ATHLETICS AND EDUCATIONAL INTEGRITY:
SCHOOLS, SPORTS AND SOCIETY

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Competitive sports teams have long been a part of educational institutions. Athletics have been a fertile ground to which ethics, values, and life lessons have been taught. The role of athletics and educational mission of colleges and universities have been debated for over one hundred years. The question that I will examine is: Can educational institutions maintain their values in a “win” driven society? My objective is to explain how leadership in educational institutions and athletic departments can find and maintain a balance between school and sports.

The majority of research centered on several core issues that have been the source for criticism of the role athletics should play on college campuses. Those issues included a brief history of college athletics, an examination of the encroachment of business practices involving collegiate athletics, the rise of commercialism and professionalism in amateur sports and the role of presidential leadership in obtaining a proper balance between athletics and academics. The use of case-studies, review of literature, and the authors experience of serving as a coach and athletic
director at both the collegiate and high school level have provided the majority of information found in this analysis.

The findings of this study were varied. Problems of commercialism and professionalism seeping into the collegiate and sub-collegiate levels have been occurring since the very beginnings of school-sponsored sports. Reform movements have addressed core concerns with collegiate athletics on a cyclical basis in which problems are identified, recommendations are made and little, if anything, changes.

I have concluded that it is possible to maintain academic integrity while supporting athletics on campus. However, many institutions, particular the “big-time” athletic programs have clearly moved more towards professionalism and away from allowing student-athletes to experience a “typical” undergraduate experience. This is particularly the case in the sports of football and men’s basketball. Eliminating athletic scholarships would help bridge the gap between student-athletes and their contemporaries. This, however, seems quite unlikely to happen. School presidents are the key to balancing the mission of their schools and controlling their athletic department. But, the job is too big for the presidents to do alone. In order to balance academics and athletics various stakeholders must share a “clarity of purpose” for their institutions.
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CHAPTER 1: STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Competitive sports teams have long been part of American collegiate educational institutions. School-supported sports teams have been justified by colleges and universities as a vehicle in which various positive attributes can be developed and encouraged. Among the most common beliefs are that athletics help build character provide valuable life lessons, encourage school spirit, and serve as entertainment for the community. “Athletics are integral to the American education system because they have educational value” (Hoch 2009, 8). The idea of the importance of sports and what they teach has a long, and perhaps skewed, history. The connection between college sports and educational institutions is heralded in the often quoted Duke of Wellington’s famous statement: “the victory at Waterloo was sown on the fields of Eton.” In the United States, President Gerald Ford, himself a collegiate student-athlete, stated:

Broadly speaking outside of national character and an educated society, there are few things more important to a country’s growth and well-being than competitive athletics. If it is a cliché to say that athletics builds character as well as muscle, than I subscribe to the cliché. (Miracle, Jr. and Rees 1994, 29)

Athletics have also provided a great source of physical fitness and activity for those who participate, which is consistent with the Greek educational philosophy of “sound mind and body.” The majority of
undergraduate students at America’s colleges and universities, however, do not actively participate in varsity sports. They rely on intramurals, clubs and student recreational activities to provide them with the health benefits of physical activity during their college years.

While a good deal of debate about the values of sports in society has already taken place, a growing concern for colleges and universities is that sports at the collegiate level have fallen victim to commercialism and professionalism, placing at risk the amateur status of the “student-athlete.” Critics of intercollegiate athletics argue that sports now have a greater emphasis on entertainment and show business rather than satisfying the academic mission of the institution, thus the reputation of the school suffers. Author Murray Sperber, one of the leading critics on the contemporary relationship between athletic departments and the university looks at the rise of college sports and attacks its emphasis on business. He suggests that athletic departments have become franchises, “a huge commercial enterprise with operating methods and objectives frequently opposed to the educational missions of the host universities” (Sperber 2000, 33). There are several issues that certainly undermine the integrity of an academic institution. Included on the list are such questionable practices as: the lowering of admissions standards for highly recruited athletes, the funneling of athletes into “soft” majors, sub-standard
graduation rates for varsity athletes, and the involvement of athletes in academic fraud. These issues, combined with stories of student-athletes getting in trouble with the law, help to amplify calls for radical changes in the relationship between the athletic department and the university.

The role of athletics in relation to the educational mission of schools has been debated in virtually every locale across America, including school boards, faculty rooms, barber shops, bars and even in the halls of Congress. The primary question that I will examine is: Can educational institutions maintain their institutional values, both academic and athletic, in a win-driven society? My objective is to examine the history of college athletics and the subsequent reform movements that have taken place. I will also look to explain how leadership in educational institutions, specifically presidents and their governing boards, along with athletic directors, can find and maintain a balance between school and sports. By studying these questions, I hope to deliver insight into the reform movement itself and to identify answers and possible solutions to growing concerns that athletics on college campuses have spun out of control. By looking at these questions and the relationship between educational institutions and the sports they sponsor, there will inevitably be other questions to address including: Can a school maintain educational integrity and sponsor athletics? What lessons and messages
regarding values and integrity are coming out of our educational institutions? What role does educational leadership play in maintaining the integrity of academics and athletics? And, do different types of schools balance their missions better than others?

This paper will examine the relationship between educational institutions and the sports that they sponsor. One of the most interesting aspects of this research is the fact that the relationship between athletics and colleges and universities is uniquely an American phenomenon. “Throughout the rest of the world, young people attend school for the academics and participate in sports through clubs, travel teams, camps and clinics, and with private coaches”(Hoch 2009, 8). While collegiate sports have their history rooted in the elite public schools of England, the bridge to professional sports in America overwhelmingly goes through the college campus. Particularly in the high profile sports of football and men’s basketball, athletes develop the athletic skills in college that will improve their chances of becoming a professional athlete.

The closeness of American sports and the schools that sponsor them is truly unique, as mentioned by researcher William S. Bailey in his book: Athletics and Academe. In his writing Baily states: “only in the United States, of course, have athletics assumed such a close and representational identity with higher education” (Bailey 1991, 6). As you
will see, this relationship enhances the arguments of the critics of college athletics and brings to question why America’s educational institutions should even sponsor varsity athletics. It can be argued that college a function of college athletics is to serve as a training ground or “minor league” for future sports professionals. If that were the only function of collegiate athletics, the argument would certainly be stronger. The fact that very few collegiate athletes become professional athletes indicates that collegiate athletics must serve a broader purpose. The criticisms or talking points against the seemingly over-emphasis on college athletics are familiar and are usually stated as a matter of fact: “Why should the school accept an athlete who does not care about an education over someone who values an education?” There are several problems with this question including the assumption that someone who was qualified to gain acceptance was denied by the acceptance of an athlete. A second, and more troubling, problem with this statement is that an assumption has been made that the athlete does not value or care about an education. This is actually not the case. The United States Department of Education released data on all students who entered college in 2000-2001 and graduated within six years. They found that Division I athletes graduated at a higher rate than the overall school population (Sander 2008, A34). Certainly those in the field of education should be aware of the harmful effects of
stereotyping and gross generalizations. What this statement does indicate is that people have very passionate feelings about the role of athletics on college campuses and that they cover the entire spectrum from enthusiastic support to disdain for their very existence. Much discussion will take place analyzing these viewpoints, identifying problem areas, and addressing some of the issues through change or reform. One of the main obstacles that will be looked at when dealing with change is the very fact that change is often met with great resistance. Coaches, athletic directors, students, faculty, university administration, alumni, boosters, the general public, the conferences and the NCAA have differing interests, and each group can attempt to block reforms that may conflict with their role in intercollegiate athletics. Some of the issues that are provoking criticism and discussion today are new, others are over one hundred and fifty years old.

There are many topics in college athletics that involve ethical behavior, questionable values and legal issues including: gender equity, exploitation of college athletes, performance enhancement drugs, health issues concerning the athletes, and gambling and corruption in sports. While, not extensively covered in this paper, they serve to illustrate the complexity of balancing the relationship between schools, sports, and society. They also, underscore why there is an urgency to look at reform
movements in sports and examine why they have been needed and whether or not they have been successful.

In analyzing this topic, and throughout this discussion, I will primarily look at sports at the collegiate level. Brief references to professional sports, high school sports and youth leagues will be introduced only as a reference point and to illustrate how that some of these issues have trickled down from professional to collegiate to high school and even youth leagues. As you can imagine, there are many great athletic topics outside of collegiate sports that demand our attention.

There are many issues of great concern and a growing belief that some of the worst practices associated with collegiate sports have made their way to the high schools and clubs for younger children. The main issues involve recruiting grade school children to play sports in high school, and the often blatant disregard for academic achievement. Several of these issues are brought to life in the award-winning documentary *Hoop Dreams*, released in 1994. *Hoop Dreams* follows two Chicago grammar school basketball stars as they are both recruited from Chicago’s inner city to a suburban catholic high school. William Gates and Arthur Agee are talented young basketball players, and they both have dreams of playing in the NBA. The movie follows the two boys from the summer of their freshman year in high school until they graduate and documents the
relationship that the young men have with their respective schools. Often this relationship highlights the negative aspects of sports in our schools.

Recruiting grade school and middle school students who have been identified as potential top athletes is prevalent in many of America’s cities. As a high school football coach and teacher at one of Chicago’s many catholic schools, I often attended grammar school football games to scout out talent and then begin recruiting that individual. Talking to parents, selling the value of the school where I worked, providing information about financial aid and getting the family to come visit the school for a “shadow” day, in which the prospective student would be paired with a current student, who just so happened, to play the same sport as the prospective student. Follow-up phone calls were made by various members of the school’s admissions and athletic departments. This is the standard operating procedure used to recruit players in high school.

Successful recruiting often pulled good athletes and families out of the public schools and helped turn city public schools into a sea of “undesirables” thus, furthering along the demise of the inner city public school. The games were flooded with high school coaches, each decked out in their school colors and football shirts. Whether you, as an individual, thought that recruiting was a good thing or a bad thing did not matter. If your school and football program was not represented, you were
out of the picture and instead of coaching the young talent you observed, you would be spending the next four years playing and defending against it. This is true in the sport of basketball as well. It becomes even more intense with the existence of AAU and club teams that make basketball a year round sport. Many young people focus only on playing basketball, specializing in it to develop a skill level that will be rewarded with a college scholarship. For all their time and effort, only a very small number will have the opportunity to play at the collegiate level, leaving the vast majority of students wondering what to do when their high school basketball careers are over. While these concerns are reflective of America’s addiction to sports, college and universities must be the focal point for any meaningful change (Gerdy, 2006a).

On a practical front, whether competitive athletics belongs on college and university campuses or not is irrelevant. Sports are a significant part of the social fabric in American culture and they are tied tightly with our educational institutions. To maintain a proper balance of integrity between athletics and academics should be the goal of all schools that sponsor sports. This paper will examine the history of intercollegiate athletic issues and reform movements, identify the concerns that seem to perpetuate an increasing imbalance between athletics and academics, and identify possible solutions that can provide change.
While the overall topic of this paper involves the relationship between athletics and academics on collegiate campuses, important distinction must be made. The most vocal, and well-documented criticisms of school sponsored sports are at the NCAA Division I-A level and specifically aimed at football and men’s basketball. These two sports generate the most visibility, have the capacity to make the most money, spend the most money, and generally speaking, have graduation rates that fall below the general student population, as well as other student-athletes. These sports have been referred to as “big-time” sports. I will throughout this paper use this reference. These big-time sports are often the driving force behind calls for reform.
CHAPTER 2: HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

In the recent history of college sports, the last twenty years, it is clear that a growing movement has begun to address the problems associated with sports and college campuses. Reform movements and discussions have been sponsored by the NCAA, university presidents, and non-profit educational advocate organizations. It is important to understand the historical relationship between athletic and educational institutions to gain an understanding of the issues and concerns that we face today. The following is a brief history of the relationship between educational institutions and athletics and how they have coexisted on American colleges and universities.

The study of the history of collegiate sports is important for many reasons. Any contemporary understanding of balancing academics and athletics requires an historical perspective because often discussions about reforming collegiate athletics share the premise that somehow everything would be okay if we returned to the “good old days” of college sport, when the students and the teams were more pure. Many people seem to believe that there was a time when athletics and academics mixed free of controversy and all parties were content with the relationship between academic institutions and the sports that they sponsored. As you will see
in this discussion, that is simply not the case. From the beginning of intercollegiate competition, there has been a philosophical debate about the place of athletics in colleges and universities. What is clear is that issues that trouble critics today, namely commercialization, eligibility, and professionalization, were evident a century and a half ago. For our purpose, the beginning of collegiate sports in America occurs in the mid nineteenth century, specifically in 1852. To be sure, student organizations on college campus were involved in games and sport (hunting) prior to this occurrence (Smith 1988). Nevertheless it seems appropriate for our discussion to begin on the banks of Lake Winnipesaukee in New Hampshire in 1852. The event involved a rowing contest between Harvard and Yale. The contest was the brainchild of a railroad executive, who wanted to use the event as a week long social affair that would inevitably promote the growth of the railroad and increase business in the beautiful New Hampshire area. The event was truly a commercial operation with the railroad company paying all the expenses and travel for the two schools. Harvard and Yale complied and took part in the week long festivities that included practice races as well as food and drink. The event culminated in a race between the two great institutions, with the Harvard crew winning the event (Smith 1998, 27). The travel, time commitment, planned social events, entertainment and promotion of
business that happened in the beautiful countryside of New Hampshire, is eerily similar to the same social and entertainment values that take place one hundred and fifty years later with college football teams competing in bowls during the holiday season.

Looking back at the history of collegiate sports shows us that problems were identified and early reform efforts were set up to address some of the same issues that we are looking at today. Early reform movements not only looked at the relationship of sports on campus, but they also looked at safety and health issues that made some sports dangerous.

One of the first organized meetings to take place involved Walter Camp, the head football coach at Yale, and several other top football coaches in the country. Football had become extremely dangerous by the turn of the century. Operating in a country that was bitten by the progressive and reform movements of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, America became aware of collegiate football and the dangers that it brought. The rising injury rate and death toll, as a result of football, signaled that reform must happen or the sport itself would cease to exist. In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt, a firm supporter of athletics, physical fitness and competition, called America’s leading football coaches together to discuss the high number of deaths resulting from
participation in collegiate football. Eighteen boys were killed and one hundred and forty-nine boys were seriously injured that year (Byers 1995, 39). Rule changes were implemented that eliminated dangerous practices such as the “flying wedge,” a tactic by which teammates threw a player head first into the pile to stop the advancement of the opposing team. This rule change almost immediately reduced the number of fatalities. A second result of this meeting with President Roosevelt was the development of an organization designed to oversee collegiate sports. Thus, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was formed. The NCAA would become a critical player in the development and management of intercollegiate athletics. Interestingly enough, the NCAA would find itself as an organization that was credited for protecting the student-athlete and the integrity of intercollegiate athletics, while at the same time, it was criticized for transforming collegiate athletics into a commercial entity. Further discussion of the NCAA’s role in collegiate sports will take place in subsequent chapters.

One of the first attempts at reform came from the Ivy League at a conference in Providence, Rhode Island. The conference was hosted by Brown University and included all of the Ivy League schools except Yale, who refused to attend. The conference was held in 1898 and it identified the major issues and concerns of the times. The compelling issues in
collegiate sports were to be addressed and they included: “eligibility of undergraduate and graduate students, athletic scholarships, the use of professional coaches, and summer baseball for pay, excessive gate receipts, and faculty control of athletics” (Smith 1988, 140). Several of these issues are still being discussed today. “The Brown Conference Report” was significant for several reasons. It provided insight into the debate on the role athletics should play at the collegiate level. It called for more faculty control of athletics, including a recommendation that schools should set up a faculty athletics committee, upholding the principle of amateurism, limiting to no more than four years of eligibility, putting restrictions on transfers, limit the length of seasons, placing the faculty and administration in charge of hiring all athletic personnel, and setting admission standards and minimum grade requirements for participation. All of these recommendations seem very reasonable and many of them have been addressed and woven their way into the current framework of collegiate athletics. “The Brown Conference Report” never passed as mandatory practices; however, it did provide other schools and conferences with a framework to use (Smith, 1988, 142). The concerns of the faculty were voiced at the time and again sound very familiar today, as they referenced that they did not want athletics to interfere with the intellectual and moral development of their students. They were critical of
the idea that colleges should make athletes. They also did not want
students who participated in athletics to come under the influence of
professionalism and commercialism. (Smith 1988, 142)

Of greater impact in the call for reform and the exposition of the
problems within college athletics, “American College Athletics” was
written and distributed in 1929. Also known as “The Savage Report,” this
study was a product of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of
Teaching. This report looked at the state of collegiate sports and cited the
numerous violations and bad practices that were occurring on collegiate
campuses. The study substantiated how wide spread the problem was.
“Three quarters of the 112 colleges studied by the Carnegie Commission
were found to be in violation of NCAA codes and principles of
amateurism” (Zimbalist 1999, 8). The main culprit, according to “The
Savage Report,” was the growing commercialization of sports and it
questioned whether or not sports, as a business, should have a place in
higher education. The report attacked the media and criticized them for
fostering an environment that promoted the commercialization of
intercollegiate athletics (Thelin 1994, 27). The study doubted that
commercialization would subside, and called for, as a major reform, a
return to the days when the sports themselves were student-sponsored not
under the control of the faculty and administration. “The Savage Report
accomplished two important things: it exposed college sports’ resistance to systematic investigation, and it triggered refutations and denials by college and university presidents” (Thelin 1996, 27). The response would be typical of the cycle of reform movements on college campuses in which recommendations would be made and problems would continue to exist.

“A follow-up survey conducted by the New York Times in 1931 found that not a single college had changed its practices to adhere to the NCAA codes” (Zimbalist 1999, 8).

The NCAA became involved in a reform movement when it established “The Sanity Code” in 1948. The “Sanity Code” put into place a series of guidelines to help preserve athletics on campus and maintain its integrity. This was significant because it established a uniform code of conduct for all institutions and put in place a means to enforce it. “Under the Sanity Code, a student-athlete could receive tuition and fees if he showed financial need and met the school’s ordinary entrance requirements; this amounted to a merit award for athletic ability” (Byers 1995, 67). However, the “Sanity Code” was short-lived. It was met with great resistance and ultimately was abolished by vote in 1951.

One of the most recent and comprehensive studies on intercollegiate athletics, is a series of works known simply as “The Knight Commission.” “The Knight Commission” was established and produced
three reports in 1991, 1992, and 1993. The titles of these reports were: “Keeping the Faith With Student-Athletes: An New Model;” “A Solid Start: A Report on the Reform of Intercollegiate Athletics,” and “A New Century: Intercollegiate Athletics in the United States.” These studies were the result of a low period in the 1980’s in which major violations were threatening the integrity of collegiate athletics. A follow up study was released ten years after the initial report in 2001 and was titled “A Call to Action: Reconnecting College Sports and Higher Education.” The 2001 report was released and came to the conclusion that despite the efforts of the previous decade, sports at the collegiate level were still rife with violations. The 2001 report really called for university presidents to take a much more active role in their athletic departments.

Certainly one of the most common themes and criticisms among people in addressing the relationship between athletics and academics on college campuses is the growing amount of money that is involved in supporting “big-time” sports and generating revenue through commercialization of collegiate sports. “The National Collegiate Athletic Association estimates that all college sports teams generated $4.2 billion from its fans and various partners, such as broadcasters and sponsors” (Isidore, 2006). The question inevitably turns to placing value on the practice of varsity sports sponsored by higher education.
It is fairly typical for educational institutions to examine themselves over the topic of generating revenue. When there is money to be made, moral and ethical values can be challenged. Those reformers who believe that institutional values may be compromised by generating money can be frustrated by what can be perceived as a lack of an audience. What happens when the message you are trying to say regarding morals and ethics is not well received by your audience? It is difficult to argue issues that involve morals and values. As Robert Simon points out in his book, *Fair Play: Sports and Social Values*, “The difficulty in arguing morals and values is whose are we using? Who is to say what should be taught and what should be avoided” (Simon 2004, 5)? This is exactly the point that perplexes those who study the relationship between colleges and the sports that they sponsor. Many people in society value competition and big business athletics. They see no reason to change the current system and thoroughly enjoy the fact that college sports are, first and foremost, entertainment. They enjoy being able to turn on the television on any given night in the winter and early spring and see several college basketball games, some starting as late as nine o’clock in the evening to accommodate television networks. Others see this scenario as sending the wrong message about college students. These students, they believe, miss too much class time and should not have games scheduled
by the dictates of the media which compromises student-welfare. It becomes very difficult to find common ground between these two camps.

There is a good deal of information on the value of college sports and what certainly is evident is that several sports including football and men’s basketball are much more high profile than others. They are the most commercialized and, as I mentioned, are often collectively referred to as “big-time” sports. Peter A. French, in his book *Ethics and College Sports*, examines the following question: “Can the very existence of in the academy of intercollegiate athletics, especially the high-profile or “big-time” prestige or elite sports of football and men’s basketball be justified” (French 2004, 1)? French argues that the actions of the “elite” sports teams on college campuses are directly tied to the overall reputation of the college or university, and because of this French asks the question: What are they doing on the campus in the first place? French states:

A scandal in the biology department involving a professor engaged in the drug trade hardly makes a dent in the university’s public image, but poor football seasons or scandals in the men’s basketball program can tarnish the school’s image for decades. (French 2004, 3)

Can sports at the collegiate level maintain their institutional integrity in a win-driven society? The answer to this question is both yes and no. Much of the question lies with a more practical question: Do we really want to change the culture of college sports on campus? To get an
answer to my original question it is important to look at the broad issues surrounding colleges and universities. What makes this matter so complex to address is the fact that colleges and universities come in all shapes and sizes with differing reasons for their existence. Athletics, like any other program at the collegiate level, and its purpose can be, and is, different depending on the school itself. Fresno State, a Division I-A public university and Amherst, a Division III highly selective liberal arts college are very different institutions, they may share some goals and philosophies, but they clearly differ on others. Therefore, any broad questions regarding the relevance of athletics and athletic program is going to vary according to the type of educational institution we are examining. It is one reason why conference affiliation is so important. Conferences are an assembly of like-minded institutions and have a better chance of monitoring their own issues, based on the member school’s size, mission and philosophy. To discuss the relationship between intercollegiate athletics and their respective schools, it is important to understand how schools are divided divisionally.

Because of the popularity of sports on campus, much attention is brought to the university in the form of their athletic teams. As mentioned earlier, one of the difficulties in examining the relationship between athletics and the mission of the schools lies in the fact that there are a
diverse set of schools that differ dramatically in their sponsorship of athletics. It is important to understand the differences in classification of collegiate sports.

The NCAA divides schools into Division I, II, and III. There are several notable differences between Division I and III. The greatest is that Division I schools offer athletic scholarships to students who participate on their respective teams. The Division III schools offer financial aid based on need and do not consider athletic ability at all when determining the amount of financial aid to give. This difference brings us to our first issue that seems to be at the core of the debate about intercollegiate athletics. What is the impact on colleges and universities for offering students athletic based scholarships? This question will be examined in the next chapter with a look at the divide between student-athletes and the general student undergraduate population.
CHAPTER 3: ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS

One of the reasons why so much has been made about the role of athletics on college campuses stems from the fact that the athletes themselves are often separated from the general undergraduate populations. The demands placed on these individuals are part of the reason why they have such a different experience. At the Division I level it is hard to escape this fact. No other “group” of students has a similar background in terms of how they arrive at the university that they choose. To illustrate this, I will discuss the typical path for a recruited student-athlete that ultimately enrolls in college.

The following information has been gathered through my experience as a Division I football coach in which I was actively involved in recruiting high school players. The allowances and restrictions that I describe come from the NCAA Bylaws, specifically Bylaw, Article 13 on recruiting. In the case of big-time sports, football and basketball, the recruiting process can begin as early as the ninth grade of high school with a particular individual attending one of the many football or basketball camps that are associated with colleges and universities. The top priorities of these camps are to make money, to supplement coaching salaries, and to identify and evaluate potential student-athletes. In fact, the NCAA in its
recruiting bylaws defines a prospective student-athlete as any student who has started classes for the ninth grade. According to the NCAA every high school freshman in America is considered a “prospect.” This would surely come as a shock to the vast number of high school freshman, particularly those who do not play sports. After tracking an individual’s freshman and sophomore year in high school, the collegiate coach and athletic department can begin sending letters to the individual. In the sport of basketball, letters can be sent in the summer following the completion of their sophomore year. In football, those letters can begin going out on September 1st of the “prospects” junior year. The phone calls also begin with basketball allowing a coach to call a prospect basically once a month beginning in the summer after the completion of the prospects sophomore year and increasing the number of phone calls leading up the beginning of the prospects senior year. In football, a coach can call a junior in high school one time during the month of May, and then call a prospect once a week beginning September 1st of the prospects senior year. As you can see, this recruitment process is quite different for an athlete as opposed to student who is applying for admission through the general undergraduate admissions procedure.

Critics often identify the recruiting process as conflicting with the priorities of the mission and purpose of a college institution. However, the
recruiting process does not end with the letters and phone calls. If the prospect is truly sought after by the school, the coaches and the athletic department will invite the prospect on an “official visit” to the University. This official visit will allow the university to pay for the prospect to come to the school, air fare, train, gas mileage allowance, etc. The student will be provided campus lodging. The NCAA points out that a hotel that is within close proximity to the campus can be used as long as it is similar to what would be considered “typical” accommodations. The rules further note that if the institution uses a hotel, that “lodging may not include special accessories (e.g. Jacuzzis, suites) that are not available generally to all guests residing at the establishment.” Meals are also provided, three meals a day plus a “reasonable snack” (e.g., pizza, hamburger). Prospects are allowed to take five of these “official visits.” As you can see, Division I recruits are actively pursued by the respective coaches and the athletic department. The process of recruiting finally ends when the prospect announces his intention and commits to one of the several universities that were competing for his services as an athlete. His ability as a student is centered on attaining at least the minimum grade point average and test score, set by the NCAA that will allow him to receive a scholarship. This announcement is often a dramatic exhibition. In some cases, the high school student holds a “press conference” in a packed high school gym
and announces to his fellow classmates his intention. The crowd goes wild, particularly if the individual is staying close to home and playing for the local or state university. The lead up to the “press conference” is in itself a drama, as recruiting services and experts offer their opinions on who will get the talented young star. Rumors swirl and stories appear saying that one school is in the lead, but a late development has pushed school number two ahead in the blue-chip sweepstakes.

In the sport of football, high profile high school all-star games are held where it is a requirement that the player announces his choice during the game. Watching this game, you see a choreographed set up where the camera films one of the many participating all-stars reaching into a duffle bag and pulling out a hat with the college insignia of the choice of school.

One of the truly unfortunate results of this type of behavior is that it has trickled down to the high schools where more and more high school coaches are pressured to get their players into a college football program. The high school coach who does not help promote his players and help them get into college does not last long in this business. This description of the recruiting process is common place among Division I scholarship sports. To be consistent, I have focused on football and men’s basketball, but it should be noted that all of the varsity sports have similar allowances for recruited student-athletes. Of course, as we have discussed earlier, the
Division III schools, those colleges and universities that do not give athletic scholarships are clearly different than those of Division I, however, there is a recruitment piece to their admissions process as well. Often because many Division I coaches move down the ranks throughout their career, for example a Division I assistant coach who becomes a head coach at the Division III level will often bring their vast recruiting practices to the lower level.

The Division III, non-athletic scholarship schools pale in comparison to the spending habits of the Division I schools. However, the admission process and the role of athletics on those campuses have come under fire as overemphasizing athletics on their campuses as well. Instead of an athletic scholarship, the prized recruit is given a valuable “admission spot,” which in some areas and at some high schools is more sought after than an athletic scholarship. Further discussion on Division III athletics will come in a subsequent chapter.

As you can see, being a recruited student-athlete immediately places an individual in a different mind set. The college application process, highly traumatic for many students and their families, as well as school counselors is bypassed by the recruited student-athlete. This factor alone can cause a great deal of resentment from non-recruited student athletes. Many students see athletes receiving preferential treatment.
They will surely see more of this type of treatment once they are admitted to college and pursue their degree, especially if they attend a college or university that sponsors “big-time” sports.

The very nature of collegiate athletics calls for a separation between those who play on sports teams and those who do not. The amount of time spent practicing, the shared experiences with games and travel, along with the rigors of in-season training and off-season training force individuals to spend most of their free hours with other team members. Often similar classes are taken because of what time of day that they are scheduled, keeping in mind that a student-athlete must schedule his classes around the team’s practice time. If that wasn’t enough, the term student-athlete is used to describe the individual who is a member of the team, thus putting a label on a student that often has a negative connotation in the setting of academia.

One of the myths regarding Division I athletes is the insistence that they are referred to as “student-athletes.” Isaiah Thomas, former college and pro basketball player and now a NBA executive summed up the reality of collegiate athletics at the Division I level:

When you go to college, you are not a student-athlete, but an athlete-student. Your main purpose is not to be an Einstein, but a ball-player, to generate some money, put people in the stands. Eight or ten hours of your day are filled with basketball or football. (Sperber 2000, 30)
What Thomas is saying, is that your number one job as a scholarship athlete is to work to become a better athlete to help your team win games, sell tickets and make money. The reality of scholarship athletes is putting a double burden on college athletics that is not “typical” of the “traditional” undergraduate experience.

Sperber also describes the tremendous pressure that is placed on jocks to try to balance their young lives. He quotes a published guidebook for college athletes and their parents:

The label student-athlete says it all. A college student who is also an athlete is asked to live two roles and be two people in one. No other college students are identified in this hyphenated way, no others are pulled in two completely different directions. No other students are asked to be one person for half the day and someone else for the other half. (Sperber 2000, 29)

The term student-athlete was created by the NCAA for a very specific reason. With the collapse of the Sanity Code in 1951, more colleges and universities were offering full-grants-in-aid to athletes. It was hard to get around the fact that, in reality, college athletes were getting paid to play. This concerned the NCAA, not only because it threatened the idea of amateurism, but in a practical sense, arguments were being made that athletes were contracted by the university and, therefore, could come under protected labor agreements. Byers explains this: “It was then that we came face to face with a serious external threat
that prompted most of the colleges to unite and insist with one voice that
grant-in-aid or not, college sports still were only for amateurs” (Byers
1995, 69). Byers goes on to state: “that threat was the dreaded notion that
NCAA athletes could be identified as employees by state industrial
commissions and the courts; We crafted the term student-athlete, and soon
it was embedded in all NCAA rules and interpretations as mandated
substitute for such words as players and athletes” (Byers 1995, 69). This
certainly poses an interesting question. Are students whose receive
financial aid because of their athletic ability considered amateur athletes?
The ramification of this term can be enormous if the answer to the
question is no. These individuals who perform a service (i.e. a football
player on a football scholarship at the University of Michigan) if not
considered an amateur could potentially qualify for compensation based
on revenue earned, insurance, workman’s compensation, and subject to all
regulations that govern an employee-employer relationship. Critics who
point this out believe that big-time college sports are incorrectly classified
as amateur sports. They claim: “properly considered as employees, the
players would be entitled under labor law to wages as well as to a range of
statutory protections accorded U.S. employees” (McCormick and
McCormick, 2008).
As professionalism and commercialism continue to rise, it is absolutely possible that we will see an increase in support for compensating athletes, and ultimately could see some movement on the organized labor front. Imagine, on the eve of the NCAA basketball tournament if all of the collegiate basketball players on the sixty-five teams who are invited to the NCAA tournament refused to take the court until an agreement was signed including compensation, health care, educational assistance and a reduction in practices hours. It seems very unlikely at this point for something like this to occur; however, if costs and spending continue to rise and student-athletes are placed in greater demand, it is not unthinkable. A sure way to prevent this would be to downsize our emphasis on intercollegiate athletics.

One of the areas that the NCAA and universities have addressed is the idea that it is important to not separate student-athletes and the general undergraduate population. In some areas they have been successful, in others, by the very nature of the schedule and demands placed on scholarship athletes they cannot help but be separated from the general student population. Athletic scholarship student-athletes do indeed have an atypical undergraduate experience. This attempt to integrate the athletes with the non-athletes has not come without resistance. John Gerdy, in his book *Air Ball*, shares an experience he had in dealing with
football in the powerful Southeastern Conference. Gerdy had served as the conference’s associate athletic director for compliance. Gerdy was present at the 1990 SEC conference when conference commissioner Roy Kramer had the delicate duty of informing the SEC football coaches that no longer would athletic dorms be permitted on campus. Athletic dorms had long been a symbol of the separation between athletes and the general student population. The dorms were usually isolated and near practice facilities and they often had their own cafeteria with top of the line food and amenities. SEC football coaches had no desire to comply with this seemingly outrageous rule. Pat Dye, the head coach at Auburn turned to Gene Stallings, the head coach at Alabama and said: Gene do you think we could get the state legislature to pass a law that would require all football players at Auburn and Alabama to live in athletic dorms? To which Stallings replied: “I think we could do that, Pat” (Gerdy 2006a, 6).

Ultimately, the decision to prohibit athletics dorms passed, and the Alabama state legislature did not pass a law. This story does show us that there has been positive change on college campuses in an attempt to lessen the divide between student-athletes and the general student population.

The greatest divide that still does exist at institutions that sponsor Division I sports is that of the awarding of athletic scholarships. There is no way of getting around the fact that an individual who is on an athletic
scholarship is there because of athletic ability and thus enters an institution of higher learning for, in all or large part, the opportunity to play a sport. For all the advantages that a student-athlete has in terms of a free education, they cannot escape the fact that they are a student-athlete and face the inevitable stigma of the negative stereotypes associated with being a “jock.” In some cases this may be perfectly justified, in many cases it is not.

With the creation of the NCAA, “The Savage Report,” “The Sanity Code,” to “The Knight Commission,” why have these reforms not worked? The answer quite simply is that collegiate athletics sponsored by academic institutions can never be purely amateur as long as they attempt to make money and sell out to commercialism. Furthermore, when students are recruited and given an athletic scholarship, they become athletes first and students second. Their loyalty and existence, if on scholarship, is to the team, not the class or the field of study. “An athletics scholarship represents a contractual agreement between the athlete and the coach” (Gerdy, 2006b).

Coaches have a great deal at stake in recruiting the top athletes. Clearly in our society today, winning games are essential. For all the talk of building character, being a good citizen, seeing students thrive educationally and preaching good values and sportsmanship, the
importance of winning in the big-time sports takes precedent over everything else. If you win, you can get more people to come to the games, you build bigger stadiums that house ninety to one hundred thousand people. You create luxury boxes; you recruit kids to help you win football and basketball games, not to improve the undergraduate cumulative grade point average. Coaches are pressured to win. If they don’t, they lose their job. How can you tell them to be a good mentor and teacher if you relieve them of their duties because they did not win enough football or basketball games? Herein lies one of the problems. It actually would not be a problem or at least not as hypocritical if we were true to ourselves and admitted that at the division one level, big-time sports are more about entertainment and commercialism than they are about educationally sponsored organizations

The question is then asked: Can an educational institution maintain its academic integrity in a win-driven society? The answer for that at big-time schools in big-time sports (football and basketball) is: it depends. As long as the individual is given an athletic based scholarship it will be much more difficult to defend.

Again this depends on we define integrity. Students who are strong academically can achieve and maintain integrity by this dual identity, but students who are weak, and perhaps would not be admitted to
the school by their own academic merit, place great questions on the academic integrity of the school, and specifically on the administration for admitting the student. A follow-up question would be even though marginal and poor students are admitted to the school; does it actually hurt the schools reputation or the reputation of student athletes? Does the University of Virginia, an excellent public state university, lose any of its educational credibility because it chooses to admit students into their school to play big-time college sports, that provides a significant part of the undergraduate experience of many of it’s students? Graduating with a degree from the University of Virginia or Georgetown University, for that matter, gives a student a “meaningful” degree in the eyes of the general public and those associated with higher education. Certainly the students coming out of these two universities, provided that they did well in their coursework, would be looked upon by most people in a highly favorable light. A scholarship athlete that graduates from these two schools should be given the same favorable view.

It does become difficult to defend the student-athlete concept when a highly publicized event occurs that comes very close to the definition of educational malpractice. For example, authors John Theilin and Lawrence Visconse in the article *The Numbers Game: The Statistical heritage in Intercollegiate Athletics* describes the problem with the
institutional credibility in a 1982 landmark legal case by which the University of Minnesota allowed a student to play varsity basketball for three season but did not allow him to be admitted to a degree program. In Mark D. Hall v. University of Minnesota, a federal judge stated:

The Court is not saying that athletes are incapable of scholarship; however, they are given little incentive to be scholars and few persons care how the student-athlete performs academically, including many of the athletes themselves. The exceptionally talented student-athlete is led to perceive the basketball, football and other athletic programs as farm team and proving grounds for professional sports leagues. It may well be time that a good academic program for the athlete is made virtually impossible by the demands of their sport at the college level. If this situation causes harm to the university, it is because they have fostered it, and the institution rather than the individual should suffer the consequences. (Thelin and Wiseman 1989, 9)

Again, I would argue that although this situation could be viewed as educational malpractice, does this incident significantly damage the reputation of the state of Minnesota’s flagship university? Perhaps it does. It clearly should be a great embarrassment to the university and certainly to the athletic department. It should be noted that a decade later, the University of Minnesota would experience another scandal that involved their basketball team and a university employee who wrote papers for the players. Ultimately, the University was forced to fire the coach, who was found to have known this was going on. Minnesota at that time was doing pretty well on the basketball court. Is the pressure to win and recruit so
great that it forces individuals into unethical decisions? It is hard to place blame on a condition that affected a behavior, but one thing is absolute clear, particularly in Division I football and basketball. If you do not win as a coach and fill the stands, you will be released. This should not be a message that comes from higher education. It is ultimately what happens when you try to balance idealism with realism. “Coach was a great man, a fine family man, and a good teacher he just did not win enough games.” This is a quote that could be used to describe many scenarios in which a coach has not produced the desired results on the fields or courts.

What allows these types of situations to take place at an institution of higher learning? Naturally it is the drive to win and for the university to make money off of its major sports. No other undergraduate, who was accepted to the university, would be denied admission to a program of study, outside of the academic and course requirements and prerequisites. When you sanction athletic-based scholarships at the university, engage in big time recruiting, attempt to lure a student to your school and away from others, and spend incredible amounts of money on that student, you are making those choices based on who can help your team win the conference championship, not who can excel in the classroom. The question is firstly, can he help us win, and then, secondly, can we get him into school. This is looking at the minimum requirements to get in. What
often happens is that a student who doesn’t have the tools to succeed in the collegiate academic environment is now thrown into a program that is academically challenging; the student-athlete is, in essence, a full-time employee working at his sport. Athletic departments have now spent huge amounts of money building vast departments of student services to get tutoring, pick the right major, the right classes, usually friendly professors. This, of course, can be seen as hypocrisy.

According to Sperber, one of the biggest problems that occurred in the win driven society, was when the coaches convinced the NCAA to discontinue the practice of awarding four year scholarships and begin the process of awarding one year renewable scholarships. The four year scholarship allowed students to have more freedom with their time outside of the sport for study and to do what they wanted to do. The one year scholarship gave tremendous power to coaches and forced the students to put in more time to ensure that their scholarship would be renewed.

College athletes can expect to spend 50 hours or more each week in their sport, coaches generally expect the hours required for team-related activities to be taken from their leisure time. (Sperber 2000, 28)

There are tremendous financial incentives today for coaches to be successful and win games. At big-time universities the head football and basketball coach are the highest paid employees of the university. What
message does this send? This question will be looked at in the following chapter.

Everything in coaching, when it comes to financial matters, is based on winning. Winning coaches’ get more people to come to camps, they get lucrative shoe and clothing apparel contracts and command high speaking engagement fees. “All aspects of their jobs depend on winning, for example, no trade association ever paid a losing coach $20,000 to speak at its convention (Sperber 2000, 30). This attitude regarding winning is heavily engrained in our culture. Andrew Miracle and C. Roger Rees, authors of the book, Lessons of the Locker Room, argue that American culture is obsessed with winning and that it constitutes the bottom-line. The first question asked after a game is usually “Did you win?” or “What was the score” (Miracle, Jr. and Rees 1994, 14)? One former football coach summed up the importance of winning, “According to George Allen, former coach of the Washington Redskins, losing is worse than death because you have to live with losing” (Miracle, Jr. and Rees 1994, 14).

It is important to note that some coaches struggle with the new commercialization of sports and it’s all based on winning mentality. Fred Akers, a long time football coach sums up his feelings about the demands placed on college athletics and the need to win: “The more you win, the
bigger the bucks. But you never can win enough – I won at the University of Texas, but got fired for not winning more.” Akers, after being fired became the head coach at Purdue University and was subsequently fired because he had some losing seasons. He went on to comment:

I was out of step. Most coaches believe that the best way to win is to put their players in the most intense training possible. Keep at em from dawn to dusk and into the night. I never did that, I didn’t feel it was fair to my guys. I wanted them to go to class and have time to study. But I am not in college coaching anymore. (Sperber, 2000, 30).

This statement is unfortunate because it seems to go against what we would like to see happen at an educational institution.

In the early 1990’s as a result of public criticism regarding athletes practice time and not allowing for student-athletes to have time to study, the NCAA passed legislation limiting the time commitment for student-athletes to four hours a day and twenty hours a week. The legislation was loaded with loopholes and only regulated mandating hours. Coaches soon became creative and called for voluntary time to work on your sport. It did not take long for the voluntary part of the program to become in reality mandatory. Critics of the NCAA look again at its hypocrisy:

Yet, in a symbolic sense, the four and twenty hour rule captures the essence of the modern NCAA: its PR practice of guarding the welfare of student-athletes, versus the reality of its high powered promotions of a billion dollar a year colleges sports business, and its lack of concern for the workers in that industry. (Sperber, 2000, 32)
In many respects it is difficult to discuss reform in college athletics when many of the problems associated with athletics are also problems experienced in general society. Schools do not operate in a vacuum; many critics will argue that it is the nature of how we in society view sports that is problematic. Colleges and universities are reflective of society in general and the norms of society both good and bad. Underage drinking and promiscuity on college campuses occur with alarming regularity despite great efforts to educate students on healthy behavior. John Gerdy in his book *Air Ball* believes that the problem is not necessarily collegiate athletics, but that America is addicted to sports. He states:

Day after day the sports pages present us with examples of the negative effects of the win-at-any cost mentality that drives our sports culture. Recruiting scandals undermine academic institutions and intellectual values. In locker rooms and on sidelines, signing a pro contract and buying a fancy car is valued far more than earning a college degree. Coaches scream at seven-year-olds for committing an error in a T-ball game. Parents attack Little League umpires or fatally beat each other at youth hockey games. We can no longer play sports simply for fun and exercise; we must elevate all competition to epic proportions, today’s “Game of the Century” is merely a prelude to next week’s “even Bigger Game of the Century.” Cheating is rampant. (Gerdy 2000a, 52)

The win-driven mentality that we see today in our society is certainly carried over to higher education. With sports in general, from the colleges on down, seemingly spinning out of control, it is important to
look at why this may be happening. There is very little question that professionalism of players and coaches along with commercialism of the sports have infiltrated into our schools. It is okay to do this at the professional level, where sports are legitimately a business. But, should educational institutions take an active role in perpetuating this occurrence? These topics will be addressed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: COMMERCIALIZATION

There are many issues that are related to athletics and their proper role on university and college campuses. As mentioned in previous chapters, these issues have been around since the very beginning of college athletics in America. Discussions and reforms have taken place regarding eligibility, lowering admissions standards for athletes, graduation rates and academic fraud. These topics are essential to maintaining educational integrity. In fact, a systemic problem involving any these core academic principles, makes maintaining integrity between academics and athletics is impossible. Academic issues strike at the heart of educational institutions, it is what universities and colleges stake their reputations on. The main purpose of higher education is to educate. Not everyone will earn the same grade, or study the same subjects, however, the value of a college education is significant because there are certain standards of work and skills that need to be met and maintained.

Recently, it is fair to say, that there have been impressive gains in the area of “academic integrity” for student-athletes. There is a sense, at least, that on this front, collegiate athletics are moving in the right direction. The recent implementation, by the NCAA, of the Academic Progress Rate (APR) is a reflection of this. The APR is a program in
which a student-athlete’s progress toward a college degree is monitored
with very real consequences to the university, specific team, and the
athletic department. The APR calls on the educational institution to track
student-athletes from the time they enroll in school and directs student-
athletes to take the appropriate courses to earn a degree. In short, student-
athletes need to be on track to graduate, they cannot simply take classes to
satisfy full-time enrollment status. Failure of student-athletes to graduate
can result in the program’s loss of scholarships. According to Myles
Brand, the president of the NCAA: “We want to change the behaviors of
the teams and the institutions and the athletic program so we’re all headed
toward the success of student-athletes on the field and in the classroom.”
(Brutlag Hosick, 2006)

The intention of the APR is two-fold. First, to insure
accountability that student-athletes are students first and, second, to
attempt to force coaches to recruit student-athletes who are likely to stay
in school and graduate. The idea that coaches recruit athletes who are
going to graduate is admirable. However, as we have referred to before,
coaches at big-time universities are judged by their wins and losses, not
the cumulative grade point average of their team. This was made evident
when Tyrone Willingham was fired as the football coach at Notre Dame.
By all accounts, Willingham’s players went to class, were good citizens,
and graduated from the university. But, Willingham’s Fighting Irish did not win enough football games and he was fired with time remaining on his contract. The Notre Dame administration admitted that Coach Willingham was excellent from Sunday through Friday he just did not win enough games on Saturday.

Any argument for maintaining integrity between the university and the teams that they sponsor must have at the very core an academic component. While this has not always been the case, anecdotal evidence reminds us of the student-athlete who had no business getting into school, never went to class, and in some very sad cases graduated from college without the ability to read. However, the majority of student-athletes graduate. And as I will discuss, as a whole, they graduate at a higher rate than the general student population.

While commercialization in collegiate athletics has been around since the beginning of intercollegiate competition, the growing size of big-time college sports has renewed calls for concern. It is here where the integrity of schools and the perception of the role of sports come into greatest question.

Critics charge that college sports have strayed away from their educational purpose and have now become a business enterprise that concentrates on entertainment and commercialization.
Reformers contend that evidence of increasing commercialism in college sports can be found everywhere from the advertising plastered over sports venues’ institutional images to licensing and logo deals universities sign with apparel companies and producers of various sports trinkets, to the predatory behavior of sports agents to the hype and sensationalism generated by the bestowal of celebrity status upon select college athletes and coaches, to the pressure of scheduling events every night of the week to fill schedules for the increasing number of sports networks. (Benford, 2007)

Critics site, with mounting evidence, that in the sports of football and men’s basketball, these college teams have the characteristics of professional teams and leagues. The argument at the extreme end of this side is that college sports are nothing but a “minor league” system in which the student-athletes are using college to “get to the next level” of play.

This view is embraced by members of our society who envision the “dumb jock” who has been passed up through grade school and high school, heavily recruited, brought to campus for the sole purpose of winning games and championships, rarely going to class, helping get the team on national television and then leaves school to join the professional ranks. In my position as high school athletic director, football coach and history teacher, I come across this view constantly when talking too many of my colleagues. I am always fascinated that this story comes up regularly as their perception of college athletes and the relationship of
athletics on campus. The idea of an individual “using school” to get to the
pros is quite offensive too many in academia, with many feeling that there
is no greater injustice.

However, in the eyes of the general public, this notion is not
nearly as bothersome. This is primarily due the fact that big-time college
sports have become a major form of entertainment and very much
ingrained in our social culture. The masses cannot get enough of this
entertainment. Walking across campus, where there is big-time football,
on a home football Saturday conjures up very similar images regardless of
the school. Being on campus the week of the conference men’s basketball
tournament and for those schools fortunate enough to be in the NCAA
basketball tournament, the feeling is electrifying for many students,
administrators and faculty members.

Do college athletes use college sports to get to the pros? Some
certainly do, but most do not. For those who do aspire to go to the pros,
who can blame them? In our culture we are obsessed with sports and
individuals can receive super stardom through the use of sport and their
athletic gifts. The fact is that in American culture, there is a close
relationship between college and professional sports. As mentioned
earlier, America is the only society in which the opportunity to play
professional sports primarily goes through college campuses. This is
evident every Monday night during the fall. On Monday Night Football, at the beginning of each game, the starting players for both teams introduce themselves and the only piece of information they give is their name and the college they attended.

The majority of college athletes do not continue to play their sport at the professional level. The numbers and opportunities are very limited and only a small percentage of collegiate athletes make it to the pros. Since our educational institutions are very diverse, it is hard to make the claim that college sports are just a stepping stone to the professional ranks. At the Division III level, where students are not on athletic scholarship, the goal of turning professional is not the driving force behind participation in college athletics. It is possible, but very rare for a Division III athlete to make it to the pros.

Most student-athletes, at all divisions, realize that playing professionally will not be an option, and like typical undergraduates, they value the importance of a college education and use it to prepare themselves for their future careers. Many go on to graduate school to continue their field of study. Recent NCAA commercials highlight the fact that most student-athletes will turn professional, “just not in the sport that they played in college,” seems to be well-received and a creative way to tell the “real story” behind college athletics.
These efforts to portray student-athletes as typical students are good. They underscore what is happening at most college and universities. That is, student-athletes are not only graduating, they are doing so at a higher rate than the general undergraduate population. This statistic, quite frankly, is a statistic that everyone who is a stakeholder in higher education should be aware of. However, when you look at the numbers in greater detail, the graduation rate for football and men’s basketball players is lower than the average undergraduate and at many institutions they are significantly lower (Sander 2007). The problem of balancing academic and athletic integrity is specifically a problem with football and men’s basketball. Thus, the perception is still that big-time sports are different.

In the sports of football and men’s basketball, at the Division I level, it is harder to distinguish between “amateur” teams and schools that look more like professional franchises. Not only are the graduation rates for participants in these sports lower than that of their peers and, not surprisingly, the proximity to the professional leagues in these sports is closer. In response to critics who say that these college programs resemble professional teams or that they are a training ground for professional teams, it is important to point out that there are significant and obvious distinctions between the two. While there is debate and
discussion about the status of collegiate athletes, they are officially considered amateurs. At the Division III, non-athletic scholarship schools, there is no debate about student-athlete’s status. However, the line of separation between professional and amateur blurs at the Division I level with the existence of athletic scholarships. “Yet educational institutions have no business being in the business of professional sports.” (Gerdy 2006b)

A problem exists in big-time collegiate athletics in large part because the message being sent about the role of college athletics can at many times be complex and confusing. At times, the emphasis is on education and student-welfare, and at other times collegiate athletics plays the role of business and entertainment.

One of the biggest differences between big-time college sports and professional sports is clarity of purpose. Professional sports have it right, in terms of being very clear about what they expect and how they do business. Professional sports and their organizations have clearly stated and understood objectives. They are businesses that function to make a profit. They have a bottom line and that bottom line is to make money. They must produce a good product that attracts a fan base and fill stadiums. They are in the entertainment business and their customer is the general public. They market their organizations through television
contracts and licensing agreements. Professional teams pay wages to their employees, from front office personnel, to maintenance workers, to the players themselves according to their market value. They negotiate contracts; work with agents and player representatives. They enter into collective bargaining agreements and owners recognize and negotiate with “organized labor.” If and when negotiations break down or contracts expire, professional sports run the risk of dealing with work stoppages, strikes and lockouts. Professional teams and owners look to corporate sponsorships to help generate revenue, including the building of corporate executive suites inside the stadiums. These stadiums, in many cases, have been built with “the aid of taxpayer” dollars. Professional sports organizations have an extensive media and public relations team that often include community service activities to enhance their reputation in the community. Professional sports teams have an elaborate scouting department that scours the country, and in the case of basketball, hockey and baseball look globally for talent. They spend an enormous amount of time and money researching the physical and mental health and capacity of players to determine who they should bid on, and what deals to obtain.

While the “character” of players may be a greater concern today, most professional organizations often give a “troubled” individual a second, and in many cases, a third chance. This, of course, is contingent
upon the athletic ability of the player. The greater the ability, the greater the leeway.

Professional sports organizations operate like a “typical” large American business. They even attempt to market themselves globally, to tap into billions of potential customers. They do this and are successful at it, in large part, because they have clear goals. The general public recognizes this and people understand what they are getting. All decisions made in professional sports are business decisions that affect the bottom line. Hiring and firing of coaches, acquiring, trading, and cutting players, building a new stadium and relocation to a new city or state.

Professional sports teams do look at “character” issues and do value maintaining integrity within their organization and within the sport itself. They do not do this because of their mission statement nor because they believe that it is their moral duty to educate individuals and teach character traits, goals you typically find in a university “mission statement.” Rather, even when it comes to these character issues, the driving force behind the decisions of professional sports teams is the economic bottom line.

For example, professional sports have attempted to attach character issues to contracts. Several professional leagues have banned the use of performance enhancement drugs. Moreover, the use of illegal
drugs or altercations with law enforcement officials can result in suspensions and fines. Repeat offenders run the risk of being banned for life. These issues are absolutely relevant to owners and league officials. However, I would argue that these issues are put in place for purely business reasons. Professional organizations that have players arrested for character issues lead to negative public perception of their teams which can hurt the profitability of the organization and the game itself, thus, leading to the loss of revenue. These types of behavior can prevent teams from maximizing their earning potential.

Maintaining integrity in the professional leagues, just like in college, has a long history. When judge Kennesaw “Mountain” Landis, major league baseball’s first commissioner, took action against the 1919 Chicago White Sox, now infamously known as the “Black Sox,” for fixing games and taking payoffs, it was to maintain the integrity of the game. No individual or team was bigger than the sport itself. More recently, when baseball commissioner Fay Vincent banned all-star Pete Rose, for his involvement in gambling, it was also to protect the integrity of the game. These actions were seen as demonstrating to the public that there was integrity in the game and that you could continue to spend money to come see an “honest” game. It will be interesting to see how much, if any, the recent steroid scandal issue will hurt baseball.
The role of professional sports is very clear and relatively uncomplicated because their leaders understand that they are in the entertainment business. Big-time college athletics struggle in large part because it is unclear what role they play in society and on college campuses.

It is important for this research to look at the professional model of sports because I am arguing that a significant problem with sports in school and at the youth level is the trickle-down effect from professional sports. In short, amateur athletes and programs are taking on more characteristics of professionalism and have entered the entertainment business.

Today, the biggest criticism levied against universities and their relationship with the teams that they sponsor, is the fact that the amount of money that has been spent on big-time athletics makes people believe that the universities priorities are skewed. These people believe that big time sports have very little to do with education and have become nothing but big business ventures that serve as entertainment only. They are also critical of the professionalism and the commercialism of these sports, as well.

Are big-time athletic departments and sports on college campuses big business? They most certainly are. All one has to do is look at an
athletic department web page or media guide to see the vast amount of staffing that is involved in today’s modern big-time athletic department.

What once used to be sports and teams run by the students themselves, and then subsequently run by the physical education department, has now evolved into a multi-tiered business with athletic directors, associate directors, assistant directors, administrative assistants, video coordinators, compliance officers, student enrichment programs, facilities and operations, business and corporate sales teams, maintenance and grounds personnel, and at some schools, travel agencies.

Athletic Directors are often viewed today as CEO’s of their athletic department. Many schools actually have a CFO, as well. Big-time athletic departments have become part of corporate America. Licensing, negotiating deals regarding television rights, and realigning athletic conferences for marketing purposes, have all become standard operating procedures at our nation’s colleges and universities.

A big difference, however, between the CEO of an athletic department and the CEO of a major corporation, lies in the fact that the bottom line for athletic directors does not have to be so bottom. Athletic departments frequently lose money. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, in its’ May 23, 2008 edition, reported that a NCAA study determined that the vast majority of athletic departments operate in the red. In many
cases, the remaining debt is assumed by some part of the university or through student subsidization in the form of fees. A CEO of a corporation in America would not hold his or her position very long if they repeatedly lost money. This is just another example of blurring the line when you cross educational goals and philosophy with a big-business practice.

Recent reports have discussed at great lengths the amount of money that universities spend on big-time athletics. The two most criticized areas regarding intercollegiate athletics are one, rising coaching salaries and two, the massive build up of athletic facilities, often referred to as an athletic “arms race.”

The common theme involving both of these issues is that by spending huge sums of money on these two areas, colleges and universities are sending the wrong message from universities to the public about where their priorities are and what their values are. This is clearly the case when one looks at the salaries of college football and basketball coaches compared to the university president.

Several highly publicized reports have given strength to this argument. An article published in USA Today in December of 2007 revealed “four coaches-Oklahoma’s Bob Stoops, Alabama’s Nick Saban, Florida’s Urban Meyer, and Iowa’s Kirk Ferentz- already have cracked the $3 million mark, leading a spiral that shows no sign of slowing.” The
report further went on to state: “This year, for the first time, the average earnings of the 120 major college football coaches hit $1 million.”

(Wieberg and Upton)

Besides these massive contracts, these same reporters a year earlier found that the coaches contracts were filled with all sorts of perks:
“personal use of private jets, low-interest home loans, land deals, million-dollar annuities, pricey luxury suites at the schools’ stadiums, use of vacation homes and family travel accounts” (Wieberg and Upton 2006).

Many people associated with these universities are also upset by bonuses that are found in the contract for merely acting out what should be a regular job requirement. These include incentives for winning games, graduating players and keeping their players out of trouble. Isn’t that what should be happening anyway?

What further infuriates academics, and others, is the amount of spending on athletics and how it compares to the salaries of university administrators and faculty members. In a 2006, article published in Inside Higher Ed, author Tom Palaima, a classics teacher at the University of Texas documented:

The head football coach at UT now makes a base salary of $2.55 million per year. By comparison, the entire instructional budge (faculty salaries and other teaching related expenses) of UT’s number one ranked petroleum engineering department is only $2 million. The average salaries of the 11 assistant football coaches
last year easily outstripped the average salaries of full professors in our law school, the highest paid full professors at our institution. (Palaima 2006a).

Over the last few years, a lot of attention has been given to this topic. In a *USA Today* article in November of 2006, several cases were cited that would clearly support the notion that higher education places an “unhealthy” relationship in public. Citing several public universities, the article talks about the University of Iowa’s head football coach, Kirk Ferentz. According to the story, in 2006, Ferentz stood to make a guaranteed 4.6 million dollars. By contrast, the president of the University of Iowa’s salary was reported to be $390,250. It is obviously very difficult to argue that big-time college sports and educational values have lost their balance. Why are college coaching salaries so high? The answer is that the coaching salaries are driven by free enterprise and the market. What sets the market is competition for premium coaches. There is an idea that only a limited number of coaches can be successful. This argument is refuted by Maury Sperber in his book *College Sports Inc.*, Sperber argues that there have been many cases when a relative “no-name” coach achieves great success. This coach, whom the general public did not know, upon winning games is often rewarded with a lucrative contract. After winning games, he commands a huge raise.
What is interesting is if the laws of supply and demand dictate market value, than coaches contracts should not be that high because there are so many coaches out there who aspire to be and are qualified to be a head coach. Duke’s Mike Krzyzewski, who is recognized as one of the greatest basketball coaches of all time, was a head coach at Army before going to Duke. Bobby Knight also coached basketball at Army before achieving notoriety at Indiana University. Both Bo Schembechler and Woody Hayes, two of the all-time great coaches at the University of Michigan and Ohio State University, respectively, began their coaching careers at Miami of Ohio. In 1989, the head basketball coach at the University of Michigan, Bill Frieder took another job as the head coach at Arizona State University. He planned on coaching the Michigan team in the NCAA tournament and then would leave when the season was over. Frieder was let go on the eve of the NCAA tournament and his assistant Steve Fisher became the head coach and led Michigan through the tournament and to a national championship. These examples show that truly in a free-market system, the coaching salaries should not be as high as they are, yet college athletic directors and presidents allow this to happen convincing themselves that they need a proven winner and paying premium price to get them. Other factors do contribute to the rising salaries and one of those factors is that highly successful college football
coaches can be lured away to professional teams who can pay more. In order to keep their college coach, university administrators feel the need to offer a very competitive salary. In reality, this only happens to a select few coaches every year.

By the same token, when college and universities look to hire a new coach, they often look to the NFL. This certainly clouds the line between college and professional sports. While we have come to expect this with the big-time programs like the University of Southern California, the University of Alabama, and the University of Miami, it is not limited to big-time programs. Yale, certainly a school that would appear to balance athletics and academics recently hired Tom Williams, who was a defensive assistant for the NFL’s Jacksonville Jaguars. What this proves is that one of the most prestigious universities in the world realizes the importance of athletics on campus and that they need to find a coach who will defeat Harvard on a regular basis.

The rise in coaches’ salaries at big-time schools is an issue for critics who argue that universities and colleges are sending the wrong message about the role of athletics. In 2006, in college football “at least 42 of the 119 Division I-A coaches earned one million dollars or more this year. This was an increase from five coaches in 1999” (Upton and
Wieberg 2006). This is a problem that the NCAA has not figured out how to address.

Former NCAA Executive Director, Walter Byers, gives a fascinating discussion on the development and the role of the NCAA in his book, *Unsportsmanlike Conduct*. Byers begin his book with the very paradox that he and the NCAA will face: the seemingly dual purposes of an organization that cannot help but be at odds with itself. Byers states: “I was charged with the dual mission of keeping intercollegiate sports clean while generating millions of dollars each year as income for colleges” (Byers 1995, 1). By Byers’ own admission he claims: “I was inadequate with the first goal, and highly successful with the second goal.” It is quite clear that a problem exists when school-sponsored sports and revenue generating components are mixed together.

We know that in professional sports, sports are indeed a business. One would hope, that in youth leagues, sport is not business, however, we are seeing more and more youth leagues finding sponsors. Shoe companies and sports apparel companies are spending millions of dollars on targeting the youth of America with “brand loyalty.” Much like the cigarette companies that have been accused and in some cases proven guilty of targeting kids, so they can get a lifetime of users, it could be said that Nike and Under Armour are doing the same thing. Obviously, the
health ramifications are completely different; however, the business and marketing strategies are very similar.

I worked at an all-star youth football camp, which an apparel company sponsored. The campers were given brand name attire and the facilities were filled with posters, logos and automobiles that left no doubt who was sponsoring the camp. The spokesperson, a seemingly larger than life individual, made a guest appearance and spoke to the campers as he got them all fired up. The campers, approximately two hundred young men, together yelled the brand name and were clapping and chanting. I stood back in amazement as I watched corporate America attempt to spread its influence with these young kids, wondering how many of them would leave camp and try to get their parents to purchase that particular brand of shoes, shirts and shorts at the local sporting goods store.

The argument that clearly supports the idea that big time sports are becoming professionalized and commercialized is in the fact that they are increasingly moving toward the entertainment business. Universities are building gigantic stadiums or “palaces” as some are referred to, which hold ninety to one hundred thousand people. Games are televised virtually every night of the week. Corporate sponsorships and luxury suites are part of the package. All of this clouds the line between professional and collegiate sports.
According to author Peter French, when one takes a pragmatic look at the reality of big time sports, everything becomes very clear. French states: “big time intercollegiate athletics is big time entertainment, and it is about time that those in the business of producing it were honest about what they are providing” (French 2004, 104). French goes on to say:

The business of entertainment and all that entails is what football and men’s basketball is really all about. Once that is understood, virtually the elite [big time] sports are run on the Division I campuses across America makes perfectly good sense. It the primary mission of those programs is denied or masked in the rhetoric of academics or ethics education, nothing makes much sense at all. (French 2004, 104)

If this is so obvious, why don’t we accept this as a way to spend time in the fall watching a huge match-up between ranked football teams? Looking forward to the holidays to watch the bowl games, and waiting rather impatiently for the NCAA men’s basketball tournament appropriately named March Madness. The answer is fairly simple. The NCAA and the universities could possibly be subjected to entertainment taxes and potential labor relations issues if they were openly to concede this premise.

Further evidence is provided to us about sports in entertainment from James Duderstadt, former president of the University of Michigan and author of *Intercollegiate Athletics and the American University*. 

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Duderstadt claims: “Today we find that big time college sports most closely resembles the entertainment industry. . . . While universities “own” their athletic franchises, they are far from actually controlling these activities in the face of intense media, market and political pressure” (French 2004, 107). Duderstadt goes on to state that “the games are actually staged more for television production that they are for the campus community or those in the attendance stands” (French 2004, 107).

This is clearly evident today in college sports. There is no denying that the big-time sports are in the entertainment business when you look at their relationship with television. Television is the driving force behind big-time collegiate activities. In the not so distant past, one could count on college football games to be played on Saturday afternoons, or in some cases, particularly in the Southeastern Conference, Saturday nights. This was done primarily to avoid the midday heat in the south. Today college football games can be seen on television every night of the week and on the weekends, games can begin as early as ten o’clock in the morning. Like college football, college basketball can be seen every night of the week and it is not uncommon for games to begin at nine o’clock in the evening. It is hard to make the argument that the welfare of the student-athlete is a top concern, when they are playing basketball until midnight on a school night.
Not all sports and schools find themselves in this situation. If we are talking about the professionalization of sports at the collegiate level, there are certain factors that if present constitute more of a business corporation approach to athletics. First, are students given any compensation (i.e. in any form) because of their athletic ability? If yes, they are closer to professional status. These terms can often be difficult to define. As mentioned earlier, while colleges and universities sponsor a great number of sports including fencing, sailing and rowing, it is the high profile sports of football and men’s basketball that are at the heart of the debate. The second characteristic that, if present, comes close to whether or not the sport looks like a business is revenue generated. This component varies greatly among schools.

While it is clear that presidents at the Division I level have supported commercialism in college athletics, what is less widely known has is the fact that today in universities and colleges across America, commercialism has also become a large part of academics. Many of the same ethical issues that are brought up when talking about commercialization in collegiate athletics, can also be discussed when looking at commercialism in academia. What has caused much of this, particularly at the large state public universities, has been a tremendous reduction of financial support that began in the 1980’s and continues to
this day. To make up for budget shortfalls, schools have been looking for ways to increase revenue, and corporate sponsorship is a way of doing this.

Derek Bok, former president of Harvard does an excellent job of describing how the corporate world has influenced many departments within the university, not just the athletic department. Bok begins his book by stating the position that today’s universities found themselves in, “they had emerged as the nation’s chief source for the three ingredients most essential to continued growth and prosperity: highly trained specialists, expert knowledge, and scientific advances others could transform into valuable new products or life saving treatments and cures” (Bok 2003, 1).

Bok makes it clear that commercialization in higher education is not limited to athletics, “Faculty members began to bear such titles as Yahoo Professor of Computer Science or the K-Mart Professor of Marketing” (Bok 2003, 2). Bok claimed that this phenomenon attracted more media attention and with the increase in stature and visibility came a larger degree of public scrutiny. Bok further claimed that because of this value, universities realized that a tremendous amount of money could be made.
All of these issues raise significant concerns about the place of athletics on our college campuses. If left unchecked, certainly the powers and spending habits of athletic departments will grow. If a balance is to be maintained between academics and athletics, it will take strong leadership and guidance from university presidents. The role of university presidents will be examined in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5: PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

The relationship between college presidents and intercollegiate athletics has been at times tumultuous and yet the ability of college presidents to get a handle on intercollegiate athletics is the key to achieving and maintaining integrity between universities and the sports they sponsor.

Ultimately, the responsibility of maintaining academic integrity at the university lies with the university president, or at least in theory, this is how it should work. The principal of an elementary or secondary school has ultimate accountability for everything that is sanctioned by the school; likewise, the college president is ultimately responsible for the programs that are part of the college. It is an incredibly complex job that encompasses a wide range values and differing perspectives. On the issue of balancing academics and athletics, college and university president’s face a difficult task, one in which their skills as a leader will be greatly tested. School presidents must address the needs and desires that come from a multitude of stakeholders within the university community.

In the examination of intercollegiate athletics and the role that they play on college campuses, several issues are clear. Historically, college presidents have played a significant role in both expanding athletic
programs and reducing athletic programs. Second, the external pressures on college presidents have, in many cases, forced them to take a less active role in combating the growing influence of college sports on college campuses. Third, as individuals in a free-thinking society, not all presidents think alike when it comes to the role of athletics on campus. And, finally, if reform is to occur, college presidents must be actively involved and take advantage of their leadership role for any movement to be effective.

College and University Presidents have an incredibly difficult and demanding job. These jobs have become much more complex with the advent of big-time college athletics. Presidents often see that problems and conflicts of interest are occurring within their athletic departments, and addressing these issues often proves to be quite a formidable task. What makes this so difficult is the fact that often, the president’s attempt to instill changes within the athletic department, reform policies or in some cases, de-emphasis on athletics, can be met with great resistance from forces within the walls of the college or university itself.

History has shown us several cases in which, governing boards, trustees, regents and even students themselves have resisted the call for athletic reform on campus or, at the very least, a moderation of the emphasis that has been placed on athletics. In the early 1900’s, Harvard
President, Charles W. Elliot, attempted to eliminate football for safety as well as ethical issues. This principled stand was overruled by Harvard’s governing board (Bok 2003, 37). President Eliot was not only challenged by the governing body, but also by others within the University including many of the students. “The Harvard faculty, like Eliot, opposed professional coaches, athletics practices that interfered with serious academic work, financial inducements to attract athletes in college. Students and alumni, on the other hand, supported policies that would lead to athletic victories and greater public recognition” (Stack and Staurowsky 1998, 25).

There were several significant historical events that established the current relationship between college presidents and the coaches and athletic directors. According to Walter Byers, former Executive Director of the NCAA, one of the most significant events in the early twentieth century took place at the University of Michigan.

In 1906, University of Michigan President James Burrill Angell attempted to constrain the university’s football program, that he believed was becoming too big. According to Byers, Agnell met with the other presidents of the Big Ten and convinced them to agree to a plan that would place “reasonable” limits on intercollegiate football. These measures included: limiting the football season to five games; restricting
eligibility to three years; banning the use of graduate students; limiting the price of student tickets to fifty cents; eliminating the training table and prohibiting training quarters (Byers 1995, 37). These seemed reasonable and, to an extent, are similar to many of the issues that are being discussed today, such as, reducing the number of games played, and various athletic-eligibility issues.

Michigan’s football coach, Fielding Yost did not approve of these new limits imposed on his football program by the Big Ten. He was further disturbed that these limits had been instigated by his boss. In a move that would be repeated for years, Yost bypassed President Angell and addressed the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan. The Regents sided with Yost, overruling the university president, and voted to leave the Big Ten conference. Michigan left the Big Ten in 1908 and would return later in 1917. Byers commented, “Angell could move a whole conference, but where football was concerned, he could not convince his own coach and his own board” (Byers 1995, 37). “This act of a coach steamrolling his college president had historic significance although the lesson had to be relearned time and again by succeeding generations of college executives” (Byers 1995, 38).

It is very difficult to call for change and reform if there is a small or non-existent audience to hear the message. Clearly in the Michigan
case, members of the community did not want to see anything stand in the way of winning football games. “When the faculty members at the University of Michigan tried to put limits on Michigan football, students and alumni, fearing that the rules would destroy the Michigan football dynasty, protested, the university’s regents responded by eliminating the faculty committee on athletics” (Stack and Staurowsky 1998, 26).

As college football became more popular with the undergraduate populations across the country, many governing boards felt that sponsoring a good football team could help attract students and attention to the university which would result in increasing enrollment and exposure. This very idea was pointed by Henry Pritchett in 1911, Pritchett wrote: “those few presidents who tried to stand up for sound educational goals were often dismissed because of the popular cry for greater numbers [of students] or winning athletic team” (Bok 2003, 37). Nowhere was this belief greater than at the University of Chicago.

To look at the role of college presidents and how they differ on their perspective, a great case study involves the University of Chicago in the early part of the twentieth century. Early on, the University of Chicago’s President William Rainey Harper felt that it was important to put together a strong football team to help expand the image and spread the word about the University of Chicago. Harper was particularly
interested in promoting his school and targeting the east coast. Harper took out ads in the paper and actively promoted travel for the team. He felt that football, more importantly a successful football team, would serve as an advertising vehicle for the university, and this would serve ultimately as a successful recruiting tool. His hope was that through football, more people in the east would take notice of the great institution in the Midwest and that some of the eastern elite would find their way to Chicago. Listening to Harper, almost one hundred years ago, sounds very similar to what some university presidents think today.

Harper hired Amos Alonzo Stagg as a faculty member to coach the University of Chicago football team. Like today, Stagg was paid more than most faculty members and administrators at the University of Chicago. This is a case in which the university president absolutely felt that having a winning football team would increase the prestige of the university. This illustrates that university presidents are not all on the same philosophical page, with regards to the appropriate role of athletics within the university. This was particularly true in the case at the University of Chicago, which would later have a President with a very different perspective.

While President Harper strongly felt that athletics, and in particular, football, was an essential part of the university’s mission,
Robert Hutchins, who served as President of the University of Chicago in the 1940’s, had a completely different view on football and intercollegiate athletics. Hutchins was notable because he won a rare victory in terms of limiting the influence of athletics on campus. Hutchins was a liberal educator who had very little interest in athletics himself and certainly did not want big-time college sports on his campus. Hutchins not only wanted to reform athletics, he ridiculed them. Hutchins claimed: “whenever I feel a desire to exercise, I lie down until it goes away” (Byers 1995, 40).

Under Hutchins guidance, and with the support of his Board of Trustees, the University of Chicago left the Big Ten Conference. Hutchins explained the decision as follows: “Education is primarily concerned with the training of the mind, and athletics and social life, though they may contribute to it, are not the heart of it and cannot be permitted to interfere with it” (Byers 1995, 41). This decision would forever change the role of football at the University of Chicago. Today, Chicago’s athletic programs are part of the NCAA Division III classification. They do not offer athletic-based scholarships; they compete regionally, and are limited in terms of recruiting. Clearly under presidential leadership, the University of Chicago made a choice about maintaining academic integrity and today they cannot be accused of an over-emphasis on athletics.
There are several examples of this phenomenon occurring. In the book, *College Athletes For Hire*, contributing writer, Richard Lapchick, describes what occurred at Harvard. “The Harvard faculty, like Eliot, opposed professional coaches, athletic practices that interfered with serious academic work, financial inducements to attract athletes in college. Students and alumni, on the other hand, supported policies that would lead to athletic victories and greater public recognition” (Sack and Staurowsky 1998, 25).

Lapchick goes on to further describe what happened at the University of Michigan when the faculty tried to put limits on the football program, “students and alumni, fearing that the rules would destroy Michigan’s football dynasty, protested, the university’s regents responded by abolishing the faculty committee on athletics” (Sack and Staurowsky 1998, 26). This illustrates how important it is for a college president to have the backing of the governing board. “The Board should affirm commitment that the institution will conduct with integrity and intercollegiate athletics program that places emphasis on the proper relationship of athletics and education and that board will support the CEO fully in achieving this objective” (Bailey 1991, 72).

It is very difficult for college presidents to go it alone when it comes to reforming their athletic departments. “College presidents were
often caught in the middle as they tried to reconcile the academic integrity
of their institutions with the athletic demands of powerful outside
constituencies” (Sack and Staurowsky 1998, 26).

The ultimate responsibility rests with college presidents or does it?
A significant problem is the fact that athletic departments were
accustomed to operating with very little oversight for years. This has now
changed with the increasing responsibility and growth of the role of
president. “The principle of presidential authority and responsibility for
intercollegiate athletics as the key to institutional control has caused a sea
of change” (Duderstadt 2000, 123). Duderstadt went on to state:

By the 1980’s it became clear that the days of the czar athletic
director and independent athletic departments were coming to an
end. College sports were becoming simply too visible and their
impact on the university too great for their control and
management to be left extremely to the discretion of the athletics
establishment, its values and cultures. (Duderstadt 2000, 124)

Athletic conferences are becoming and serving more and more as
governing bodies, primarily because they collectively negotiate broadcast
deals. University presidents are, in effect, serving as a board of directors
of their respective conferences. It would seem logical that any meaningful
reform would have to come from the conferences themselves. In theory,
these conferences are a collection of schools that are similar in size,
structure and mission. Presidents could act collectively and distance
themselves from having to “go it alone” or make themselves vulnerable to groups who may oppose any attack on the sacred institution of big-time college athletics. In reality, the schools in the conference tend to be more concerned with competing against each other for conference titles and working hard to make sure that their own schools are successful at beating all of the other schools rather than reforming their conferences.

“Conferences today look more like professional organizations like the NFL or NBA than academic associations” (Duderstadt 2000, 123).

While the new reform movements have called for more presidential involvement in athletic departments, an argument that seems to be consistent with everyone who would like athletics to be valued appropriately in college, Duderstadt predicts that this role requires far too much of a university president’s time, as he or she must deal with a plethora of issues other than sports. Duderstadt claims: “it is too time-consuming for the president to be involved in athletic and conference matters, and that we could be headed for athletic independence as of old and that would not be good” (Duderstadt 2000, 125). As a result of this, the President must delegate authority and work in conjunction with the Athletic Director.

Walter Harrison, the President of the University of Hartford, provides us some excellent insight to the state of intercollegiate athletics.
Harrison is also the Chairman of the NCAA’s Executive Committee and he serves on the Committee on Academic Performance. Harrison was questioned for a story that appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. In response to a question regarding the growing phenomenon of building luxury suites inside college stadiums, Harrison responded:

> The biggest threat to college sport is commercialism, and one of the areas I see commercialism encroaching is luxury boxes. I understand that they are revenue producers, but you are establishing a moneyed elite who gets drastically improved seats at a university and I don’t think as a university that is the message we ought to be sending. As an American society, we ought to be sending a message that we are egalitarian.” As a president of a university it is clear that the relationship between commercialism and athletics is the biggest challenge that will face presidents as they are called upon to lead their universities. (Wolverton 2006)

Harrison was also asked: Are commercial interests too strong for athletics programs to resist? His response indicates that presidents must be involved and that presidents must work together. We have already seen what can happen, if a president independently attempts reform. “They are not too strong, but they require college presidents acting together. Athletes should never be in a position where they appear to endorse a product, I am starting to wonder at where the line is with coaches endorsing products.”

Recently, the United States government has started to get involved in the debate on collegiate athletics and their relationship as a business.
Currently, Congress is investigating stadium costs and excessive coaches’ salaries. Harrison responded to the question: Do college sports need government regulation?

I am a firm believer in self-regulation. The NCAA is the exact right body for oversight. I believe that there is enough good in sports with the right kind of leadership at the presidential level and at the NCAA that we can see what is good and do away with what is not.” In looking at the role of presidents the question is why should we rely on presidents? “Presidents more than anyone else have a holistic view of what a university is about. Universities are very complex organizations. College sports get more attention than most of the rest of the university combined. (Wolverton 2006)

Presidents have to be involved in their athletic departments because of the high visibility associated with college athletics. This is evident by a statement made in 1954 by the Reverend Robert J. Slavin, the President of Providence College: “Seven hundred years of Dominican scholarship, nobody ever heard of us until we put five kids on the floor at Madison Square Garden”(Lapchick 2006, 1). Maintaining academic integrity and strong athletic programs at the college level has been and will continue to be an ongoing struggle for universities and their presidents.
CHAPTER 6: THE NEED FOR REFORM

A series of scandals rocked the collegiate world in the 1970’s and 1980’s that forced people to take a more serious look at intercollegiate athletics and their role on American college campuses. Cheating, recruiting improprieties, academic fraud and spending seemingly were out of control at a significant number of institutions.

Walter Byers discusses several of the big cases between the NCAA and member institutions. Certainly one of the biggest cases involved the football program at Southern Methodist University and the subsequent “death penalty,” which suspended the university’s football program. Southern Methodist University was a member of the now defunct, Southwestern Conference. Allegations of improprieties with regards to illegal payments to players, player’s families and money given to highly sought after recruits ran rampant throughout the conference.

The violations at SMU were numerous and the university completely disregarded any NCAA rules. The leadership at SMU was as guilty of ethical violations as were the coaches. Even the Governor of Texas was involved (Byers 1995, 35). However, once again, the audience for reform wasn’t there. Byers States: “ironically, people were more
upset about the death penalty than the violations committed at SMU” (Byers 1995, 35).

What has been a constant since the beginning of the twentieth century with intercollegiate athletics, has been a cyclical pattern of abusive practices at the collegiate level. The faculty makes known it’s grievances about athletics, the media exposes stories that question the institution’s integrity, the governing body usually involving the conference or the NCAA or both, look to reform the model, they create more values that are subsequently programs and the practice continues. Reform movements grow, there is public outcry, and years later, despite reform and the noble efforts or the educators and reformers, problems and abuses increase rather than decrease. (Moore 1992). This was summarized in John Moore’s essay on presidential accountability:

The abuses in college sports that have been reported extensively are not really new to intercollegiate athletics. Early accounts of abuse and proscriptions for change were the subject of a major study conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as early as 1929. The last sixty-three years have seen an increase in the frequency of abuses, particularly on campuses engaged in big-time sports. (Moore 1992, 30)

When scandals and unflattering stories occur with regards to collegiate athletics, critics and reformers often call for a full review on the role of athletics within our schools. At this point, it is often tempting for individuals to question the very existence of school-sponsored athletics.
In practical terms, that question is irrelevant, intercollegiate athletics are on our campuses and will continue to remain there. What must be addressed is maintaining and balancing the relationship between academics and athletics. The leadership combination of University Presidents, athletic conferences, Athletic Directors and the NCAA will be critical in determining the direction of collegiate sports. Outside organizations, and independent groups have offered some valuable insight into the problems and concerns involving school and sports.

In the early 1990’s “The Knight Commission” began what would be a three part study on the problems of athletics and how to change the system. A follow-up study was conducted ten years after the first study and was published in 2001. It was here that the commission had recognized the magnitude and scope of the issue that they were working on. “The Knight Commission” realized in 2001, that despite all of the work that was put forward in the first three studies and all the attention that was given to the problems of intercollegiate athletics, the problem seemed to be getting worse.

Although “The Knight Commission” studies have been the most recent significant studies on the role of intercollegiate athletics on college campuses, they have certainly not been the first. Examinations, debates and subsequent calls for reform have occurred since the early 1900’s with
remarkably little change in the focus of the problems: commercialism, professionalism, academic integrity, eligibility, amateurism and fiscal irresponsibility. As mentioned earlier, “The Savage Report” released in 1929 provided a comprehensive study of the role of intercollegiate athletics. “It became the canon that set the standard for reform proposals and policy analyses about the place of intercollegiate sports in American colleges and universities” (Thelin 1994, 13).

Other attempts at reform would often use and cite findings of The Savage Report, including professor Thomas Palaima, a classics professor at the University of Texas. Palaima, served on The Wright Committee, a committee at the University of Texas that looked into the real cost of athletics on the university. The Wright Committee Report quoted a 1929 report from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which sounds uncomfortably contemporary: “The football contest is not a student game as it once was.” The report stated:

It is a highly organized commercial enterprise. The athletes who take part in it have come up through years of training; they are commanded by professional coaches, little if any personal initiative of ordinary play is left to the players. The great matches are highly profitable enterprises. Sometimes the profits go to finance college sports, sometimes to pay the cost of the sport amphitheater. (Palaima 2006b)

Palaima and others were very critical of the extraordinary expenditures at the University of Texas on athletics. Clearly this was a
source of pride for DeLoss Dodds, the current Athletic Director at the University of Texas who in reference to the “keeping up with the Jones’” mentality of the athletic arms race is often quoted as saying, “We are the Jones.” (Palaima) It should be noted that the University of Texas’ football stadium currently operates sixty-two luxury suites inside of its football stadium.

In an article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Hayden White, a professor of comparative literature is critical of the relationship between athletics and academics. His criticism is familiar, but White also condemns other programs in higher education. Much like Bok discussed earlier, commercialism on collegiate campuses is not exclusive to the athletic department:

Everyone knows that college sports have long betrayed their own ostensible educational purpose. The have become parts of the entertainment-media-business complex open to criticism only when they fail to yield profits – financial and psychological – they are supposed to generate. Indeed, the glamour and thrill of college sports would hardly be imaginable without their link to the media and the market. But it can no longer be said, in this moment of an openly consumerist capitalism, that the commercialization of college sport sullies the reputation of the educational institution that sustain and feed off this. The commercialization and professionalization of college sports has proceeded apace with similar processes in the institution of higher education themselves. All three traditional domains of higher education, sports, teaching, research, as well as that new distinctively monstrosity called “administration” replicate the same process that has subverted the honor of the professions of law, medicine, the ministry, the military, politics, and business. All show what happens when
commerce is substituted for morality and ethics throughout society. (White 2006).

While all of these reform movements have played a role in the evolution of collegiate athletics, and they have addressed the concerns of their times (those concerns have remained remarkably similar), perhaps the report that may have the most lasting impact is “The Knight Commission” report: *A Call to Action: Reconnecting College Sports and Higher Education*. In this report the authors identified that presidential control was crucial to any reform and they called on presidents to take the lead in academic integrity and fiscal responsibility. This report came about as result of the concerns raised by the state of college athletics in the 1980’s. “In 1989, as a decade of highly visible scandals in college sports drew to a close, the trustees of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation were concerned that athletics abuses threatened the very integrity of higher education” (Knight Commission 2001). The committee was put together to propose a reform agenda for college sports.

Some of the issues that had surfaced in the 1980’s were pointed out at the beginning of the report. Included in this discussion was the fact that over fifty percent of Division I schools were censured, sanctioned or put on probation by the NCAA; a third of present and former football players surveyed said that they had accepted illicit payments while in college,
equally alarming was that fifty percent of the responders saw nothing wrong with the practice; and, that forty-eight, out of 106 schools in Division I had graduation rates under 30% for their men’s basketball players. (Knight Commission 2001)

As a result of the commission and the publicity that it generated, the NCAA would eventually put in place the Academic Progress Rate program, as mentioned earlier, that would focus on student-athletes taking courses in their major of study and instituting penalties to those schools and programs that did not graduate their student-athletes. Leading the reform movement, were the University presidents themselves.

A second series of reports that have received wide-spread attention have been the studies produced by James Bowen and William Shulman. These authors instigated a comprehensive study of collegiate athletics at various academic institutions that were classified as highly selective. This group of schools included Division III liberal arts colleges like Williams, Amherst, Washington University and the University of Chicago, as well as Division I schools, both public and private, like the University of Michigan, Virginia, Duke and Vanderbilt.

The original study, *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values*, along with their follow-up study, *Reclaiming the*
Game: College Sports and Educational Values, succeeded in providing a comprehensive study of the relationship between athletics and academics.

These studies made it clear that athletics at the Division III level, had the potential to be equally divisive on college campuses as their Division I counterparts. Among the findings, was that although Division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships, they do actively recruit and bring in athletes that fall below the academic standards of the non-student-athlete undergraduates. Bowen and Shulman, argue that in some ways, there are more harmful negative effects on the campus at the Division III level.

The authors argue that the size of the school makes student-athletes much more a part of the overall campus climate and experience. At larger state universities, scholarship athletes are an extremely small percentage of the school population and, therefore, they have less of an impact on the school’s culture. What is absolutely clear is that the coveted “admission spot” for an athlete on the “coaches list” is as valuable as a scholarship to many potential student-athletes. According to Bowen and Shulman, one of their many findings was that recruited student athletes gained an advantage in the admissions process.

Athletes who are recruited, and who end up on the carefully winnowed list of desired candidates submitted by coaches to the admissions office, now enjoy a very substantial statistical
“advantage” in the admissions process – a much greater advantage than that enjoyed by other targeted groups such as underrepresented minority students, alumni children, and other legacies; this statement is true for both male and female athletes. (Bowen and Shulman 2001)

While Division III athletic departments have not been overwhelmed by the forces of commercialism, they face similar issues with regards to the role of athletics on their campuses. In many cases the percentage of student-athletes at a Division III school are much higher than at Division I school. Although the Division III model is much more in sync with the philosophy of the student-athlete, lowering the admission standards for student-athletes at highly selective colleges, also jeopardizes academic integrity.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Can colleges maintain academic and athletic integrity in a win-driven society? They most certainly can and many institutions do. For the most part, colleges and universities do an excellent job of educating their varsity athletes and enhancing the student-athlete experience. We must recognize that the problem of finding a balance between academic integrity and school-sponsored sports lies within the sports of football and men’s basketball. Big-time sports are the problem and any effort to reform must focus on football and men’s basketball.

In the United States, higher education has become more readily available to a growing populace. On-line courses, evening programs, weekend degree opportunities, and flexible schedules have become common place at many schools of higher education. Community colleges, small private liberal arts colleges, large public state universities, highly-selective schools, and schools that offer rolling admissions all play a role in allowing students to continue their education.

These various types of schools differ in their level of athletic sponsorship of intercollegiate athletics. Many students have to balance their studies with non-academic responsibilities, including outside employment, developing skills in music or drama and participating in
varsity athletics. The majority of students are able achieve this balance and do well in the classroom and in the case of athletics do well on the field of play.

In the area of school-sponsored varsity athletics, it is crucial to the debate to remember that in the non-revenue, or non big-time sports, student-athletes graduate at a much higher rate than the overall student population. Thus, the area of concern, when it comes to institutional integrity, is the presence of big-time sports, football and basketball on college campuses.

Focusing on these two sports at the Division I level indicates that schools are also capable of maintaining the balance between athletics and academics.

Critics on both sides of the aisle offer differing views of this. On the one hand, there is the group that is absolutely ecstatic about big-time college sports. They see it has entertainment and often take an active role in the atmosphere and the pageantry of the events. These could be undergraduates who camp outside of stadiums, most notably outside of Cameron Indoor Stadium waiting in line to get the best seats in the stadium for the ACC showdowns with North Carolina and Maryland. These undergraduates at Duke, who are some of the brightest students in the country, do not seem bothered by the attention put on the basketball
team. The degree obtained from Duke University is not diminished by the successes of the basketball team. It appears that the students have been able to get a world class education and enjoy the experience of big-time sports entertainment.

Why does it seem to work at Duke? As is often the case, perception is reality. Duke and other highly selective Division I colleges and universities take in qualified student-athletes, they have success in the classroom and the players graduate. The same can be said about other schools as well. Stanford University is able to maintain a high level of integrity, while simultaneously offering a world class athletic program. Stanford has helped produced Olympians in swimming, track and field, gymnastics and women’s basketball. Along the way they compete in the intense PAC 10 conference and have made the NCAA men’s basketball tournament and played in the Rose Bowl.

Too many schools, however, have compromised their integrity with regards to athletics. Schools that do not maintain their academic integrity or have student-athletes who compromise the university’s mission, end up portraying the university in a negative light. If a portion of an athletically sponsored team does not graduate, it relates to the academic integrity of the programs at the university.
Division III schools, it would seem, have the appropriate philosophy when it comes to maintaining the balance between athletics and academics. They do not give athletically based scholarships, thus, the division between athletics and academics is not nearly as pronounced. However, as evident in the recent studies by Bowen and Shulman, Division III schools have come under much greater scrutiny with who they chose to admit.

Bowen and Shulman argue that admitting student-athletes at highly selective non-scholarship colleges can actually have a greater impact on the overall academic integrity of the school than it does large public institutions. “Recruiting athletes for up to 40 intercollegiate teams at college’s and universities that are vastly oversubscribed by talented applicants has major opportunity costs-especially at the smaller Ivy League universities and the coed liberal arts colleges” (Bowen and Shulman 2001, 269). They also describe this effect from the large public school perspective using the words of a former college president at a prestigious large school: “Yes it was embarrassing when there was a scandal of one kind or another, but the number of athletes was so small relative to the size of the student body that whatever they did or didn’t do in the classroom or on the campus didn’t really affect the place as a whole” (Bowen and Shulman 2001, 269).
The greatest foe of integrity is when actions do not coincide with
words or in this case purpose. To maintain integrity within the institutions
it would seem that there are three possibilities towards achievement of this
goal. Understanding that damage can be done if perceptions don’t meet
reality, a way of maintaining integrity at least in terms of calling it what it
is would be to fully embrace the idea that college athletics, specifically
big-time college athletics is a commercial enterprise, in which
entertainment and business are the greater goals.

If we are willing to accept this, then student-athletes would be in
actuality athlete-students. Students would receive additional
compensation and a split of the money that they help generate through
their involvement with the team. Athletes would use colleges and
universities as a minor league in preparation for playing in the pros. This
scenario does have some merit. It addresses several concerns that have
been brought up in terms of dealing with integrity. This plan would
certainly answer the concern that college athletes are exploited. By
compensating these athletes and allowing them to endorse products the
university would be allowing these individuals a chance to use their skills
in a free-market society, something that we allow other undergraduates to
do if they have a particular talent or skill that is valued in our culture.
This plan would also address the many times that universities, colleges
and the NCAA seem to be speaking out of both sides of their mouths. The NCAA would be able to maintain one of its core principles and that is to promote college athletics. Universities would not have to seem hypocritical for building new facilities and adding luxury suites if everyone accepted the fact that this is business and entertainment.

Part of this plan has actually been laid out by Professor Glenn Wong at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Wong, a professor of sport management has suggested dealing with the sports of football and basketball at the collegiate level differently than other sports. He suggests a “business model” approach in which football and basketball would be for profit entities, and that a trust fund would be set up for the money that college athletes generate (Sander 2008).

The biggest obstacle to this idea is the fact that the academic piece in this scenario is reduced. The pressure on coaches to win and recruit the top athletes would make academics secondary at best. The second obstacle lies in the fact that if the sports were more closely aligned with business, than players would be more likely be seen as employees of the university. This would force the universities and colleges to grant benefits to college athletes as if they were employees, including workman’s compensation. This would also most certainly threaten the NCAA and athletic department’s tax-exempt status. In response to this type of model,
Harry Bienan, president of Northwestern responded: “if any of these business models became necessary, Northwestern would probably withdraw from big time college athletics” (Sanders 2008).

A better way to maintain academic integrity is to eliminate a distinction between athlete and student. The best way to do this is to eliminate the characteristics that differentiate between the two. How do you go about doing this? First at the Division I level the following would need to happen: eliminate athletic scholarships, shorten the time commitment to being seasonal, no out of season practices, reduce recruiting efforts, play regional contests, and minimize the amount of classes missed by student-athletes. By doing these things, much of the separation between student-athletes and the general undergraduate population would be eliminated. To further maintain integrity, students should be admitted within the general parameters of other students. For the most part the structure is in place for this to occur at the Division III level. As mentioned, however, Division III programs are not free from controversy. Comparatively speaking, it is just as important to have equal facilities or at least comparable facilities within the Division III culture and classification. If Williams builds a state of the art, recreation center, Amherst, Colby and Middlebury will feel the pressure to build there own as well. Williams does not need a stadium comparable to Syracuse, but in
order to compete and get quality student-athletes they don’t want to have an inferior set of facilities. There are other issues with this. What about students who are accepted by the college with a lower test score than their peers. What about the fact that the percentage of student-athletes at a smaller school is higher therefore, in essence can have a greater impact in terms of lowering academic standards. A major public university only has a fraction of their population playing athletics therefore; the lower standard that they may have has relatively no impact on the general student body. In fact one of the many criticisms is that there is very little interaction between scholarship student-athlete and the general undergraduate student.

Since there is very little chance that we will ever go back to non-athletic scholarships, the best way to maintain academic integrity is to place presidents at the top of the athletic departments. By making sure that student-athletes have the necessary academic tools and skills to be admitted into college is a great beginning. This becomes difficult again to offer a blanket solution or formula since the type of intercollegiate institution differs greatly in many areas. Making sure that student-athletes are on track to graduate. Many athletic departments have a phenomenal student-athlete academic network in place. While others may criticize this, as long as we continue to operate the way we do and put so many
time and travel demands on our student-athletes, a support network is needed and justified. Playing intercollegiate athletics is the equivalent to a full-time job. Those undergraduates who have to work their way through school will attest to the difficulties that they face, compared to their undergraduate colleagues who do not have to support themselves and are able to take full advantage of the time and focus that they are able to put towards school.

This Division III, non-athletic scholarship model, while in the purest sense addresses the issue at hand, is not very likely to happen at the Division I level without a significant change in our society. An elongated period of economic decline could perhaps be a catalyst to reduce spending for collegiate athletics. However, absent a significant shift in our society, the most logical way to maintain academic integrity is a solid working relationship established on campus between all of the stakeholders. At the helm, is the university president who must take control of the athletic department and be involved in ensuring that the universities mission is not compromised by the athletic department. W. Roger Webb, president of Central Oklahoma University states: “We don’t do enough as presidents to bring the athletic directors into the mainstream of the academic program. I have been experimenting here with making our athletics
director part of my executive team so he can truly understand the mission, goals, and objectives of the university” (Lapchick 2006, 211).

College President’s must play a significant role in the athletic department and foster an environment in which all members of the university are seen as valuable members of the community striving for excellence, educating our citizens and pursuing the mission of the institution. This is a very difficult task in which relationships must be built and fostered. A successful president will engage the university’s faculty and coaches and share a common goal that is rooted in maintaining an academic and athletic environment that is equally excellent.
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