Gurney (2012) believed that the NCAA's expanded sliding scale is the problem and differs from the traditional admissions criteria. The sliding scale determines whether students may participate in athletics during their freshman year. The study used the special admission student athletes that were admitted into the school from 2007-2009 (Winters and Gurney, 2012). They used a longitudinal database that had all the special admission student athletes with their GPA's from high school and college. The findings were that both the NCAA sliding scale and the special admissions were demined to be flawed. These special admission cases are students who do not meet the academic standards at the school but are still eligible to be admitted. Of the 109 special admitted study athletes, forty-nine of them were part of revenue driven sports, like football and basketball. This study also found that a student GPA's had no difference in one academic ability compared to other students (Winters and Gurney, 2012). The significant difference showed up in standardized testing scores and also basic academic skills. This is important because it could determine that these requirements are not strict enough for students. With these stricter policies it would make high school students strive to do better in school if they want to play a sport at the Division I or II level. This would also relate achieving higher grades in college. The NCAA needs to review these special admittance cases and determine that these requirements are contributing to having a successful student athlete. In Division III there is not a sliding scale required because athletic scholarships are not

given out, but it may be possible that academic standards to get into a certain school reflect student athlete retention rates.

Continuing on with the NCAA and their sliding scale, Hosick and Sprould (2012) examined the new requirements ordered in 2012 by the NCAA, which were needed for a student-athlete to pass in order to be eligible for a scholarship. The researchers stated that the NCAA used their own research gathered from the different institutions to decide whether the criteria used in previous years, to be eligible to gain a scholarship, was beneficial to students to graduate from college (Hosick & Sprould, 2012). The study focused on all students athletes registered with the NCAA clearing house and also students who received scholarships. They found that the NCAA was in need to raise their standards in the upcoming years so that it would be more beneficial to the students. This is important because it showed that the scale the NCAA was using was not being as effective in translating the success of students graduating. With the previous article it showed that the sliding scale did not help student athletes to graduate. Now with the increase in the stricter policies it looked like the NCAA themselves did not believe that the sliding scale is at the right caliber to result in higher graduation rates.

In 2010 Godfrey created an experiment which examined the relationship between athletics and academics to further the understanding of the college experience for student athletes. Godfrey (2010) used semi structured interviews of ten football players to get a base model. After these interviews were conducted, the participants' statements were broken down in to six different categories: The Fraternity of the Paw, Family Focus, Identity Adaption, Exceptional Expectations, and Athletics VS. Academics and Time Fatigue (Godfrey, 2010). These different categories are themes seen throughout the interview and are coded with key words to

put them in a certain category. The results of this study showed that there are many written and unwritten rules placed on student-athletes, required by the athletic department, which non-student-athletes don't have to follow. These rules are team rules, coach's expectations and university honor codes and also expectations based off of program history. This implantation of these rules has both a positive and negative effect on these athletes' experiences (Godfrey, 2010). Fans and social media also play a role in the experience of student athletes because it makes them more recognizable and have trouble going out and socializing in public (Godfrey, 2010). This is important to show that these players experience pressures from all over the place such as home life, athletics, academics and the community. These same factors can contribute to a reason why some Division III schools struggle to have a high retention rate of their football athletes.

With the pressures a student-athlete receives, one of the largest factors can be the attitude a teacher has towards college athletics. In 2010, Atwater wanted to gain knowledge of how faculty members' attitudes towards college athletics were and how they developed these attitudes as well. This study focused on finding out the faculty's attitude and the academic competency of student-athletes at a NCAA Division-I institution (Atwater, 2010). Participants for this were current faculty members that had teaching roles in the school. One hour interviews were conducted with ten faculty members to get a model, and then web surveys and face to face interviews were conducted. In the results, the faculty members believed that student athletes struggled with spelling, punctuation, grammar, and written communication (Atwater, 2010). Faculty members estimated that one third of student-athletes performed below average in these four categories. With interpersonal skills faculty members believed that

student athletes were ninety one percent or higher or above average with their interpersonal skills (Atwater, 2010). These results are important showing the effects that teacher have a student athletes.

Student Retention

In the study done by Melendez in 2007, he wanted to know what type of influence athletic participation had on the college adjustment of student athletes. Melendez believed that there was psychological and development influences that associated with athletic participation that may be beneficial to adjustment. This study was focused mainly on students of freshmen and sophomore status; these students were asked to fill out the Student Adaptation of College Questionnaire (Melendez, 2007). This survey is broken up into four categories, The Academic Adjustment, The Social Adjustment, The Personal/Emotional Adjustment, and The Goal Commitment/Institutional Attachment (Melendez, 2007). The findings of the research was that student athletes had a higher institutional attachment than non- student athletes. Race and gender also did not play a role in the college adjustment (Melendez, 2007). Looking at the research from this study it will justify from the student's side of the different factors that cause them to leave other than academic standing.

Castle began to conduct his survey in 2010 examining the impact of the Academic Progress Rating (APR) has had on NCAA football programs. The APR holds each individual athletics program accountable for keeping students athletes eligible and at the institution until the student athlete graduates (Castle, 2010). Castle focused mainly on football coaches and Directors of Football Operations by asking them a series of survey questions that had to deal

with how the APR has changed recruiting and retention strategies. They also asked about the APR's effect on graduation rates and resources to academics and transferring. In result of this survey there was no significant difference between recruiting and retention strategies in BCS and Non BCS schools due to the APR. There was also no difference between strategies in schools. There was a forty-five percent change in their recruiting strategy (Castle, 2010). Of the schools who changed their strategies, fifty-six percent of them became slightly less, less, or extremely less likely to recruit players with potential discipline problems (Castle, 2010). In this same group they are sixty-four percent slightly less, less, or extremely less likely to recruit players that have academic challenges (Castle, 2010). This is important information to look at further down for research to take a look at if academic standards to enter a Division III school hinder what type of athletes are being recruited for a school.

Hobneck, Mudge and Turchi (2003) took a different approach to their study in 2003. They wanted to examine the problem that student athletes at community colleges had trouble showings signs of being academically successful (Hobneck,Mudge & Turchi, 2003). They first went back to the 2001 fall semester and looked at the academic records of student athletes on the women's teams: basketball, tennis, softball, volleyball and the men's team: basketball, golf, tennis, and baseball. The academic records were then broken down into total hours attempted, total hours completed, developmental education hours, hours withdraw, hours failed, and the teams' GPA. Next they surveyed the student athletes and faculty members if they believe they can balance the life between being an athlete and being a student. For the first set of data that was received of the 1013 hours attempted eighty-six percent of the hours were completed. It was found that fourteen percent of the hours attempted resulted in a failing grade or

withdrawal from the class (Hobneck et al., 2003). In the survey the athletes had a higher perception of being able to balance life and school, while the teachers were the exact opposite of the students (Hobneck et al., 2003). This study showed that there is a problem with the students being able to being academically successful and that there is a need for increase in academic support for student athletes.

Craig and Ward (2008) conducted a five yearlong study starting from 1998 to 2003. The problem that community colleges are having is keeping the retention rate up of students due to open door admission policy's and balance of life between commuting students. This study measured the student retention rates of all first full time students entering in community college in 1998. Analysis variance and logistic regression analysis broke down students by demographics, major, student status, and the time between graduating high school and enrolling into the college (Craig & Ward, 2008). The findings of the two processes were that students who dropped out of the school had much lower grades on average than students who were successful (Craig & Ward, 2008). The most significant impact that was had on a student that was successful or not successful was the time between high school and enrollment in college (Craig & Ward, 2008). It was found that students who have been out of school greater than or equal to five years had done on average .29 points higher the students who immediately entered school (Craig & Ward, 2008). This study shows that it might be beneficial for a student to go out and mature more as a person before entering school and will allow them to be a more successful student.

In 2003-2004, Baker and Robnett examined Pre College and college experiences and characteristics. The sample of the study included first year students at Western University.

Survey questions were used to ask 1502 students and used in a logistic regression analysis. This was then broken up into two separate categories of precollege characteristics such as demographic characteristics and academic preparation. The second things looked at were college characteristics; first year GPA, on campus support, off campus ties and college environment (Baker & Robnett, 2012). The findings of this study were Asian Americans had the highest retention rate with Ninety-three percent followed by African Americans at ninety-two percent and then Latinos at eighty-six percent. Latinos were significantly less than Whites' and Blacks' to be born in the US and speak English as a first language. Going forward with the research some of these questions asked could help with figuring out the different factors other than academic standards that deal with students leaving school.

Conceptual Framework

Academics play a large role in athletics. There are some large takeaways from these articles that show that connection between the two. Depending on the division a high school athlete applies to, they are required to apply to the NCAA clearing house and required to meet the requirements of the NCAA sliding scale. Also after meeting these requirements some of these students may not meet the requirements to be admitted into school but they can still receive special admission status. One of the last key things is the way faculty members view athletics. Faculty believes that these students struggle with the academics placed in front of them. The key terms that need to be explained in these articles: Graduation Success Rates: Designed to show the proportion of student athletes on any given team who earn a degree (NCAA). The Academic Progress Rates: team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and

retention of each student-athlete, each term (NCAA). Tutors: Tutors are students who help out athletes with homework, studying, anything academically while on the road or at school. Study Hall: A period of time throughout the day or night that athletes have to work on homework.

Student retention is a key thing for athletic programs and schools. In order to be successful in all aspects, retention is an area that needs to be tuned in as much as possible. The problem with this is there are many different factors that come into play for a student to stay at a school. The big factor for athletic teams is if their athletes have an institutional attachment. This means that when they are going out for a sport they play to represent the school and not just themselves. In two different studies it showed that in community colleges there seems to be a struggle with student athletes. This problem is being able keep retention up because of the low academic standards to enter in the school. One of the last things is the Pre College, demographics of the student and then the students' college experience. Some definitions need to know is retention: the act of retaining: the state of being retained (Merriam-Webster). Next is college adjustment: The way a student or student athlete feels about going to school.

There are a couple different variables that were looked to measure to get the data. First will be the presence of an athlete on the roster. This athlete will need to be present on the roster from his freshmen year until his senior year in college. The second will be the type of school, public or private, and what the types of academic standards each school has to enter into the school. Some possible variables that will intervene in the study are the type of drop off period; meaning is it just from the program or is it from the school.

To see the connection between these two concepts, the first step is to take a look at Melendez (2007). Within academics and athletics and student retention, a student needs to psychologically develop a connection to the football team which allows them to having an easier college adjustment and this also helps with student retention. The next is the article by Hobneck, Mudge and Turchi (2003), which goes into depth about the relationship between low academic standards and the retention of students. Low academic standards allow students to further their education but with playing athletics, if a student is not able to balance the two aspects, the chances of them staying at the school are lowered.

The two main points from both concepts that are the most important are Goodfrey(2010) and Hobneck, Mudge, & Turchi (2003). In Godfrey's (2010) article College football players: *The new nontraditional student,* Godfrey finds the connection between academics and athletics while also finding out the type of college experience student-athletes receive compared to a normal student. With Hobneck, Mudge & Turchi (2003) *Improving student athlete academic success and retention,* it explained how that community colleges struggle to have successful student athlete because of low admission criteria. Also that the student athletes have a false sense of confidence on how well they do in school compared to how well they are actually doing.

Methods

For this study the research question is: How Do Retention Rates of Division III Football Programs Differ Based on the Type of Institution? The research design that was used was a cross sectional; the data was needed to recorded only once. What was being looked for was to

find out if there was a difference in retention rates based on institution type and also if there is a correlation between the retention rate and the type of institution.

The population that was used in the study was all the Division III football programs that were present from the 2009-2012 seasons. The sample of the study was 20 private school programs and 20 public school programs.

Access was gained to the population by using http://web1.ncaa.org/stats/StatsSrv/careersearch. After placing all schools to an excel sheet they were then separated into their appropriate conference. Schools were then separated together by the type of institution either public or private. Next random number generator was used and after this sorted the numbers from smallest to largest to get the sample of 20 private and 20 public programs. Qualitative secondary data was then collected. Using http://web1.ncaa.org/stats/StatsSrv/careersearch and also the schools' different athletic websites and collected the freshmen class names in 2009, then the sophomore class names in 2010, junior class names in 2011 and finally the senior class names in 2012. These names were placed on an excel sheet and carefully sorted, highlighting names that came up each year continuing to look if they were present as freshmen. To get the retention rate percentage for each year the number a sophomore that returned to the roster would be divided by how many freshmen came in. The retention rate from sophomore to junior year was calculated by taking how many student athletes returned for their junior divided by the number sophomore. Junior to senior year was done the same way, as for overall retention this was how many seniors were left on the team that completed four years of football divided by how many freshmen started in

2009. Independent t test was used to find the difference between retention rates of the public and private schools, and also a correlation to find if there was a relationship between the retention rate and the type of institution.

Results

When collecting data it was retrieved from the school's athletic website where they hold roster information. If the roster data was not able to be found for the 2009 season http://web1.ncaa.org/stats/StatsSrv/careersearch was used. This website site has stats and records and roster of all teams under the NCAA going back to when programs first began. The population of this study was 244 Division III football programs. For the sample twenty private school programs and twenty public school programs. Nine of these programs were excluded from the study because they had left Division III after the 2009 season. Also the school Adrian was selected but had to be excluded because roster information was not able to be found on either the school's athletic website or Career search. Overall as a whole the study is using 18 % of the population, as you break down the schools into public and private programs. These two samples are very different while there are 199 private and only 35 public school programs.

The average retention rate for four years of both public and private football programs was 27.35 of student athletes. From freshmen to sophomore year the average retention rate was 51.75% of student athletes. From sophomore to junior year the retention of the student athletes increased to 64.29%. Lastly from junior to senior year the retention rate of student athletes was 83.77 %. Of the 40 programs the schools on average had freshmen football class size of 38 student athletes. The average football class size for sophomore was 19 student

athletes. As juniors there was average of 12 student athletes that returned to the program and 10 student athletes returned for their senior year from the original freshmen class.

On average public schools had a slightly higher retention rate (M=53.38 % SD=.167) from freshmen to sophomore year then private programs (M=50.12% SD=.1341) On Average private schools programs had a higher retention rate of student athletes (M=67.37 % SD=.108) compared to public programs (M=61.22 % SD=.126) from there sophomore to junior year. Both programs had a very similar retention rate of student athletes while private schools (M=83.93% SD.106) and public programs (M=83.61 % SD.134) from junior to senior year. On average the overall retention rate was greater in private programs (M=28.55% SD=.093) than public programs (M=26.16% SD=.075).

Conclusion

Based on the 40 football programs the overall retention rate for all football programs over the four year period in the study was 27.35%. Also of the 40 football programs there was 51.75 % retention rate of the incoming freshmen class to the following year. The average retention rate for the 40 programs of student athletes from their sophomore to junior year was 64.29%. Lastly the 40 programs student athlete average retention rate from junior to senior year was 83.77%. When splitting up two the types of institutions into their own categories, the 20 private school programs averaged a 28.55% retention rate while the 20 public school programs average 2 % less and had a 26.16 % retention rate over the 4 years. From freshmen to sophomore year public school programs had a higher retention rate at 53.38% while private school programs had a 50.12 %. The following year private schools had a 67.37 % compared to

public school which had 61.29 % retention rate from their sophomore to junior year. One of the last findings after the programs were broken down was junior to senior year where both schools had a very similar retention rate with public school programs having a 83.61% and private school programs having a 83.92%

As in the first article in the literature review by Lapchick, Donovan, and Pierson (2013) explained how at the Division I level schools are struggling with graduation success rates (GSR) and the academic Progress rates (APR). These Division I schools have different requirements such as tutors and mandatory study halls hour for these student athletes. While at the Division III level unless the coaching staff puts together something along these lines it was expected that these results would be lower than at the Division I level. Since this study is the first of its kind about Division III retention rates, it has opened up to show that Division III schools are struggling to keep a respectable retention of their student athletes.

Limitation/Delimitations

The first limitation in the study was that not all 244 schools were able to be included in the study. Nine out of the 244 schools had to be excluded from the study because they had left Division III after the 2009 season. The second limitation that was experienced in this study was with the school Adrian. Adrian was randomly selected to be in the study however it had to be replaced with another school because roster information was not able to be recovered from the 2009 season.

The delimitations that were selected for this study made the retention rates more accurate then what the data would have shown if these delimitations were not included. The

first delimitation was student athletes who were granted another year of eligibility following there freshmen year. These student athletes were not included because they were considered in a different class the following year. Transfer students were also not included because they did not come in with the freshmen class and would not count towards the original retention rate. The last delimitation was not including student athletes who entered in the program their freshmen year and left for any reason then returned back to the program.

Future Recommendations

Going into further research on this topic this study could be done more effectively if the research would go directly to the source by calling the school and having the roster information sent to them directly instead of from a website that might not be correctly updated also including all schools in the study to get a more exact answer. Also the study should be done over an eight year period of time so that they are able to find the retention rates of four different incoming classes. One of the last recommendations is to use all Division III football programs.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to find out what are the retention rates of Division III football schools and to see if these different rates differed between public and private institutes. Secondary data was collected from 40 Division III football programs which included the names of freshmen in 2009 till their senior year in 2012. It was found that based on the 40 football programs that were included in the study it was found that over 70% of the student athletes that report to camp their freshmen year will not return the following fall. These

findings went on long with the article by Lapchick, Donovan & Pierson (2013) where Division I schools were struggling with their retention rates and the graduation of student athletes.

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