

THE VIRTUE OF VISION: EXAMINING ADMINISTRATOR AND COACH PERCEPTIONS OF VALUE SYSTEMS IN NCAA DIVISION I ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Strong value systems that reside in the structural core of an organization facilitate a culture of empowerment. This culture enables individual decision making that helps aspiring companies reach their full potential (Collin & Porras, 2000). When the right values are chosen, an organization takes the first step to creating an identity that guides decisions for employees at all hierarchical levels. It is important, however, that leaders understand that modeling and follow through are critical if value systems are going to be effective (Lencioni, 2002). In addition, there is a need to constantly monitor the values being emphasized to determine if “culturalization” is taking place throughout all levels of the organization. This research will explore this process within the unique population of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletic departments through examining administrator and coach per-

ceptions of organizational value systems.

Values in Intercollegiate Athletics

In recent years, the actions of commercially driven NCAA Division I athletic departments have been characterized as being at odds with the core mission of academic institutions (Knorr, 2004; Knight Commission, 2010a). As a result, the stated purpose of athletics has been a source of debate within the academy (Frey, 1982; Rader, 1999, Shulman & Bowen, 2001), and the discussion seems to be gaining momentum as scholars have deemed high-level college athletics a deterrent to institutional education (Sperber, 2000). In addition, research has extolled these athletic programs for exploiting athletes while encouraging improper practices such as academic misconduct, illegal recruiting, and exorbitant deficit spending (Branch, 2011; Dufresne, 2011; Mandel & Staples, 2011; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998).

As discussion of these issues continues to escalate, potential progress tends to be overshadowed by discussion of violations rather than a proactive examination of institutional goals (Trail & Chelladurai, 2002). In order to progress toward a more productive future in college athletics, administrators have been urged to challenge the status quo and lead with a transformational vision that culturalizes values throughout the entire department (Cooper & Weight, 2011; Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010; Trail & Chelladurai, 2002). In a tumultuous intercollegiate athletics era (Knight Commission, 2010; Mandel & Staples, 2011; Splitt, 2011; The Drake Group, 2011; Weiberg, 2011), it seems that an analysis of value systems, therefore, would be a critical step in determining the central issues that exist in college athletics. Thus, the purpose of the research was to examine NCAA Division I administrator and coach perceptions of value systems to determine whether organizational values are consistent throughout the "upper" administrative levels of athletic departments. Prior to discussing the research questions and the significance of the study, a literature review and theoretical framework that provided the foundation for this research is presented.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Core Values

The era of organizational value statements was started following the legend-

ary book *Built to Last* by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras (2000). In addition to documenting the presence of core ideology in high performing organizations, the authors explained a value system "guides and inspires people throughout the organization and remains relatively stable for long periods of time" (Collins & Porras, 2000, p. 48). Building on this benchmark research, scholars have established the importance of core values as an essential element in brand building and organizational differentiation (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Moser, 2003; Urde, 2003). In simple terms, core values have been characterized as the "glue that holds an organization together as it grows, decentralizes, diversifies, and expands" (Collins & Porras, p. 73).

Values, defined as beliefs about desired behaviors, processes, and outcomes that guide the selection and/or evaluation of events on a day-to-day basis (Hofstede, 1980; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992), have been shown to influence perceptions, evaluations, and decisions in a variety of different contexts. While there is a wide range of these applications, some of the most critical in past research have included the impact of values on managerial decision-making (Pant & Lachman, 1998) and activity performance goals (Trail & Chelladurai, 2002). In essence, when value systems are implemented properly, there is an opportunity to make progress because a unified focus on the right values allows organizations to reach full potential (Collins & Porras, 2000). Further, it is the identification and articulation of a central value system

that allows organizations to create a culture that embraces common goal pursuits and outcomes (Abreu, Macedo, & Camarinha-Matos, 2009; Berings, De-Fruyt, & Bouwen, 2004).

Benefits of Central Core Values

For intercollegiate athletic managers, one of the most important benefits that relates to central core values is the ability to emphasize values that will engender support for their programs (Trail & Chelladurai, 2002). A consistent focus on the *right* values allows athletic departments to make daily decisions that keep them out of the public eye for the wrong reasons. Additionally, the pursuit of a uniform value system is essential because it allows organizations to significantly enhance efficiency and effectiveness with staff members at all levels (Van Rekom, Van Riel, & Wierenga, 2006). Previous research has shown that a strong value system that is consistently culturalized throughout an organization has fostered employee motivation and empowerment that has resulted in a higher contribution to organizational effectiveness (Berry, 1999; Meir, 1989; Pattakos, 2004).

With the influence of value systems on individual's behavior (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989), many top level organizations have chosen to implement an organizational value leadership model over the traditional command and control models (Collins & Porras, 2000). One of the primary reasons for this value-based leadership is that it fosters an environ-

ment that encourages staff members at all levels to make sound situational decisions that reinforce organizational principles (Ouchi, 1979; Sull, 2010). Given the unique challenges in contemporary competitive athletics wherein "ethical dilemmas cannot be avoided" (Malloy, Ross, & Zakus, 2003, p. 49), clarification of individual and organizational values is critical to facilitate sound decision making from coaches, student-athletes, and general staff members (Coakley, 2009; Kjeldesen, 1992; Malloy et al., 2003). However, it is important that administrators understand the importance of implementing a system properly because empty value statements without organizational modeling can be even more detrimental than not having values established at all (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008; Ind, 2007; Milliman & Clair, 1995; Sull & Spinosa, 2007).

The Culturalization Process

Once organizations have invested in a strategic plan that includes a stated value system, it is critical that an implementation process is in place to ensure values are embraced at all levels. Van Rekom et al. (2006) explained that the implementation phase (communication, modeling, and reward systems) is extremely important because it allows leaders to improve coordination and morale throughout the entire organization. This is a process that starts immediately and must be embraced at every potential opportunity: "From the first interview to the last day of work, em-

employees should be constantly reminded that core values form the basis for every decision the company makes" (Lencioni, 2002, p. 117). When this process occurs consistently, organizational stakeholders tend to fully embrace their values and are able to reap the benefits associated with strong value systems. It is important to note, however, there can be tremendous damage if value systems come across as inauthentic to employees and stakeholders.

Scholars have cautioned organizational leaders against investing in value systems that lack authenticity/follow through and warned that insincere values can ultimately undermine leadership action (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008; Ind, 2007; Lencioni, 2002; Milliman & Clair, 1995; Sull & Spinosa, 2007). When this occurs, the incongruent value system can fail and lead to mistrust, skepticism, and cynicism as many employees become demotivated because of the insincere approach utilized to maximize efficiency. Further, research has also shown that leaders often fail with implementation of value systems for two key reasons: (1) the lack of ability to articulate/communicate the values to employees, and (2) the lack of ability to keep values current based on industry demands and standards (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008; Milliman & Clair, 1995). Thus, for administrators looking to capitalize on the unique benefits associated with a system, it is important they are aware of the reasons these initiatives often fail.

Transformational Leadership

At the core of a successful value system is a strong leader that is able to create and implement a vision that followers embrace on a regular basis. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there was a considerable amount of research that was devoted to the exploration of leadership to determine the reasons why some individuals are able to accomplish great things through the ability to inspire others around them. While there were certainly variations between studies, one common theme that emerged throughout the different research projects was the unique ability of leaders to express a compelling vision while displaying charismatic behaviors and modeling key values (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1984; Burns, 1978; Graeff, 1983; House, 1971; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). During this time frame, one philosophy that emerged was the theory of transformational or visionary leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1984; Burns, 1978). In essence, this theory is characterized by a leader's ability to transform an organization by clearly expressing a compelling vision that inspires and infuses an organization. It is this process that can arouse higher-order needs in employees that stimulates motivation, empowerment, and effort that can lead to a re-birth or organizational change (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Transformational theory posits that the enhanced morale, motivation and ownership that can be inspired by a leader's vision and action can transform follow-

ers into leaders, causing subordinates to surpass expectations (Yukl, 1989).

Transformational Leadership in Sport

There has been no shortage of leadership theory in sport management literature as scholars have emphasized the need for strong leaders since the foundation of the field (Chelladurai, 1987; Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996; Lim & Cromartie, 2001; Paton, 1987; Sourcie, 1994; Weese, 1994; Weese, 1996). From a practical standpoint, the positive effects of a transformational leader was explored in the literature as leadership characteristics of Division III athletic directors were measured and compared to coach job satisfaction measures (Yusof & Shah, 2007). The results revealed a significant relationship existed between AD behaviors and coach job satisfaction. Other studies have demonstrated strong transformational leadership displayed by coaches in a sport setting can lead to enhanced intrinsic motivation (Charbonneau, Barling, & Kelloway, 2006).

A fundamental component of a transformational leader is the ability to espouse values and infuse a vision into an organization (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1984; Burns, 1978). In an effort to understand the different value systems that exist in athletic departments, Cooper and Weight (2011) examined sport program values and determined a wide range of values (conduct, academic achievement, athletic success, personal relationships, and community involvement) were deemed important to administrators in

Division I athletic departments with monetary benefits stressed far more in men's basketball and football than traditional Olympic sports. In a follow-up study, Weight and Cooper (2012) studied administrator and coach perceptions of "nonrevenue" or Olympic sport values in NCAA DI, II, and III institutions. Findings revealed high levels of value placed within each division on elements of holistic education with conduct and academic achievement ranked most highly by both administrators and coaches with the most agreement between the two populations within Division III. Time allocation and coach narrative responses revealed coach feelings of inferiority and lack of value compared to the "revenue generating" programs within the department leading to a conclusion that "nonrevenue" programs are valued for their educational contribution to the overall athletic department mission but are viewed as "second-tier" to the commercial potential inherent in "revenue" sports (2012).

The previous literature has provided a solid foundation to take steps towards understanding the value systems that exist within organizations. The research is limited, however, when it comes to the values that are being emphasized and culturalized within NCAA athletic departments. Thus, the purpose of this research was to examine NCAA Division I administrator and coach perceptions of value systems to determine whether organizational values are consistent throughout the "upper" levels of athletic department administration. Viewed through the lens of the trans-

formational leadership theoretical framework, the findings will help to determine whether athletic directors are effectively culturalizing their values with key leaders in the department. This pursuit will provide insight into current practices that may guide future efforts to enhance organizational effectiveness and transformation within NCAA intercollegiate athletic departments. To guide this initiative, the following research questions were created to foster a better understanding of the value systems that exist within Division I athletic departments.

- [RQ 1] What are the organizational values deemed as having the highest priority for NCAA Division I athletic departments when carrying out their mission?
- [RQ 2] Are there variations in perceptions of the priority level of organizational values in NCAA Division I athletic departments when focusing on the role (head athletic director, senior administrators, associate administrators, assistant administrators, and coaches) of respondents in the research?
- [RQ 3] Does athletic department affiliation ("BCS" v. "Non-BCS") have an influence on the priority level of organizational values in NCAA Division I athletic departments?
- [RQ 4] Are there contradictions between stated values and actual practices within NCAA Division I athletic departments?

- [RQ 5] Are there specific strategies that NCAA Division I athletic departments use to culturalize their values?

METHODOLOGY

Survey Instrument

In order to address the research questions targeted within this study, an online survey was designed. Using this new instrument, the study surveyed administrators and coaches at each of the NCAA Division I institutions to understand the organizational values emphasized within these departments. The actual core values included in the survey were developed using several steps to ensure instrument validity. First, an examination of NCAA athletic department websites was conducted to identify the values listed in mission statements. Following this assessment, there were a set of values that emerged as the most prevalent organizational initiatives for NCAA athletic departments. Prior to distribution, a panel of experts (four senior-level intercollegiate athletic administrators, two professors, and an expert in research and survey design) was formed to ensure the instrument's content was sound and had the ability to effectively measure the core values of administrators. Based on the panel's feedback, the decision was made to include 11 organizational core values in the survey. Following a series of revisions, the online survey instrument was unanimously approved by the panel of experts for distribution.

Sample

The instrument was distributed via email to the entire population of NCAA Division I athletic departments ($N = 342$). Athletic department staff directories were used to obtain the email addresses for the administrators (head athletic director(s), senior administrators, associate administrators, and assistant administrators) and coaches at each individual institution. While the head athletic directors were identified as the primary contact from an administrative standpoint, the remaining administrators were copied on the invitation and were strongly encouraged to participate in the research. Similarly, the head coach was the primary contact, but assistant coaches were strongly encouraged to complete the survey. Each of the populations received two email invitations (initial and follow-up) to participate in the research. Following these invitations, there were a total of 410 administrators (Athletic Director [$n=50$], Senior Administrator [$n=91$], Associate Administrator [$n = 144$], and Assistant Administrator [$n=125$]) and 1,477 coaches (46% head and 54% assistant) that participated in the research.

Data Analysis

The project utilized a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. While an emphasis was placed on the quantitative analysis of the data, open-ended questions were also examined to add depth to the re-

search. Descriptive statistics were generated for each of the items that were included in the research instrument. In addition to means and standard deviations, a one-way *T*-test was conducted for each of the values to determine the significance of the sample mean relative to the scale. Further, an analysis of variance was used to examine the differences between administrators and coaches in their perceived priority level of these core values within corresponding athletic departments. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variance was used when comparing the sample means within the related statistical procedures. An alternative "equal variances not assumed" format was used when necessary to account for heterogeneous variances. In addition, a Bonferroni Correction was run ($.05/11$) to control for the multiple comparisons that were made.

Analysis of narrative responses was conducted to provide an additional layer of depth to the quantitative data (Patton, 2002). Coding schemes were developed by independent coders ($n=2$) based on themes uncovered in the open-ended questions. These codes were compared and discussed until a master code that most thoroughly captured the themes was developed (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Independent coding utilizing the master code was then conducted. Inter-coder reliability was tested utilizing a Scott's Pi calculation. A Scott's Pi value of .89 was attained which denotes strong agreement between coders (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005).

Table 1
Cumulative NCAA Division I Administrator's Responses to Organizational Core Values

Organizational Core Values	M	SD
Academic Excellence <i>To achieve high levels of student-athlete and team success in the classroom.</i>	4.47*	0.67
Student-Athlete Experience <i>To ensure that student-athletes receive a valuable and rewarding experience (on and off field) during their career.</i>	4.34*	0.79
Athletic Excellence <i>To achieve high levels of student-athlete/team success during athletic competition.</i>	4.19*	0.78
Disciplined Diversity <i>To provide fair and equitable opportunities for all individuals regardless of gender, race, and/or physical challenges.</i>	4.15*	0.88
Health and Safety <i>To create procedures/protocol that ensures health and safety for all individuals in the athletic department.</i>	4.11*	0.89
Contribution to University Mission <i>To create a culture where individuals embrace and contribute to educational mission and role of university.</i>	4.08*	0.85
Fiscal Responsibility <i>To implement transparent budgeting strategies that encourages sound, equitable financial decisions.</i>	4.02	0.94
Growth Opportunities <i>To create an environment that encourages individuals to develop sound professional skill sets (effective leaders).</i>	3.76	1.01
Sense of Shared Community <i>To create an atmosphere that allows stakeholders to feel like they are an integral part of the department.</i>	3.58	0.98
Relationship Cultivation <i>To create an environment that encourages and fosters strong relationships among individuals in the department.</i>	3.50	1.02
Broad-Based Participation Opportunities <i>To provide a wide range of participation opportunities for individuals interested in different sporting events</i>	3.11	1.07

Note: The scale ranged from (1) "Not a Priority" to (5) "Essential Priority."

*($\mu \geq 4$); $p < .001$

RESULTS

The results of the study demonstrate some of the unique trends that exist within NCAA Division I athletic department value systems. In addition to showing the overall cumulative values receiving the highest priority level by administrators, the data also highlights the unique variations present within these departments when focusing on the level of administrator. To add further depth to this line of research, the coaches' perceptions of the priority level of values within their athletic department were examined before comparing them to administrator's responses. Each of these areas is presented in this section prior to discussing some of the qualitative responses provided by respondents.

Administrator Responses

Overall, administrators tended to rate organizational values at the higher end of the spectrum with the means for each item at or above the "medium priority" ($\mu \geq 3$) level on a five-point scale. As illustrated in Table 1, there were six of the 11 organizational values that differentiated themselves by being rated as statistically significant at the "high priority" ($\mu \geq 4$) level by administrators (*in rank order*): (1) academic excellence ($M = 4.47$; $SD = 0.67$), (2) student-athlete experience ($M = 4.34$; $SD = 0.79$), (3) athletic excellence ($M = 4.19$; $SD = 0.78$), (4) disciplined diversity ($M = 4.15$; $SD =$

0.88), (5) health and safety ($M = 4.11$; $SD = 0.89$), and (6) contribution to university mission ($M = 4.08$; $SD = 0.85$). While the remaining organizational values were not rated statistically significant at this standard, the data demonstrated four of the values (fiscal responsibility, growth opportunities, sense of shared community, and relationship cultivation) were rated above the 3.0 mark (*in between medium and high priority level*).

Coaches Responses

Similar analyses demonstrated slightly different responses when focusing on the coaches' perceptions of organizational values prioritized in their athletic departments. As shown in Table 2, there were fewer organizational values rated statistically significant at the "high priority level" ($\mu \geq 4$) as only three met this criteria (*in rank order*): (1) academics ($M = 4.43$; $SD = 0.68$), (2) student-athlete experience ($M = 4.28$; $SD = 0.83$), and (3) athletics ($M = 4.14$; $SD = 0.81$). However, while not statistically significant, there were three other values (health and safety, disciplined diversity, contribution to university mission) rated above the 4.0 level and the remaining values were all rated above the 3.0 level. With that being said, these values were rated at a lower level of perceived priority when in comparison to the responses provided by the administrators in the study.

Table 2
NCAA Coaches' Responses to Organizational Core Values

Organizational Core Values	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic Excellence <i>To achieve high levels of student-athlete and team success in the classroom.</i>	4.43*	0.68
Student-Athlete Experience <i>To ensure that student-athletes receive a valuable and rewarding experience (on and off field) during their career.</i>	4.28*	0.83
Athletic Excellence <i>To achieve high levels of student-athlete/team success during athletic competition.</i>	4.14*	0.81
Disciplined Diversity <i>To provide fair and equitable opportunities for all individuals regardless of gender, race, and/or physical challenges.</i>	4.10	0.90
Health and Safety <i>To create procedures/protocol that ensures health and safety for all individuals in the athletic department.</i>	4.03	0.91
Contribution to University Mission <i>To create a culture where individuals embrace and contribute to educational mission and role of university.</i>	4.02	0.86
Fiscal Responsibility <i>To implement transparent budgeting strategies that encourages sound, equitable financial decisions.</i>	3.91	0.94
Growth Opportunities <i>To create an environment that encourages individuals to develop sound professional skill sets (effective leaders).</i>	3.73	1.02
Sense of Shared Community <i>To create an atmosphere that allows stakeholders to feel like they are an integral part of the department.</i>	3.52	1.01
Relationship Cultivation <i>To create an environment that encourages and fosters strong relationships among individuals in the department.</i>	3.43	1.05
Broad-Based Participation Opportunities <i>To provide a wide range of participation opportunities for individuals interested in different sporting events</i>	3.00	1.06

Note: The scale ranged from (1) "Not a Priority" to (5) "Essential Priority."

*($\mu \geq 4$); * $p < .001$

Variations in Values

While the individual responses from administrators and coaches are valuable, they alone do not provide an accurate representation of the “culturalization” of value systems in Division I athletic departments. An examination of value-priority based on the tiered level of administrators in the study, however, does provide some insight into value culturization. This data helps determine whether tiers within the organizational hierarchy are on the same page when it comes to the values emphasized within the athletic department. An analysis of variance revealed statistically significant differences between respondent roles (head athletic director, senior administrator, associate administrator, assistant

administrator, and coach) for each of the organizational values included in the research. Specific differences will be presented in the next section.

Tiered Administrator’s Responses.

When examining the mean responses from a tiered administrator standpoint (head, senior, associate, and assistant), the data demonstrated head athletic directors rated the organizational values on 10 out of 11 occasions as having higher priorities than all of the lower level administrators (Table 3). Interestingly, athletic excellence was the one area where lower level administrators rated an organizational value higher than athletic directors. This finding will be examined in the discussion section. Another interesting finding is that sen-

Table 3
NCAA Athletic Department Staff Responses to Organizational Core Values

Organizational Core Values	Staff Mean Values				
	Head AD	Senior AD	Associate AD	Assistant AD	Coaches
Academic Excellence	4.82	4.63	4.62	4.51	4.43
Student-Athlete Experience	4.72	4.59	4.59	4.36	4.28
Health and Safety	4.67	4.39	4.51	4.15	4.03
Athletic Excellence	4.28	4.41	4.41	4.29	4.14
Fiscal Responsibility	4.59	4.35	4.42	4.16	3.91
Disciplined Diversity	4.41	4.26	4.39	4.15	4.10
Contribution to University Mission	4.52	4.33	4.29	4.00	4.02
Growth Opportunities	4.24	3.95	3.93	3.60	3.73
Sense of Shared Community	4.06	3.80	3.78	3.54	3.52
Relationship Cultivation	3.94	3.72	3.69	3.43	3.43
Broad-Based Participation Opportunities	3.65	3.59	3.58	3.39	3.00
Cumulative	4.39	4.17	4.20	3.98	3.87

Note. The scale ranged (1) “Not a Priority” to (5) “Essential Priority.”

ior and associate administrators rated each of the organizational values higher than the assistant level administrators that participated in the research.

Administrator and Coach Comparisons. When analyzing the data provided by coaches, post hoc tests demonstrated head athletic directors rated 10 of the organizational values higher than coaches. The athletic excellence area was the one value where there were no differences between athletic directors and coaches. In addition, when considering the previous section focusing on tiered administrator findings, the data clearly show a trend of declining level of perceived priority for each of the values (outside of athletic excellence) when moving down the hierarchy within the athletic department. The specific mean values included in these comparisons are provided in Table 3.

BCS Responses

When focusing on the data provided by BCS and non-BCS respondents, the results indicate a similar trend to the overall mean values produced in the research. As demonstrated in Table 4, there was a general decline in means with both BCS and non-BCS respondents when moving down the administrative ladder from head athletic directors to coaches. Again, the sole exception was in the athletic excellence value where BCS athletic directors rated this lower than the remaining administrators. Outside of this instance, both BCS and non-BCS athletic directors rated all remaining values higher than assistant

administrators and coaches in their respective divisions.

Another interesting aspect of the research was the direct comparison of responses from BCS and non-BCS respondents. Statistical analyses demonstrated athletic excellence was the only value where divisional affiliation had a significant influence on responses from BCS and non-BCS administrators. However, while there were no other statistically significant differences, the cumulative mean values in Table 4 show BCS administrators in all roles rated the values higher than non-BCS administrators. Similarly, the same trend existed for the coaches that participated in the study.

Open-Ended Responses

Several open-ended questions were asked of both the administrators and coaches within the study in order to add an additional layer of depth to the quantitative organizational value findings. These qualitative responses illuminate many of the statistical findings discussed above through the actual words expressed by Division I administrators and coaches.

Administrator Responses. Administrators were asked whether there were contradictions between values and practices within their departments. As demonstrated in Table 5, the vast majority (55%, n=104) responded their belief that no contradictions existed. An additional 5.8% (n=11) explained their departmental culture was currently in the process of transforming, and thus

Table 4
NCAA Athletic Department Staff Responses to organizational Core Values (FBS vs. Non-FBS)

Organizational Values	Head AD		Senior AD		Associate AD		Assistant AD		Coaches		Overall	
	BCS	Non-BCS	BCS	Non-BCS	BCS	Non-BCS	BCS	Non-BCS	BCS	Non-BCS	BCS	Non-BCS
Academic Excellence	4.66	4.85	4.65	4.62	4.60	4.66	4.54	4.49	4.46	4.41	4.50	4.46
SA Experience	4.66	4.73	4.63	4.57	4.64	4.55	4.43	4.31	4.48	4.19	4.51	4.26
Health and Safety	4.88	4.63	4.44	4.35	4.60	4.44	3.97	4.26	4.21	3.94	4.25	4.06
Athletic Excellence*	4.44	4.25	4.53	4.28	4.50	4.33	4.58	4.11	4.45	4.02	4.42	4.07
Fiscal Responsibility	4.78	4.55	4.41	4.29	4.46	4.40	4.27	4.09	4.11	3.83	4.19	3.93
Disciplined Diversity	4.57	4.37	4.18	4.33	4.51	4.32	4.19	4.12	4.23	4.05	4.25	4.10
University Mission	4.67	4.49	4.28	4.39	4.45	4.16	3.94	4.03	4.18	3.96	4.20	4.02
Growth Opportunities	4.11	4.26	4.02	3.87	4.05	3.84	3.66	3.55	3.91	3.63	3.92	3.69
Shared Community	4.22	4.03	3.79	3.82	3.83	3.74	3.49	3.57	3.72	3.44	3.72	3.51
Relationship Cultivation	4.33	3.85	3.69	3.74	3.69	3.70	3.31	3.49	3.59	3.37	3.60	3.43
Broad-Based Oppor.	4.22	3.52	3.67	3.50	3.83	3.39	3.38	3.40	3.11	2.94	3.26	3.05
Cumulative	4.50	4.32	4.21	4.16	4.29	4.13	3.98	3.95	4.04	3.81	4.07	3.87

Note. The scale ranged (1) "Not a Priority" to (5) "Essential Priority."
p<.001

Table 5
NCAA Division I Administrator Open-Ended Responses

Are there contradictions between values and practices within your athletic department?	(%)	(#)
No contradictions exist between values and practice	55.0%	104
Yes, contradictions exist	29.1%	55
<i>Financial gains are often prioritized over values</i>	27.3%	15
<i>Winning is often prioritized over values by coaches and some administrators</i>	16.4%	9
Our organizational culture is in the process of reforming	5.8%	11
Tensions exist between resources and competitive demands, but values generally supersede.	10.1%	19
Total	100.0%	189

values, were currently unclear, and another 10.1% (n=19) stated tensions exist between resources and competitive demands, but values generally supersede. 29.1% of the administrators (n=55), however, expressed concern related to the contradiction between values and practices at their institution, with financial gains and winning listed as two forces that often take precedence over stated departmental values.

Coach Responses. Coaches were asked the same question related to contradictions between stated and practiced values within their athletic departments. Responses varied dramatically between the 1005 coaches who responded to the open-ended invitation. The majority of coaches (54.3%; n=546) noted no contradictions between values and practice within their department. Many coaches elaborated on the consistency in message and actions demonstrated by their exemplary leaders such as: "Our motto is education through athletics, and we

practice it!" (FCS Male Assistant Coach); "I am very proud of how united and transparent the athletic department is. We are all about the student-athlete college experience" (FCS-AQ Female Assistant Coach). Several commented on the reputation within intercollegiate athletics propagated in the media and passionately stated how different that image is to the leadership and values practiced daily within their departmental walls as the unified staff strives to provide an optimal experience for their student-athletes.

Another significant number of coaches (40.8%; n=410) noted contradictions do exist within their departments. These contradictions varied (see Table 6), with the majority (28.8%; n=118) voicing concern over the considerable administrator hypocrisy that exists within their departments. Examples of these statements include "Yes. Often times the department will say one thing 'on the record', and do another 'off the record'" (FBS-

AQ Male Head Coach); “Yes. Do as I say, not as I do is the prevailing example we receive from administration” (FBS-AQ Male Associate Head Coach); and “Absolutely. We go through the motions—we say things are important, but there is never any action to back that up” (FCS Female Head Coach). The next most common (21.7%; n=89) subcategory coaches elaborated upon related to value/practice contradictions was based upon the variation in standards administrators practiced between sports within the department. Other common value/practice contradictions included coaches expressing a lack of financial support from administration to facilitate

value-achievement (11.7%, n=48); winning prioritized over values (7.6%; n=31); little communication with or care for coaches and staff despite values that ascribe to unity or a family atmosphere (6.1%; n=25); gender equity proclamations vs. practice (4.6%; n=19); widespread hypocrisy in collegiate athletics not limited to their institution (3.4%; n=14); and financial concerns prioritized over values (2.7%; n=11). “Other” responses (9.5%; n=39) included inconsistencies in administrative practices and stated values related to recruiting, academic standards, athlete discipline, diversity, and coach accountability.

Table 6
NCAA Division I Coach Narrative Responses

Are there contradictions between values and practice within your athletic department?	(%)	N
No contradictions exist between values and practice	54.3%	546
Yes, contradictions exist	40.8%	410
Considerable administrator hypocrisy	28.8%	118
Different standards for different sports	21.7%	89
Financial support does not facilitate the values ascribed to	11.7%	48
Winning prioritized over values	7.6%	31
Little communication / care for coaches and staff	6.1%	25
Gender equity proclamations vs. practice	4.6%	19
Widespread hypocrisy in college athletics — not an institutional problem	3.4%	14
Financial concerns prioritized over values	2.7%	11
Other	9.5%	39
Tension exists between resources and competitive demands, but values generally supersede	4.1%	41
No standards, no contradiction	0.8%	8
Total	100.0%	1005

Table 7
NCAA Division I Administrator Open-Ended Responses

Strategies to “Collateralize” Organizational Values	(%)	(#)
Engrained through consistent department/university culture	26.0%	91
Education/ Activities/Programs	25.1%	88
Emphasize in departmental meetings & manuals	21.1%	74
Make all decisions grounded in these values (strategy, hiring, evaluation)	11.4%	40
Written in strategic plan	7.4%	26
Very little effort made to encourage aspirational values	4.9%	17
Recognition/honor of athletes demonstrating these values	2.3%	8
None	1.7%	6
Total	100.0%	350

Culturalization Strategies. Administrators were asked what strategies were utilized to culturalize values throughout their departments. As shown in Table 7, respondents (n=172) mentioned strategies to culturalize organizational values including consistency through actions in departmental and university culture (26%, n=91); educational activities or programs to emphasize the guiding values of the department (25.1%, n=88); emphasis on values within departmental meetings and manuals (21.1%, n=74); and personnel and departmental strategy being grounded in values (11.4%, n=40).

DISCUSSION

Division I Value Systems

The exploration of value systems within NCAA athletic departments through administrator and coach perceptions has revealed a plethora of en-

lightening findings. Prior to discussing the unique differences in responses between the levels of employees, it is important to point out that many of the values were rated at the high priority level regardless of the role of the respondent. So, while there are differences that impact the implications of the research, the uniform emphasis on many of the values is a backdrop that should be considered throughout the discussion of additional findings.

Starting with research question (RQ) 1, the data demonstrated certain values were prioritized more heavily in departments when carrying out their mission regardless of whether the respondents were administrators or coaches. In fact, the order of values is nearly identical between each of the roles that were explored during the research. From a theoretical and practical standpoint, this supports the notion that there is some level of congruency in value emphasis

throughout NCAA Division I athletics departments.

To fully understand the implications of the research, there are several unique findings that relate to the variations in perceptions of organizational value priority level between roles as addressed in RQ 2. For full efficiency and benefits of organizational values to be realized, there must be buy-in from individuals at all levels within an organization (Sull, 2010). With this standard being set by the athletic director, it makes sense to focus on the differences in perceived priority level of organizational values in comparison to this individual.

While the order of the core values were similar, the role comparisons in the statistical analyses indicated gaps exist in the perceived priority of organization values. In particular, when comparing the two groups furthest apart in the athletic department hierarchy, the data showed athletic directors rated 10 of the 11 values significantly higher than coaches, with a cumulative mean value difference of .52. In addition, the mean values showed the perceived priority level of these values dropped consistently as one progressed down the administrator chart to the assistant administrator level. Given that they are one of the furthest removed from the athletic director (along with Assistant Athletic Directors) in most instances, these results make sense due to the fact that these individuals have less interaction with higher-level administrators. Thus, the lack of communication could be a primary reason why values consistently drop at each the different levels of

the athletic department. However, given some of the open-ended responses, an alternative conclusion for this gap in priority level could be related to the administrator hypocrisy expressed by some administrators and coaches.

BCS Affiliation

Given the tremendous emphasis placed upon BCS-level issues in inter-collegiate athletics (Knorr, 2004; Knight Commission, 2010a; Sperber, 2000), it was interesting to note minimal differences between BCS and non-BCS institutions as addressed through RQ3. Overall, despite the small differences in priority level across various organizational values, the data demonstrated that BCS affiliation had only a small impact on the data in the research. The sole exception was the difference in the priority level exhibited for athletic excellence between these athletic departments. When considering the nature of big-time athletics present in larger athletic departments, it is not surprising that BCS athletic departments indicated a higher priority level on athletic excellence than non-BCS departments. In these BCS athletic departments, it seemed as if the athletic excellence value was the one area where all administrators and coaches seemed to be on the same page with the perceived priority level.

Relying on the theoretical foundation of the study, a possible conclusion to the lack of differences between BCS and non-BCS affiliated schools might be the role of the leader as the driving force in

departmental value-infusion (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1984; Burns, 1978). This lens would point toward the actions of the leader rather than the institutional sphere or competitive landscape being the primary catalyst of organizational value infusion. As such, differences between competitive divisions would not be as important a differentiator as individual leaders (Weight & Cooper, 2012).

Value-Practice Contradictions

The critical role of the athletic director in value culturalization was supported in the open-ended responses. Addressing RQ 4 exploring whether contradictions exist between stated values and actual practices, there were tremendous differences voiced. The sample was split almost directly in half as the slight majority of administrators (55%) and coaches (54.3%) indicated no contradictions in values and practices within their athletic departments. These voices provide hope for those who follow a growing body of literature highlighting perceived areas of deficiency in the current operating model of intercollegiate athletics (Branch, 2011; Dufresne, 2011; Mandel & Staples, 2011; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). The figure also lends to a response of dismay with the realization that only half of the programs are voicing this congruency.

The data illustrated a sizable group of administrators (29.1%) and coaches (40.8%) felt there were contradictions between values and practices in their athletic departments. Interestingly, the

number for coaches was over 10% higher than administrators, indicating these lower level employees felt value systems were not meaningful. In particular, 28.8% of coaches voiced concern over hypocrisy in the value systems and 21.7% felt there were different standards for different sports. When focusing on past research, this is a critical finding because empty value systems without proper organizational modeling can be even more detrimental than not having values established at all (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008; Ind, 2007; Milliman & Clair, 1995; Sull & Spinosa, 2007). Thus, athletic departments must be aware that there are serious implications when they invest in a value system with no intention of following through.

Emphasis on Athletics

In addition to the previously discussed data, another interesting finding in the research was related to the athletic excellence organizational value. While it is certainly not surprising this is deemed as a high priority in Division I athletic departments, it is interesting that athletic excellence was the one area where lower level administrators and coaches rated this value higher than head athletic directors. Given the trends in other values, one possible reason for this is the negative publicity in college athletics in recent years (Knight Commission, 2010a). With the negative comments relating to an overemphasis on winning, it is possible that athletic directors choose to underemphasize this in their responses.

Strategies to Implement Strong Value Systems

Given the variations present in organizational values, there is no question that athletic departments need to invest in processes to ensure they are emphasizing value systems the right way. In addition to the identification of key values, there is a process for making sure that the value systems are being embraced throughout the department. As demonstrated in the open-ended responses, strong leaders find a way to culturalize values by making them a part of departmental culture. In particular, they model these values by making sure they are present within the decisions they make on a daily basis. For example, the most effective athletic departments from a value standpoint invest in educational activities and programs to make sure that values are being emphasized at all levels. In addition, they consistently emphasize values in meetings and manuals presented to employees. Equally important, there is communication that is necessary for leaders to improve coordination and morale within athletic departments (Van Rekom et al., 2006).

Limitations/Future Research

There are a few limitations to this research that are worth mentioning. First, the study focused on a select number of organizational values that are commonly emphasized in athletic departments. It is certainly possible that there are other organizational values that would be interesting to examine in this

context. Second, the research examined only administrator and coaches perceptions of value systems in NCAA Division I athletic departments. Future research could add tremendous value by comparing the responses from these groups to other staff members and student-athletes to get a stronger idea of the value systems. In addition, researchers could focus on the same topic areas within NCAA Division II and III athletic departments to compare responses to the current study. Two final limitations in the research is that the survey did not control for organizational job tenure and there was no direct linking of participating Athletic Directors with responses to their athletic department. Future studies could add value to the field by examining these areas.

CONCLUSIONS

For athletic departments to be successful, athletic directors and senior administrators need to be aware of the value systems that are in place within their department. Potentially even more important, they need to understand the level of buy-in that exists from different levels of staff members within the athletic department. This is the only real way that administrators can reap the benefits of a strong value system while increasing chances of contributing to the overall mission of the university while enhancing their image with the media and surrounding community. The current research indicates there are athletic departments that seem to do this very well and others that are not doing it

well at all. While not proven in the current research, future scholars could examine the potential connection that effective athletic departments are run by transformational leaders who find a way to connect with people in a way that inspires them to action (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987).

It is important to point out that the current research focused on the difference in perceptions of values when moving down the hierarchy of the athletic department. It is possible that some of the differences come from the fact that values are not being emphasized in key areas such as contracts in lower-level employees. If values are not included in actual evaluation processes, then you can understand why the values are dropping as they move down to Assistant AD's and coaches. In addition, it is likely the Assistant AD's are newer employees when compared to higher-level AD's and this could make up for the discrepancies in the data. Regardless, Athletic Directors and senior level staff need to find a way to alleviate these issues so that culturalization and the associated benefits occur in athletic departments.

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