The Impact of the Academic Progress Rate (APR) on Low Resource or Non-BCS Institutions as it Relates to Football and/or Men’s Basketball Programs

Nathan Kirkpatrick
Samford University

Billy Hawkins
University of Georgia

Janette Hill
University of Georgia

Joel Maxcy
Temple University

The purpose of this study was to research the impact of the NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR) on low resource or non-BCS institutions as it relates to football and/or men’s basketball programs. In conducting the study, APR scores from 2005-2009 were used, financial information from the “Equity in Athletics” website was collected, and a previously piloted online survey was sent to 882 athletic and academic administrators at 275 low resource or non-BCS institutions in the United States. A total of 297 participants completed all or a majority of the survey questions for a 33.6% response rate. Survey responses were analyzed using phenomenological commitments and categorized by identical or similar information, emergent themes, and important best practices. The most important results showed that: 28.83% of the participants believed the impact of the APR on these institutions as it related to football and/or men’s basketball programs were “negative/tremendously negative.” In addition, from this 28.83% of responses, triangulation showed that 67.79% (40) of these participants’ football and/or men’s basketball programs also have had underperforming APR scores and negative profit at some point from 2005-2009.
The purpose of this research study was to evaluate and examine the impact of the Academic Progress Rate (APR) on low resource or non-BCS institutions as it related to football and/or men’s basketball programs in light of five significant research areas. This issue is pertinent from an athletic administrative perspective because there is currently a dearth of scholarly research concerning the NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR) from a low resource or non-BCS member institutional perspective. The study was based on an interest in athletic administrative leadership, and analyzed the most significant NCAA academic reform measure to date (the APR) in order to see how it impacted athletic departments, athletic administrators, and faculty athletic representatives at low resource or non-BCS institutions as it related to their direct work or involvement with the “revenue generating” sports of football and/or men’s basketball.

**Statement of the Problem**

The issue for Division I athletic departments, and specifically football and/or men’s basketball programs, is that effective and successful academic support for collegiate athletes depends on institutions’ financial resources, or the lack thereof. The vast revenue gap among Division I institutions and the means to support specific funding for academic support for collegiate athletes is increasing, yet the NCAA still holds all Division I athletic programs (whether financially successful or not) to the same academic standards for compliance with the Academic Progress Rate.

This situation compounds the generally existing problem of poor academic preparation for collegiate athletes, and intensifies debate whether it is even possible for low resource or non-BCS institutions, and specifically their football and/or men’s basketball programs, to comply with the same academic standards as BCS institutions (Forde, 2006). Consequently, low resource and non-BCS institutions not only lack the financial means in many cases to have strong academic support programs for their collegiate athletes, but they face great pressures to comply to these academic standards set forth by the NCAA, specifically the Academic Progress Rate (Gurney and Southall, 2012; Associated Press, 2010; Holden, 2010; Hosick, 2010; Mills, 2010; Moltz, 2010; Lapchick, Lopresti, and Reshard, 2009; Powell, 2009; Christy, Seifried, & Pastore, 2008; Forde, 2006).

These pressures shift the focus of athletic directors, administrators, and support staff from the quality of their work regarding academic support for football and men’s basketball players AND from the relationship building which is essential to reach these young men, and instead forces them to focus squarely on barely getting by with less. Gurney and Southall (2013) illustrate this well when they say: “The focus of the elaborate new models of academic support is to manage underprepared athletes needing significant remediation.”

Consequently, as Brown (2010, 2005), Hosick (2010), Johnson (2010), Moltz (2010), the NCAA (2010), and Christy (2008, 2007) recommended based on their findings and scholarly research (only analyzing BCS member institutions), further research is needed in investigating the impact of the APR on low resource or non-BCS institutions and their athletic departments in a multitude of different areas as it relates to the under-performing “revenue generating” sports of football and men’s basketball.
Research Questions that Guided the Study

RQ1: How has the APR impacted your athletic department as it relates to football and/or men’s basketball?

RQ2: How have the pressures of complying with the APR affected your direct work or involvement with the football and/or men’s basketball program?

RQ3: How has the APR impacted the type of student athlete your coaches now recruit?

RQ4: What are any positive changes in implementation measures for academic support concerning football and/or men’s basketball that resulted from the pressures of APR compliance?

RQ5: Where is your athletic department spending their net profit (if applicable), and is a portion or all of the net profit being put back into academic support services for football and/or men’s basketball programs?

Need for the Study

As Forde (2006) first predicted, and as the NCAA (2011, 2010) has admitted recently, low resource and non-BCS institutions are literally not measuring up to the NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR) standards, due largely to the lack of availability of financial resources to put towards academic support services for collegiate athletes (Hosick, 2010). The primary sport programs that are affected at these specific institutions are football and men’s basketball, and these sport programs and their collegiate athletes are suffering with very little hope of quickly changing this problem (NCAA, 2011, 2010; Powell, 2009).

Consequently, as Christy (2008) recommended based on his preliminary research (only analyzing BCS member institutions), further research is needed in investigating the impact of the APR on low resource or non-BCS athletic departments holistically as it relates to their football and/or men’s basketball programs given their generally tough financial situations and underachieving academic track records.

In addition, Castle’s (2010) research on individual Director of Football Operations personnel, and Christy’s (2008) research on individual athletic administrators, coaches, and faculty athletic representatives, all at BCS member or FBS affiliated institutions, suggested that research was also needed to gauge how these certain pressures affect the individual positions of: athletic directors, athletic administrators, athletic academic support staff, and faculty athletic representatives as they work with football and/or men’s basketball programs at under-researched low resource or non-BCS institutions.

Additionally, research was needed to analyze and identify the positive changes or best practices that have been, or are being, implemented by athletic departments regarding compliance with the APR concerning the revenue generating sports of football and/or men’s basketball programs. The impetus for additional research stems from the comments of: Brown (2010), Hosick (2010), Moltz (2010), the NCAA (2010), and Rosen (2010) as they all pointed out various ways that low resource or non-BCS institutions are working to improve their APR scores, and how they are being creative in designing academic improvement plans that meet mandated NCAA goals for APR increases.

Finally, based on Castle’s (2010) research that showed “75.7% of BCS member and FBS affiliated athletic departments have increased either the amount of money or resources to their academic budgets because of the APR legislation” (p. vii), as well as Christy’s (2007)
recommendation for additional study into athletic administrative financial issues, research was also needed to see where these under-researched athletic departments are spending their net profits (if applicable).

**Review of Literature**

*NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR)*

**Background**

In 2004, as the idea for the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) was being put into place for the NCAA, then NCAA President Myles Brand and the NCAA’s member institutions wanted to also create a real time academic progress measure that could quantify collegiate athlete eligibility and retention (NCAA, 2010; Lapchick, Lopresti, & Reshard, 2009; Hayes, 2005). The purpose behind the APR was that the GSR was only showing the end result (graduation or not), but there was nothing in place to show the incremental academic progress of collegiate athletes and their sport programs.

The NCAA’s solution was the Academic Progress Rate, or APR. The APR worked as a two-fold formula to measure individual collegiate athletes’ (only players on scholarship) term by term (fall and spring) eligibility and retention at their institutions, with the thought that if the NCAA and its member institutions could quantify yearly academic progress for individuals and sport programs, they could better predict end results, and more importantly, be able to “intercede and help academically challenged collegiate athletes before it is too late” (NCAA, 2009). These challenged collegiate athletes, as far as the APR has been concerned, have predominantly been found in football, men’s basketball, and baseball (NCAA, 2011; 2010; Powell, 2009).

**APR Formula**

The formula for these two measures (eligibility and retention) is: Each scholarship collegiate athlete, regardless of the sport, gets one point each term for being academically eligible and one point each term for staying in school at the same school. Then, the total points for all scholarship collegiate athletes of a sports program are added up, divided by the total number of points possible for a sports program, and then multiplied by one thousand to achieve the final score (NCAA, 2009). A perfect score would always be 1000 theoretically (Christy, 2007).

**APR Scoring and Penalties**

From 2005-2011, there were two cut scores designated by the NCAA that carried penalties with them. A score below 925 (which translates to a 50% graduation success rate) for any program meant they may face immediate penalty by the NCAA because a player or players were counted as “0 for 2’s,” meaning a player or players were ineligible to play AND also did not return to school. In addition, a score below 900 (which translates to a 40% graduation success rate) for any program meant they faced what were termed as “historical penalties,” which carried stiffer consequences from the NCAA towards a program, and got more severe based on the number of years a program had fallen below the 900 score cut line.
However, the APR formula changed in October of 2011 when the NCAA Division I Board of Directors met and voted on stiffer academic requirements and regulations concerning the cut scores and penalty structure of the existing academic measure. The changes from October 27th, 2011 have taken effect as of the previous 2012-2013 academic year, and are as follows (Hosick, 2011):

The new academic minimum benchmark increased from a score of 900 to 930. This new benchmark will actually do away with the two current APR cut scores of 925 and 900, and only have a 930 APR score as a measuring stick moving forward (Hosick, 2011). In addition, the new 930 cut score will translate out to a 50% Graduate Success Rate (GSR), thereby holding institutions and their sport programs more accountable towards matriculating collegiate athletes and graduating them at a higher percentage.

APR Challenges and the Future

A study by Christy, Seifried, and Pastore (2008) showed that 64% of athletic administrators and head coaches believe the APR will be a helpful and positive tool for intercollegiate athletics, will provide better accountability for academic performance, and will encourage greater academic support for collegiate athletes among member institutions.

In addition, a 2010 study by Dr. Josh Castle illustrated that “66% of football programs and 75.7% of BCS member or FBS affiliated athletic departments have increased either money or resources to their academic budgets because of the APR legislation,” and “83.5% of football programs feel they have graduated more collegiate athletes since the inception of the APR” (Castle, 2010, p. 10).

Finally, Gurney and Southall (2012) echo this academic spending by stating “most institutions employ a fleet of learning specialists, academic advisers, tutors, and “class checkers”…To avoid the embarrassment, big-time college athletic programs spend millions to ensure their most talented players remain eligible and their teams surpass NCAA academic minimum scores.”

Consequently, this study intends to build on Gurney and Southall’s (2012), Castle’s (2010), and Christy’s (2007) work regarding Academic Progress Rate (APR) research. Since there has been little scholarly research to date studying the impact of the APR on low resource or non-BCS institutions, this study not only fills a scholarly need, but also addresses a practitioner need for athletic and academic administrators to learn how to better handle this pertinent issue.

Method

Typology

The typology or purpose of this research study was to evaluate and examine the impact of the Academic Progress Rate (APR) on low resource or non-BCS institutions as it related to football and/or men’s basketball programs in light of five research areas mentioned below.
**Theoretical Perspective**

**Pragmatism**

The main qualitative, theoretical perspective used in this research study was a pragmatic approach to the research topic, instrumentation selection, method design, data triangulation, and data analysis. Creswell (2007) defined pragmatism as a “focus on the outcomes of the research—the actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry---rather than antecedent conditions” (p. 22).

The researcher was able to use pragmatism as a qualitative research lens in designing and implementing this study since the desired goals revolved around producing outcomes (emergent themes) that would shed new light on the impact of the APR on low resource or non-BCS institutions as it related to football and/or men’s basketball programs.

As Creswell (2009) pointed out, pragmatism lends itself well to mixed methods research in that it “is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality” (p. 10), and “applies to mixed methods research in that inquirers draw liberally from both quantities and qualitative assumptions when they engage in their research” (p. 10). Consequently, a pragmatic approach for this study blended well with a simple mixing of research methods, data collection, and analysis, and one believes this mixing ultimately strengthened the chances of significant themes emerging.

**Phenomenological Commitments**

In terms of analyzing the results, the major qualitative commitments came from phenomenological ideals, or as Patton (2002) put it, “focusing on how human beings make sense of experience, and how that experience is transformed into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (p. 104). Thus, the researcher viewed the impact of the APR through a phenomenological lens so that one could understand how the APR transforms the participants’ beliefs and thoughts, and how it impacts their actions and daily lives both individually and collectively as part of a group.

In addition, Vagle’s (2009) phenomenological commitment of using a “whole-part-whole” (pp. 600-601) analysis to generate important and meaningful results was used so that the results and discussion sections of this research study could actually show emergent and substantive themes brought on by taking a large phenomenon (the impact of the APR) and applying specific and targeted research questions to it, generating participants responses to the questions, and then analyzing the responses for insightful and noteworthy frequencies. Thus, the “whole-part-whole” process is represented by: a) the initial “whole” being the five research questions that guided the study, b). the middle “part” being the participants responses to each specific research question and categorized by new and emergent themes, c). and the final and conclusive “whole” being the frequency of each response category within every research question in order to show the most important and consistent results.

**Research Design**

**Summative Evaluation**

As Patton (2002) pointed out, summative evaluation research measures the overall effectiveness of a program or entity, and speaks on whether the processes equal the outcomes
that are desired and expected. This research study was a summative evaluation in that the Academic Progress Rate was evaluated by its’ overall impact on the specific areas represented in the five research questions.

**Mixed Methods Research**

Gratton, Chris, and Jones (2004) believed that by using qualitative methods (such as phenomenology) and data (responses to open-ended questions), researchers add flexibility to their research study and are able to possibly generate new and hidden information that may tell a deeper story for quantitative data and findings (Gratton, Chris, & Jones, 2004, Jayaratne, 1993). In addition, Gratton, Chris, and Jones (2004) believed that using qualitative methods in conjunction with quantitative methods within the sport research field could only lead to a deeper understanding of information, individuals, and phenomena. The researcher chose a mixed methods approach in designing, conducting, and analyzing the study due to the strengthening nature that qualitative data (open-ended responses) provides to basic quantitative, numerical data by providing greater context, expression, and background understanding.

The mixing of research methods occurred between the sets of data and within the different analyses. There were two parts of the research study that used quantitative information (institutional financial information and institutions’ football and/or men’s basketball APR scores), and one part of the research study that used open-ended survey questions, which were then qualitatively analyzed using phenomenological commitments (Vagel, 2009).

**Purposeful-Criterion Sampling**

The final piece of the research design centered on the sampling procedure, which was purposeful in nature in that it focused on “information rich” individuals who were able to provide answers that illuminated deeper themes and meanings pertaining to the research study (Patton, 2002).

**Participants**

In order to avoid sampling error, and in the effort to also aid the research study by targeting the specific individuals needed to better understand the impact of the APR on low resource or non-BCS institutions, purposeful, criterion sampling was used to survey male and female athletic or academic administrators. The entire target population for this research study was 882 potential participants at low resource or non-BCS institutions, and specifically, the following groups of participants completed all or a majority of the survey: athletic directors (n=51), associate/assistant athletic directors for compliance, compliance/assistant compliance directors (n=78), associate/assistant athletic directors for academic services, academic services/assistant academic services directors (n=67), senior woman administrators (because this role often oversees compliance efforts) (n=40), faculty athletic representatives (n=33), and an “other” category of directly related academic or compliance positions (n=28) at low resource or non-BCS, Division I institutions that sponsored football and/or men’s basketball. The participants were identified by occupational position and title based on information from their institutional or athletic websites.
The participants were recruited from athletic department or academic employees at 275 low resource or non-BCS, Division I institutions, and they were from 21 athletic conferences as well as independent intercollegiate athletic programs. The survey responses were from participants at 174 different institutional athletic departments, thus providing a large sample size of different institutional athletic departments across the Division I landscape. Their individual responses were kept confidential, and the participants’ identities were completely anonymous.

**Instrumentation**

In addition to the two previously mentioned data sets, the instrumentation for the third and qualitative data set was a pilot tested, SurveyMonkey.com, open-ended question survey which featured some basic demographic, occupational, and athletic conference questions, and culminated with the five opened ended questions that were analyzed using phenomenological commitments (Vagel, 2009). This phenomenological analysis was used for the third data set based on the recommendations of Vagel (2009), and Christy (2007) who articulated the need for further qualitative research into academic reform issues (such as the APR) and athletic administrative leadership. The five research questions were constructed and refined based on ideas and recommendations from Christy’s (2008, 2007) research, previously piloting the study with participants from one low resource or non-BCS athletic conference, and from the researcher’s background in college athletic coaching and administration.

For this research study, sampling error was avoided by sending out the survey instrument to an expansive and purposeful criterion sample of participants. In addition, measurement error was reduced by piloting the survey before the final data collection phase to make sure the instrument was valid and reliable. Non-response error was minimized by making the open ended questions short and targeted in nature, and the survey was available to a wide participant pool around the country to generate a larger response base.

**Data Collection**

**Institutional Financial Information**

For the first quantitative data set, the institutional financial information was collected from the “Equity in Athletics” federal website (Equity in Athletics, 2011). The financial information was collected for each member of specific intercollegiate athletic conferences, and the data was on things such as: 1) program-specific total expenses, 2) program-specific gross revenues, 3) and program-specific net profits to name a few categories. The available institutional financial information was from 2003-2009.

**NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR) Scores**

The second quantitative data set collected was the multi-year NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR) scores for football and/or men’s basketball programs, from the 2004-2005 season through the 2009-2010 season. The scores were collected and then organized by their conference affiliation, with designations for football and/or men’s basketball APR scores that were under either 925 (first cut score-contemporaneous penalties) or 900 (second cut score-historical penalties).
Survey

The third and final data set collected was a five question open-ended survey that had been previously piloted in the early spring of 2011. A modified Dillman “Tailored Design Method” was used for conducting the survey in that there were four email contacts to the targeted participant population, and the contacting was done from October 3rd, 2011 to November 7th, 2011 (Dillman, 2000).

Triangulation

Triangulation (comparing three data sets for emergent themes) was accomplished by taking participants’ responses to the open ended survey questions, and comparing them to their programs’ financial information and APR scores. This allowed qualitative responses related to losing money to be potentially validated by the quantitative data of negative financial figures and poor APR scores.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this research study was comprised of both quantitative and qualitative research methods in analyzing the three different data sets mentioned previously. The quantitative analysis for the football and men’s basketball programs, and their respective financial information, involved taking the basic financial figures (such as overall program expenses, revenues, and net profit if applicable) from the “Equity in Athletics” website and comparing this information to the APR data (specific APR scores for both football and men’s basketball programs) to see if there were any basic correlations between program net profit (or lack thereof) and high or low APR scores.

The survey responses were analyzed using qualitative, phenomenological commitments to create a data analysis code set used to draw out how the varied participants made sense of the impact and pressures of the APR, and how it affected their occupational positions. Specifically, for all research questions, every different participant answer became its own new category of an emergent theme. Thus, every time the same theme was mentioned by a participant, that specific category grew with identical responses to show the importance and consistency of that specific information. The highest percentage responses for each research question represented the emergent themes that were mentioned most consistently by the participants.

Finally, the quantitative institutional financial information and APR scores were also used directly with the qualitative survey responses to validate or challenge the participants’ responses related to the financial investment (or lack thereof) into APR compliance as it related to football and/or men’s basketball programs. The specific analysis for each research question appears after each question, and the following research questions guided this entire study:

RQ1: How has the APR impacted your athletic department as it relates to football and/or men’s basketball?
RQ2: How have the pressures of complying with the APR affected your direct work or involvement with the football and/or men’s basketball program?
RQ3: How has the APR impacted the type of student athlete your coaches now recruit?
RQ4: What are any positive changes in implementation measures for academic support concerning football and/or men’s basketball that resulted from the pressures of APR compliance?

RQ5: Where is your athletic department spending their net profit (if applicable), and is a portion or all of the net profit being put back into academic support services for football and/or men’s basketball programs?

A total of 297 (out of 882) participants completed the survey or the majority of the survey questions, for a 33.6% response rate.

Results

**RQ1: How has the APR impacted your athletic department as it relates to football and/or men’s basketball?**

This question was seeking to specially address the impact of the APR on athletic departments as a whole, and the responses were analyzed in two parts: 1). responses were phenomenologically analyzed to see how the APR has impacted these low resource or non-BCS institutions’ athletic departments as it has related to football and/or men’s basketball programs. 2). and if the responses affirmed that the APR has negatively impacted their athletic departments, then these participants’ responses (identified based on their institutional email address) were triangulated by comparing their responses of a negative impact to their football and/or men’s basketball APR scores and net profit from 2005-2009 to see if indeed a response of a negative APR impact correlated with underperforming APR scores and negative net profit for their football and/or men’s basketball programs.

Based on the 274 responses, emergent themes and insights were uncovered in the analysis for this question, and 40 response categories were subsequently generated from the data. The participants’ responses were then aligned within these categories based on the frequency of identical or similar information mentioned, and the top five response categories were then highlighted by percentage as important, and can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Top five response categories based on emergent themes and frequency of informational answers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. *Negative/Tremendously Negative Impact</td>
<td>28.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No Significant Impact/No Impact at All</td>
<td>22.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Negative Impact on Men’s Basketball</td>
<td>19.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recruiting Better Academically Geared SA’s/Less JC Transfers</td>
<td>14.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Very Little Impact/No Impact Yet</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes Largest Percentage
RQ1: Participant Responses

Tremendously, retention has been an issue because of hiring a new basketball coach and athletes leaving. - (Senior Woman Administrator)

We have lost scholarships in M. Basketball and are now in the next phase of penalties with reduced contact time/days. Our previous coaching staff was released as an effect of low APR. - (Senior Woman Administrator)

Our Men’s Basketball team is currently facing Historical Penalty 3 because of retention issues. – (Academic Support Personnel)

RQ2: How have the pressures of complying with the APR affected your direct work or involvement with the football and/or men’s basketball program?

This question was seeking to specially address the impact of the APR on individual athletic and academic administrative positions, and it was analyzed in three parts: 1) Responses were categorized first based on identical or similar themes and information given. 2) Then, responses were sorted by the six occupational position choices on the survey, thus seeking emergent themes, hidden insights, and opinions from each occupational position in athletic or academic administration. 3) Finally, within the specific occupational categories, the responses were analyzed for frequency of emerging themes and information given, with the top seven response categories for each occupational position highlighted by percentage as the most important.

Based on the 273 responses, with emergent themes and insights uncovered in the analysis for this question, 48 response categories were subsequently generated from the data. The participants’ responses were then aligned within these categories based on the frequency of identical or similar information mentioned, and the top five response categories for each occupational position were highlighted as important, and can be found in Table 2.

Table 2 - Top five response categories (categorized by occupational position) based on emergent themes and frequency of informational answers

RQ2:  How have the pressures of complying with the APR affected your direct work or involvement with the football and/or men’s basketball program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Position</th>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Faculty Athletic Rep:</td>
<td>1. *No Pressure/No Impact</td>
<td>24.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. More Involved w/ Academics…</td>
<td>24.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Positive Impact/Work with Staff…</td>
<td>15.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Affects Recruiting/ Philosophy…</td>
<td>12.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Yes/Very Much</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Athletic Directors:</td>
<td>1. *Not Really a Factor…</td>
<td>23.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. No Pressure/No Impact</td>
<td>19.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. More Involved w/ Academics…</td>
<td>13.72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. More Talk w/ Coaches about APR 9.80%
5. Affects Recruiting/Philosophy… 7.84%

c. Senior Woman Administrator:
1. *No Pressure/No Impact 35.00%
2. More Time, Work with FB 15.00%
3. More Involved w/ Academics… 15.00%
4. More Time, Work with MBB 12.50%
5. Not Really a Factor… 10.00%

d. Compliance Personnel:
1. *No Pressure/No Impact 21.79%
2. Affects Recruiting/Philosophy… 16.66%
3. More Involved w/ Academics… 12.82%
4. More Talk w/ Coaches about APR 12.82%
5. Not Really a Factor… 11.53%

e. Academic Support Services Personnel:
1. * More Involved w/ Academics… 22.38%
2. More Anxiety and Pressure… 19.40%
3. More Time, Work with MBB 16.41%
4. Affects Accountability, Retention. 10.44%
5. No Pressure/No Impact 8.95%

f. Other:
1. *No Pressure/No Impact 25.80%
2. NA/Not Sure 19.35%
3. More Time, Work with MBB 16.12%
4. More Involved w/ Academics… 16.12%
5. Increased $ Resources, Staff… 16.12%

* Denotes Largest Percentage

RQ2: Participant Responses

It has created tremendous pressure to spend a great deal of time on our MBB program with minimal personnel increases (only increases in student-assistants, no professional staff have been hired to help with the extra workload). – (Academic Support Personnel)

It’s babysitting 101. You become more of an enabler instead of empowering because now I and our resources have to take on just as much responsibility as the student-athlete, if not more. – (Academic Support Personnel)

I think it has created a bit more pressure and stress in the academic services department as many feel partly responsible for the APR of each team. – (Academic Support Personnel)

RQ3: How has the APR impacted the type of student athlete your coaches now recruit?

This question was seeking to uncover whether the impact of the APR has affected recruiting for football and/or men’s basketball programs at low resource or non-BCS institutions in any way, and whether in light of these institutions having underperforming APR scores, was a better “student athlete” now being recruited? The responses were analyzed in two ways: 1) Responses were phenomenologically analyzed to see the beliefs and insights into how the APR...
has impacted recruiting and the recruiting philosophies of athletic departments as it relates to football and/or men’s basketball programs at low resource or non-BCS institutions. 2) Responses were also then analyzed for frequency of emergent themes and information given, with the top seven response categories highlighted by percentage as the most important.

Based on the 271 responses, emergent themes and insights were uncovered in the analysis for this question, and 54 response categories were subsequently generated from the data. The participants’ responses were then aligned within these categories based on the frequency of identical or similar information mentioned, and the top five response categories, highlighted by percentage as important, can be found in Table 3.

Table 3 - Top five response categories based on emergent themes and frequency of informational answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3: How has the APR impacted the type of student athlete your coaches now recruit?</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. *Recruiting Better Student Athletes/More Aware of Academic Performance</td>
<td>33.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No Impact At All/Has Not Changed Our Recruiting Habits…</td>
<td>22.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. More Impacted by Our Own Standards and Processes…</td>
<td>9.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. We Never or Hardly Ever Take “Risky” Student Athletes…</td>
<td>6.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Not Necessarily/Not Much…</td>
<td>5.53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes Largest Percentage

RQ3: Participant Responses

It forces low income schools to recruit a better quality student. Although our goal is to recruit someone who may be a better student rather than a great athlete, we will consider recruiting great students first. – (Academic Support Personnel)

Have to look at a much better student - and for those "at risk" students- really need to look at their work ethic and desire to succeed. – (Compliance Personnel)

We continually talk about the type of student they are recruiting and that we need to be sure that they can be admitted and succeed in the academic programs that the institution offers. – (Academic Support Personnel)

RQ4: What are any positive changes in implementation measures for academic support concerning football and/or men’s basketball that resulted from the pressures of APR compliance?

The goal of this fourth question was to simply uncover any best practices within these athletic departments that have resulted in improved academic support services and successful APR compliance for low resource or non-BCS institutions as it relates to their football and/or men’s basketball programs in the face of APR pressure or lack of financial resources.

Responses were phenomenologically analyzed to uncover insights into what best practices, if any, were being carried out by low resource or non-BCS institutions’ athletic...
departments in regards to APR compliance for football and/or men’s basketball programs despite the difficult conditions (lack of financial resources) facing these institutions.

Based on the 259 responses, insights and best practices were uncovered in the analysis for this question, and 51 response categories of best practices were subsequently generated from the data. The participants’ responses were then aligned within these categories based on the frequency of identical or similar emergent themes that were mentioned, and the top five response categories were highlighted by percentage as important, and can be found in Table 4.

Table 4 - Top five response categories for positive implementation measures/best practices based on emergent themes and frequency of informational answers

RQ4: What are any positive changes in implementation measures for academic support concerning football and/or men’s basketball that resulted from the pressures of APR compliance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. *Increased Financial Support for Hiring of New Academic Personnel...</td>
<td>19.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No changes or Positive Implementation Measures...</td>
<td>14.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Improved Tutorial Services, Academic Programs, Monitoring...</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Higher Awareness of Retention, Eligibility Issues/Sense of Urgency...</td>
<td>11.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Better Screening of SA’s in Recruiting/Less “At Risk” SA’s...</td>
<td>10.81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes Largest Percentage

RQ4: Participant Responses

We recently hired a new academic enhancement coordinator, and we on track to hire a learning specialist. We will also put in the budget to hire graduate assistants from our sport administration program. – (Academic Support Personnel)

More awareness...but no real changes. – (Senior Woman Administrator)

Our academic staff has increased from two fulltime to six fulltime to help with the workload. We have credibility with the entire athletic department. – (Other, learning personnel)

RQ5: Where is your athletic department spending their net profit (if applicable), and is a portion or all of the net profit being put back into academic support services for football and/or men’s basketball programs?

This financial question was seeking to uncover where low resource or non-BCS institutions’ athletic departments were spending their net profit if indeed they even had any.

The responses were analyzed in two parts: 1). Responses were phenomenologically analyzed to gather insights into where net profit (if applicable) was being spent and whether it was being put back into academic support services for football and/or men’s basketball. 2). Then, after the responses were categorized, the participants’ insights and beliefs (identified based on their institutional email address) were triangulated in the analysis in a few ways:
a). If participants answered *NA*, or *No Net Profit/None*, then their responses were compared to their football and/or men’s basketball APR scores and net profit from 2005-2009 to see if whether their responses of not having net profit correlated with underperforming APR scores and negative net profit for their football and/or men’s basketball programs.

b). In the same way, if the participants answered flatly *No*, then the same triangulation was conducted as in section (a) because the researcher sought to uncover whether these institutions simply did not spend their net profit on academic support services for football and/or men’s basketball, yet may still have had underperforming APR scores and negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009.

c). Finally, if the participants responded *Yes*, or *Money Is Put Back Into Academic Support Services*, then the same data triangulation was conducted as in sections (a) and (b) in order to see if there was a positive change for these institutions regarding whether there was acceptable APR scores and positive net profit at some point from 2005-2009 for their football and/or men’s basketball programs, or whether they possessed underperforming APR scores and negative net profit despite putting money into academic support services for football and/or men’s basketball.

Based on the 254 responses, emergent themes and insights were uncovered in the analysis for this question, and 35 response categories were subsequently generated from the data. The participants’ responses were then aligned within these categories based on the frequency of identical or similar information mentioned, and the top five response categories were highlighted by percentage as important, and can be found in Table 5.

**Table 5 -** Top five response categories based on emergent themes and frequency of informational answers

| RQ5: Where is your athletic department spending their net profit (if applicable), and is a portion or all of the net profit being put back into academic support services for football and/or men’s basketball programs |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| **Response Category** | **Percentage** |
| 1. *NA/ Not Available* | 36.61% |
| 2. No Net Profit/ None | 30.70% |
| 3. Unsure/Don’t Know/Unknown | 11.81% |
| 4. Money Is Put Back into Academic Support Services | 8.66% |
| 5. Hired New Academic Support Staff/New Personnel | 4.72% |

* Denotes Largest Percentage

**RQ5: Participant Responses**

*There is no net profit at a small 1-A non-football school. Trying to rub to nickels together.* – *(Compliance Personnel)*

*No net profit from athletics.* – *(Faculty Athletic Representative)*

*Department operates at a loss.* – *(Compliance Personnel)*
Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to present the results from a simple mixed methods study using five open-ended response questions that were analyzed using two main phenomenological commitments.

1.) The most important and frequent theme for research question one that emerged through the data analysis to help form the conclusive “whole” was that 28.83% affirmed exactly what the literature has stated up to this point, which is that the NCAA’s APR has negatively, or even tremendously negatively impacted low resource or non-BCS institutions as it relates to the “revenue generating” sports of football and/or men’s basketball (Hosick, 2010; NCAA 2010; Christy, 2008, 2007; Forde, 2006; Brown, 2005).

This agrees with what the NCAA has also admitted in the past couple of years, and the researcher believes this negative impact will only change when the NCAA realizes that there cannot be a “one-size-fits-all” mentality when it comes to an academic measure like the APR (NCAA, 2011).

In addition, through data triangulation the results seem to prove what the scholars have suggested in that out of this 28.83% of participants who believed the APR has negatively affected their athletic departments as it related to football and/or men’s basketball programs, almost 3/5 of these specific institutions’ athletic departments (67.79%) represented by these participants also had football and/or men’s basketball programs with both underperforming APR scores and negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009. This essentially means that 3/5 of these 28.83% of participants believed the APR has negatively affected their men’s basketball and/or football, and their beliefs were correct as their football and/or men’s basketball programs also possessed both negative net profit and poor APR scores.

Consequently, the premise of lack of financial resources leading to poor APR scores and negative APR impact seems to be more true than less true for participants in this research study given that the majority of these participants represent institutional athletic departments that state the APR has negatively impacted them as far as football and/or men’s basketball has been concerned, and the same sport programs have had poor APR scores and negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009. This theme would falls right in line with what both Hosick (2010) and Forde (2006) have said regarding financial disparities and APR compliance.

2.) The most frequent, important, and surprising theme for research question two that emerged through the data analysis to help form the conclusive whole was that 4 out of 6 occupational positions at low resource or non-BCS institutions responded that they felt no pressure or impact at all as it related to the impact of the APR on their direct work or involvement with football and/or men’s basketball programs, including compliance personnel. This revelation regarding compliance personnel was surprising in that one would have thought these positions (who deal with NCAA rule compliance) would also have felt some of the pressures from the impact of the APR given that it is an academic reform measure created, mandated, and overseen by the NCAA, but the results showed otherwise.

This was a major insight since this result showed clearly that the pressures of APR compliance, in terms of individual responsibility, fall largely on the shoulders of academic support services personnel (not compliance personnel as well), and the remaining results correlate to this emerging truth. So much so in fact, that 22.38% of academic support services
personnel responded (their largest response category) that indeed they were more involved with academic support and academic related work due to the pressures of APR compliance as it related to their direct work or involvement with football and/or men’s basketball programs. In addition, 19.40% of academic support services personnel also responded (their second largest response category) that due to these same APR pressures from these two sports, they felt more anxiety and work related pressure to not only work harder and longer, but also better academically prepare and help football and/or men’s basketball collegiate athletes.

One believes this cannot be a healthy thing for morale or occupational longevity as far as these academic support services personnel are concerned, but hopefully these results can serve as a healthy realization for athletic directors so that they seek to find new ways to lighten the burden of their employees as they work to comply with APR measures.

Also, the researcher believes these findings regarding academic support services personnel also may reflect a lack of coaches taking initiative to aid academic support services departments in terms of the academic monitoring of their own student athletes. When instead, as Johnson (2010) and Brown (2005) articulated, coaches should be very aware and on top of their own student athletes’ academic situations, and should also be monitoring academic factors that would affect their programs’ APR scores. The responsibility should not solely fall on the academic support services personnel.

3). The two most important and “conclusive” insights for research question three stemmed from participant response percentages of 20% or higher.

The most frequent theme or insight that emerged from the data was that due to the impact of the APR on football and/or men’s basketball programs at low resource or non-BCS institutions, recruiting has changed for these programs, and better academically prepared collegiate athletes are being targeted now in the recruiting process. Specifically, 33.20% of all participants responded identically or similarly to this point, and these athletic and academic administrators also articulated why the recruiting process has changed for these two sport programs. The need for better students first is becoming more paramount as these athletic and academic administrators become more aware of the APR, and how academic eligibility and retention can be influenced, both positively by improved academic support services, and negatively by lack of academic oversight or apathy among student athletes. These results would align with much of what Castle (2010), Hawkins (2010), and Hosick (2010) have written about relating to the recruitment and retention of student athletes.

The second most frequent theme or insight that emerged was also the most surprising in that 22.80% of all participants responded that the APR has not at all impacted the type of collegiate athlete that they recruit, specifically as it relates to football and/or men’s basketball collegiate athletes. One was very surprised at how high this percentage was given the general logic that if the APR has negatively affected these institutions and these specific programs, and if the APR measures scholarship collegiate athletes’ eligibility and retention, then one main way, in theory, to help academic eligibility and retention would be to recruit collegiate athletes with the necessary skills to make better grades and matriculate in school. But, this 22.80% of participants did not feel this way based on their responses, and this development leads to some new conclusions for current and future NCAA related literature:

First, these individuals could claim that it has not impacted recruiting at all since they feel their recruiting has been strong in terms of bringing in academically prepared football and/or men’s basketball collegiate athletes.
Second, these individuals may feel like the APR has not impacted recruiting because they simply have not seen it up close and personal in their direct work or involvement with football and/or men’s basketball programs.

Finally, one believes these individuals may have answered this way because they simply are fragmented in their own area of academic support services, compliance, financial aid, overall leadership, or academic duties, and they truly have no interaction or very little with football and/or men’s basketball coaches. Thus, they have little knowledge about what really goes on in recruiting.

4) The most frequent theme or insight for research question four that emerged from the data in helping form the conclusive “whole” of the analysis was that 19.69% of all participants articulated that due to APR pressures for football and/or men’s basketball programs, there has been an increase in financial resources for the hiring of new academic support services personnel and compliance personnel (including tutors and graduate assistants). This points to the fact that even at low resource or non-BCS institutions where their athletic departments do not usually generate net profit, money still gets redistributed and allocated for new things based upon significant need (Zimbalist, 1999).

The most plausible answer to why almost 20% of participants responded this way is that when it comes to APR pressures for the two most visible sports (football and/or men’s basketball), these institutional athletic departments simply do what a ton of other business entities do, and that is cut one area’s budget to give to another area. Thus, they witness money being taken from other areas (such as travel, marketing, business operations, etc) in order to diminish or eliminate the need or crisis that arises.

In the case of low resource and non-BCS institutions’ athletic departments, the crisis is APR underperformance for their football and/or men’s basketball programs, and as evidenced by these responses, one major solution is to throw money into the hiring of new academic support and compliance positions, and provide better academic support services. If the additional money does not come from athletic departments’ net profit, or from the institution, nor fundraising, then it must come from some other area inside athletic departments, which results in a scenario of shifting around existing money to the detriment of some other person or group.

5) For the fifth and final research question, this financial question was seeking to uncover where low resource or non-BCS institutions’ athletic departments were spending their net profit if indeed they even had any. The two most frequent and important themes that emerged from the data in helping form the conclusive “whole” of the analysis was that first, 36.61% of all participants responded NA/Not Available to this research question in relation to the idea of their athletic departments even having net profit, let alone being able to use net profit to put towards academic support services for football and/or men’s basketball. In addition, 30.70% of participants also answered specifically that their athletic departments had No Net Profit/None as it related to this final research question.

Thus, these two emergent themes and insights confirm that the majority of low resource or non-BCS institutions’ athletic departments (including their football and/or men’s basketball programs) do not generate net profit at all, let alone have any extra money to put towards academic support services for academically underperforming sport programs like football and/or men’s basketball. These results fall right in line with what the NCAA (2011) has admitted as recently as June of 2011, and also agree with a multitude of scholars who have written that low
resource and non-BCS institutions will continue to have lower APR scores in relation to football and/or men’s basketball programs due to a lack of financial resources (Associated Press, 2010; Holden, 2010; Hosick, 2010; Mills, 2010; Moltz, 2010; Lapchick, Lopresti, and Reshard, 2009; Powell, 2009; Forde, 2006).

Furthermore, after data triangulation took place in the analysis, these top two response categories showed some deeper insights that were both noteworthy and yet somewhat surprising. First, within the top response category (36.61% of all participants) of NA/Not Available, only 3/7 of these participants’ institutional athletic departments (41.33%) had football and/or men’s basketball programs with both underperforming APR scores AND negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009, compared to slightly more than 4/7 of institutional athletic departments (58.66%) which sponsored football and/or men’s basketball and yet did NOT have these same sport programs possess both underperforming APR scores and negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009.

This was somewhat surprising in that the researcher would have thought out of 36.61% of total participants who responded not having net profit available, more than the roughly 41% of their athletic departments’ football and/or men’s basketball programs would have also possessed underperforming APR scores at some point from 2005-2009. Yet, the results showed the opposite, and presented new data which expressed rather that more of these low resource or non-BCS institutional athletic departments (58.66%) had football and/or men’s basketball programs with no net profit available, but still positive APR scores for the same sport programs.

Along the same lines, the second most frequent response category that showed 30.70% of all participants stating that their athletic departments did not have any net profit also had important and deeper insights after data triangulation. Out of this 30.70% of participants whose athletic departments had no net profit, slightly more than ½ of these participants’ athletic departments (52.23%) had football and/or men’s basketball programs with both underperforming APR scores and negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009, compared to slightly less than ½ of these participants’ athletic departments (47.76%) who had football and/or men’s basketball programs who did NOT have both underperforming APR scores and negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009.

Consequently, the deeper insights for the second response category (even though it is only slightly more than ½) show that more than half of the institutional athletic departments (52.23%) who clearly do not have any net profit and who sponsor football and/or men’s basketball programs have had both underperforming APR scores and negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009 in relation to these two sport programs.

The telling insight though that was gleaned through deeper analysis and data triangulation was that for both of these top two response categories of NA/Not Available and No Net Profit/None, each had either above or close to 50% of their categories participants come from low resource or non-BCS institutional athletic departments that did NOT have both underperforming APR scores and negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009 as it relates to football and/or men’s basketball programs.

Consequently, the results showed that as a whole, it is not conclusive from this study that one can say a large majority of low resource or non-BCS institutions’ athletic departments who sponsored football and/or men’s basketball also possessed BOTH underperforming APR scores AND negative net profit at some point in time from 2005-2009 as it related to those two sport programs. Rather, one can only say with confidence based on the results from this study, that for participants who were from low resource or non-BCS institutional athletic departments and
answered *No Net Profit/None*, there is a slight majority of these institutions who DID possess both underperforming APR scores and negative net profit at some point from 2005-2009 as it related to their football and/or men’s basketball programs. This gives credence to what scholars such as Hosick (2010), Moltz (2010), Christy (2008), Forde (2006), and Brown (2005) have articulated in previous literature related to the APR.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The first recommendation for future research would be to look at how the APR has impacted other sport programs such as baseball, women’s basketball, or women’s track and field. All of these other sports have had underperforming APR scores in the past (NCAA, 2013), and it would be interesting to see how these sport programs have been impacted by the APR at the BCS member institutional level, as well as at low resource or non-BCS institutions.

A second recommendation for future research would be to analyze the Academic Progress Rate (APR) from the perspective of actual NCAA administrators and compliance personnel. One believes it would be fascinating to survey these individuals and gather their thoughts on the APR, how they view the academic measure going forward, and glean whether or not they believe low resource and non-BCS institutions are truly hurt by the APR in the short or long term.

A final recommendation for future research would be to elaborate on what Christy (2008, 2007) has done, and do a full scale research study on the impact of the APR on BCS member institutions as it relates to their true “revenue generating” sports of football and men’s basketball to see if indeed academic support service personnel are burdened by the APR at this level as well.
References


Castle, J. (2010). *The impact of the academic progress rating on the retention and recruiting strategies of NCAA division I football programs.* Unpublished manuscript.


