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### **The Role of Interorganizational Relationships in the Effectiveness of Student-Athlete Academic Support Services**

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**James O. Evans**

*The Ohio State University*

**Amy E. Werdine**

*Louisiana State University*

**Chad S. Seifried**

*Louisiana State University*

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*The purpose of this illustrative case study was to examine interorganizational relations (IORs) at the intersection of higher education and athletics through the context of one exemplar sport organization focused on student-athlete academic services (i.e., the Cox Communications Academic Center for Student-Athletes [CCACSA] at the Louisiana State University). The present research specifically sought to understand 1) what types of IORs might be prevalent in student-athlete academic services, 2) which of Oliver's (1990) critical contingencies are common in student-athlete academic services IORs, and 3) how IORs are formed and prioritized by student-athlete academic services? The results show that the CCACSA, as an archetype for potentially other Division I public institutions, creates many IORs which are most often categorized as social service joint programs, agency-sponsor linkages, and trade associations. These IORs help the CCACSA primarily fulfill the critical contingencies of legitimacy, reciprocity, stability, and efficiency. Finally, the CCACSA establishes and prioritizes its IORs based on mutually beneficial goals and missions and the ability of the partner organizations to help the CCACSA achieve its mission of helping LSU student-athletes succeed. Within this point, it should be noted partnering organizations receive multiple benefits (e.g., recognition, product exposure, employee recruitment, and volunteer labor/philanthropy).*

In January of 1991, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) mandated in bylaw 16.3.1.1 that all Division I schools create academic counseling and tutoring services for their student-athletes to help maximize their academic performance with respect to eligibility and graduation rate (Huml, Hancock, & Bergman, 2014; Meyer, 2005; NCAA, 2013a). Within this bylaw, the Academic Enhancement Fund was created to provide financial assistance to those institutions that desired to construct academic support service centers for student-athletes or wanted to enhance existing services with respect to tutoring, counselors, and equipment (Huml, et al., 2014; NCAA 2013b). According to the 2015-2016 Division I Revenue Distribution Plan, this fund provided over \$26 million in aid to any academic-support service identified as appropriate and necessary toward the production of academic success.

Academic centers are vital to the success of student-athletes and have been explicitly recognized as critical facilities capable of increasing graduation and retention rates (Huml, et al., 2014, Ridpath, 2010). With respect to this point, recent Graduation Success Rate (GSR) data shows that student-athletes who entered college in 2007 have an 84 percent graduation rate in six years, which is ten percentage points higher than student-athletes that entered college in 1995 (Hosick, 2014). Next, academic centers for student-athletes have been acknowledged as important places to enhance other goals of many athletic programs which aim to improve the quality of life for student-athletes. Specifically, beyond academic tutoring, student-athlete academic centers have been recognized for their ability to counsel drug and alcohol addiction or abuse problems, build leadership skills, and serve as career development (e.g., resume, cover letter, interviewing [i.e., job and media]) and life skill (e.g., personal budgeting) learning center (Huml, et al., 2014; Ridpath, 2010).

To meet these obligations, the number of full-time athletic advisors increased significantly along with the expenses per student-athlete. For example, at the Division I level, the number of full-time athletic advisors rose 200 percent between 1995 and 2013 and the average spent per student-athlete increased 43 percent between 2005 and 2013 (Huml, et al., 2014; Knight Commission, 2014). However, hidden within the facilitation of these responsibilities and expenses, it should be noted that student-athlete academic centers are likely to utilize and/or pursue a variety of interorganizational relationships (IORs) to increase their effectiveness.

Knoben (2009) described IORs as “collaborations between actors in which activities are jointly carried out.” (p. 761). It is assumed that IORs are becoming more common as globalization, communication, and technological innovation eliminate barriers able to restrict resources needed for survival (Bae & Gargiulo, 2004; Knoben, 2009; Lund, Scheer, & Kozlenkova, 2013). Moreover, IORs have been identified as an important topic to study in the sport industry because the industry relies so heavily on cooperation even through competition (Pieters, Knoben, & Pouwels, 2012). IORs have also drawn attention from the context of higher education, but collectively, there has been relatively little attention paid to IORs where sport and higher education intersect (e.g., academic support services for student-athletes). This is interesting if we accept that firms (e.g., student-athlete academic centers) may no longer be considered as autonomous, self-reliant units. In essence, most organizations are dependent on creating or maintaining relationships with other organizations to survive and/or meet their organizational goals (Zaheer, Gözübüyük, & Milanov, 2010).

The purpose of this illustrative case study was to examine IORs at the intersection of higher education and athletics through the context of one exemplar sport organization focused on student-athlete academic services. The illustrative case study uses the Cox Communications Academic Center for Student-Athletes (CCACSA) at the Louisiana State University (LSU). The CCACSA opened in November 2002 and serves over 3,000 students a day within its: 1,000 seat Internet-accessible auditorium and student-athlete centered 2,800 square foot library, learning center, nutrition center, and tutorial center that embraces computer labs, meeting rooms, and classrooms (“History,” n. d.). Using the case study of CCACSA as an archetype for potentially other Division I public institutions, we were curious to understand: 1) *what types of IORs might be prevalent in student-athlete academic services*, 2) *which of Oliver’s (1990) critical contingencies are common in student-athlete academic services IORs*, and 3) *how IORs are formed and prioritized by student-athlete academic services?*

Oliver (1990), Barringer and Harrison (2000), and Hillman, Withers, and Collins (2009) suggested such work is important because it can help identify environmental conditions that creates and/or maintains IORs. Within this scope, this illustrative case study will not only help identify what relationships the CCACSA developed and why, but also what relationships may need to be developed in the future for the CCACSA and possibly other Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) student-athlete academic centers to meet their mission. The CCACSA is notable because it was recently named a “Model of Excellence” by the *University Business Magazine* (Bonnette, 2016). Citing relationships with groups like GradesFirst and WebEx, the CCACSA was specifically recognized for its excellence with technology to help student-athletes excel academically (Bonnette, 2016). Additional recognition has also emerged from the roughly 3,700 hours of service completed by student-athletes with IOR partners (Downers, 2012).

## Literature Review

Similar to Knoblen (2009), Oliver (1990) defined IORs as “relatively enduring transactions, flows, and linkages that occur among or between an organization and one or more organizations in its environment” (p. 241). Several elements of this definition are notable. First, the relationships formed are ‘relatively enduring’, meaning that they are not merely transitory or incidental in nature. In this same vein, IORs are usually intentional, rather than accidental or unconsciously, created (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Knoblen, 2009; Oliver, 1990). Oliver’s (1990) catalog of the terms (i.e., transactions, flows, and linkages) also implies that IORs can include a broad variety of different relationships. Conceptually, Oliver identified six common types of IORs: (a) voluntary private-sector relationships, (b) agency federations, (c) joint ventures, (d) social service sector relationships, (e) corporate-financial interlocks, and (f) agency-sponsor linkages (Oliver, 1990).

Other scholars have also made the effort to categorize IORs. For example, Ring and Van de Ven (1994) and Barringer and Harrison (2000) described various forms of IORs as strategic alliances, partnerships, coalitions, joint ventures, franchises, research consortia, and network organizations. Although collectively these lists are not exhaustive, most IORs fall into one or more of these categories, though they sometimes overlap. Along these lines, Ross, Jr. and Robertson (2007) introduced the idea of ‘compound relationships’ in which they positioned the overall relationship between or among firms can be composed of multiple simple relationships. This concept may also be described as ‘relational pluralism’, whereby the multiple simple relationships lead to the development of multiple interdependent identities for the involved

organizations (Shipilov, Gulati, Kilduff, & Tsai, 2015). From this work, the collective definition suggests that IORs are forged among organizations within a particular purpose and environment, although the limits of the environment are not always precisely delineated. Moreover, these environments could include relationships with common industries and social structures, within or outside geographic locations in which the organizations exist (Pieters, et al., 2012).

Oliver (1990) recognized six “critical contingencies” of IOR formation as: (a) necessity, (b) legitimacy, (c) asymmetry, (d) reciprocity, (e) efficiency, and (f) stability. These critical contingencies may also be considered antecedents or mediators of IORs. There is some crossover as to whether each contingency is only a causal factor in the formation of the IOR or also an end-goal or outcome of IOR formation (Knoben, 2009). While each of the six critical contingencies is a theoretically sufficient condition on its own for the formation of an IOR, there is often interaction or concurrence in practice (Oliver, 1990). The two predominant approaches in examining IOR contingencies focused on the exchange relationship and power dependency. However, a better understanding may be an integrated model, where a mixed-motive arrangement occurs to allow each organization to act toward its own self-interest (Schmidt & Kochan, 1977). In essence, the contingencies may exist simultaneously in a relationship or there may be an evolution from one contingency to another (Oliver, 1990).

The *necessity* contingency is created by legal or regulatory requirements that organizations must obey in order to conform to the dictates of some higher authority, often a government or interest association (Aldrich, 1979; Oliver, 1990; Seifried, Soebbing, & Agyemang, in press; Seifried, Soebbing, Martinez, & Agyemang, 2015). For example, financial firms may form relationships with external auditing service organizations in order to comply with governmental regulations on disclosure or accounting practices. In this regard, the necessity contingency is the only one of the six that is mandatory and suggests that some relationships are actually required simply in order to stay in operation. *Legitimacy* is somewhat related to necessity but it involves the desire, rather than the mandate, to conform to the norms or expectations of some external constituency (Seifried, et al., in press; Seifried et al., 2015). Organizations must often justify their activities to outside stakeholders in order to gain acceptance within their social environments (Bitektine, 2011). Moreover, external endorsement is important to maintain internal behavior (Drori & Honig, 2013).

The asymmetry, reciprocity, efficiency, and stability contingencies all relate to allocation and interdependence of resources within the organizational environment. *Asymmetry* describes the potential to exercise power or control over another organization or its resources (Oliver, 1990). As organizations become more culturally diverse due to globalization, fairness and equity in IORs surfaced as topics of increasing interest among scholars analyzing the asymmetry contingency (Lund et al., 2013). Control and autonomy over decisions may be reduced as a result of involvement with other organizations and/or resource scarcity (Provan, 1982; Seifried, et al., 2015). If asymmetry constitutes one ‘dark side’ of IORs, *reciprocity* is essentially its opposite: the idea that organizations cooperate, collaborate, and coordinate their resources for mutually beneficial goals or interests (Eisenhart & Schoonhoven, 1996; Oliver, 1990; Seifried, et al., 2015). Examples of reciprocity may include trading of personnel, and the sharing of customers, equipment, and technology in conjoined programming efforts (Eisenhart & Schoonhoven, 1996). Organizations also form IORs in order to increase their *efficiency*, that is, to increase the return on their assets or reduce costs and waste. Like asymmetry, some authors viewed the efficiency contingency as having potential negative outcomes, such as stagnation and restriction of competition in the marketplace (Oliver, 1990; Seifried, et al., 2015). *Stability*, on the other hand,

may be viewed as the counterpart to efficiency. Under this concept, IORs may form in order to increase predictability or reduce uncertainty caused by resource scarcity and environmental fluctuations or exogenous shocks (Kraatz, 1998; Stearns, Hoffman, & Heide, 1987; Seifried, et al., 2015).

In addition to the six critical contingencies, Oliver (1990) identified six moderators, which increase the probability or strength of IORs. These are: (a) the presence of enforceable laws or mandates, (b) external threats or constraints, (c) interparticipant compatibility, (d) relationship costs and benefits, (e) environmental uncertainty and risk, and (f) institutional disapproval or indifference (Oliver, 1990). Necessity, asymmetry, stability, and legitimacy are shaped primarily by the external conditions defined above, while efficiency relates more to internal factors (Oliver, 1990). Reciprocity is affected primarily by the relative or comparative properties of the participants, and therefore may be seen as a combination of internal and external factors. Embeddedness, or the degree to which a particular IOR is woven into the cultural fabric of an organization, is also a moderator of the strength of IORs (Pieters et al., 2012).

Finally, Börjeson (2015) described four stages of IOR formation: (a) tentative initiation, (b) deepening investments, (c) commercial realization, and (d) established management. The development of each stage depends on where the relationship exists on two intersecting continuums—immediacy and establishment. Tentative initiation is characterized by low immediacy and low establishment, while commercial realization is characterized by high levels of both (Börjeson, 2015). Deepening investments are found where there is low establishment but high immediacy, and established management exists when organizations have low immediacy levels but high establishment of the relationship (Börjeson, 2015). The relative strength of immediacy and establishment may be determined in turn by the presence of Oliver's (1990) critical contingencies and conditions. Cultural theory also suggests that organizational culture also shapes how collaborative partners are selected and how IORs evolve over time (Weare, Litherman, & Esparza, 2014).

### *IORs in the Sport Context*

Sport managers are becoming increasingly dependent on their ability to build and maintain relations with various stakeholders in order to remain viable (Pieters et al., 2012). For example, Pieters et al. (2012) examined the potential effect of social network theory and methods on the commercial performance of sport organizations. They specifically considered network embeddedness in Dutch amateur soccer clubs, and hypothesized that strength of ties maintained by sport organizations and the geographical proximity of those ties will significantly and positively predict a higher number of sponsor relationships, and that the higher number of sponsor relationships will in turn predict higher commercial performance. Strength of ties, the key component of embeddedness, is characterized as the combination of time spent, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services which characterize the link (Pieters et al., 2012). The authors found that those companies enjoying more relationships, frequency of contact, and longer relationship length have positive and significant effect on clubs' attraction of total sponsorship funds (Pieters et al., 2012). Furthermore, location within a moderately urban environment corresponded to the highest level of fund attraction (Pieters, et al., 2012).

In a series of papers, Cousens, Babiak, and Bradish (2006), Babiak (2007), Babiak (2008), and Babiak and Thibault (2009) examined IORs formed by sport organizations,

specifically focusing on the complexities involved in forming, maintaining, and measuring effectiveness of relationships. Cousens et al. (2006) proposed a framework for sport organizations and corporate sponsors to employ when deciding whether and how to form particular relationships. The authors identified three major elements which organizations should consider: context (internal and external), mutual benefit, and relationship strength (Cousens et al., 2006). External context encompasses the environment in which often disparate organizations interact to form relationships, while internal context concerns the strategy, structure, corporate culture, and political context of the individual organizations. Firms must examine their own internal contexts to determine if particular relationships are compatible in the external context. Next, in examining mutual benefits of partnerships, sport organizations and their sponsors should not only consider tangible measures but also the more holistic critical contingencies identified by Oliver (1990). Strength of the relationship depends on whether the interaction is merely transactional, characterized by timely exchange of basic products for competitive prices, or collaborative, in which the organizations form strong and extensive economic, service, and/or technical ties with an eye toward long term increase of value and mutual benefit (Cousens et al., 2006). Based on these factors, the authors created a framework in which the organizations conduct a needs assessment to evaluate internal and external context, followed by negotiation and management of the IOR to meet the identified needs and strengthen the relationship. The IOR is then evaluated for effectiveness in creating mutual benefit, and, if necessary re-negotiated to ensure ongoing success (Cousens et al., 2006).

Babiak (2007) examined the determinants of IOR formation in the context of a Canadian nonprofit sport organization and discovered that legitimacy, stability, reciprocity, and efficiency emerged as the most important critical contingencies. She also identified other preexisting conditions or antecedents of IORs in this arena, such as interdependence of structures and resources and network presence among organizational members. Babiak (2008) extended this research to identify criteria for measuring effectiveness of these relationships. This can become problematic where the organizations traditionally function in different external contexts (i.e., the for-profit market, nonprofit service sector, governmental bureaucracy, etc.) which may cause them to measure effectiveness in different ways. Some measures were found to be highly interrelated, while others were found to be competing or incompatible (Babiak, 2008).

Babiak and Thibault's (2009) study of the challenges in creating and maintaining multiple cross-sector relationships is of particular relevance to our current paper. Some nonprofit organizations must form partnerships with for-profit firms and government entities in order to meet their critical contingencies. The authors found that many cross-sector partnerships were undermanaged and thus plagued with problems such as environmental constraints, diversity of objectives, incompatibility of operations, power imbalances, and geographic limitations (Babiak & Thibault, 2009). While some of these problems, such as a need for more long term strategic planning, are recognized by all parties, others are often colored by the organization's position in the relationship. For example, corporate sponsors wanted to keep things simple without getting bogged down in governmental bureaucracy, while nonprofit and government partners cited lack of formality and procedure as an impediment to effectiveness. The key implication from this line of research is that sport organizations, especially those such as CCACSA which operate largely in the public sector, must be careful in selecting partners with similar, or at least mutually beneficial, goals and measures of effectiveness.

Kraatz, Braschak, and Shah (2002) also considered the impact of IORs and other pressures on the diffusion of women's intercollegiate athletics. They found that universities with

chapters of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) were more likely to push for the expansion of women's sports. The AIAW can be seen as an agency federation type of relationship, as described by Oliver (1990). Likewise, belonging in a conference with other schools that promote women's athletics leads schools to adopt more inclusive policies, which supported the reciprocity contingency. The authors also discovered that normative pressure such as Title IX of the United States Education Amendments of 1972 has little effect on the diffusion of women's athletics (Kraatz et al., 2002). This suggests that the necessity contingency may not be as strong as some would think in the formation of IORs that promote women's athletics.

Finally, Stern (1979) used network analysis to look at how the NCAA evolved from a loose, voluntary confederation of universities into the dominant control agent over intercollegiate athletics. He posited that four network determinants—administrative structure, degree of coupling within the network, multiplexity of ties, and new network resources—led to this transformation (Stern, 1979). The NCAA formed in 1906 as a result of confusion over the rules of football and growing public concern over its safety (Stern, 1979). Thus, early contingencies that led to the formation of this particular IOR included reciprocity and legitimacy. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century developed, the growing popularity of college sport led to a recognition that it could produce significant revenue for schools, which caused them to form more agency-sponsor linkages in order to build the stadia and other infrastructure demanded by modern spectators and participants (Stern, 1979). Legitimacy concerns again led the member institutions to cede more power to the governing body from the 1930s to the 1950s as they recognized the need to have a relatively uniform set of rules for amateurism and academic standards in order to gain wider public acceptance (Stern, 1979). Eventually, legitimacy gave way to asymmetry as the NCAA itself, rather than the colleges and universities, became the dominant political force in intercollegiate athletics (Crowley, 2006; Thelin, 1994).

### *IORs in the Higher Education Context*

Perkman and Walsh (2007) looked at the relationship between higher education and industry. They posited that university-industry relationships further both parties' interests and advance technological diffusion, thus supporting the reciprocity contingency. They called this dependence by industry on other public research organizations for technological advancement the 'open innovation' perspective (Perkman & Walsh, 2007). Many are initiated as formalized research and development alliances, but some occur incidentally through serendipitous matching of research agendas. In either instance, the ability to translate research findings from the academic world into the industry setting is an important component of the scholar-practitioner relationship (Corley & Gioia, 2011).

On a somewhat related topic, universities are not only looking to build relationships to achieve their research agendas, but also their educational capacities (Kezar, 2005). Collaboration may be defined as "a process in which a group of autonomous stakeholders of an issue domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain" (Kezar, 2005, p. 833). Kezar (2005) then identified four types of cross-institutional collaboration: (a) academic and student affairs collaboration, (b) interdisciplinary and community-based research, (c) team teaching and learning communities, and (d) cross-functional teams (Kezar, 2005). Kezar (2005) also noted eight core elements necessary to create a context that enables collaboration: (a) mission, (b) integrating structures, (c) campus networks, (d) rewards, (e) priority from administration, (f) external pressure, (g) values,

and (h) learning. Like Oliver's (1990) critical contingencies, some of these elements overlap and may evolve over time.

Finally, Tolbert (1985) and Kraatz (1998) both considered how relationships with material resource organizations impact the higher education sector. Tolbert (1985) found that resource dependence on nontraditional sources of financial support is strongly predictive of administrative differentiation in higher education. In other words, when universities do not have stable sources of revenue from individual wealthy benefactors or state legislatures, they are likely to look to industry for support, then tailor their administrative and academic programs to work with the organizations from whom they receive resources. This supports the efficiency, stability, and asymmetry contingencies. Kraatz (1998) postulated that strong networks mitigate uncertainty and adaptation in higher education by increasing communication and information sharing, which also relates to Kezar's (2005) research on collaboration among institutions of higher learning.

## Method

The case study research approach was selected as the chosen strategy to examine IOR in the mixed academic-sport setting. We specifically preferred the illustrative case study approach based on a variety of recommendations. For example, Baxter and Jack (2008) argued "rigorous case studies afford researchers opportunities to explore or describe a phenomenon in context ... It allows the researcher to explore individuals or organizations" (p. 544). Within this point, Siggelkow (2007) positioned illustrative case studies as useful because as a "concrete example of every construct that is employed in a conceptual argument, the reader has much easier time imagining how the conceptual argument might actually be applied to . . . empirical settings" (21-22). Yin (1981) and Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) further support this research effort by suggesting the significant attribute of case studies revolve around their utility to examine current or contemporary phenomena that emerge in real-life. Finally, multiple scholars also suggested that, as a research strategy, illustrative case studies can generate and/or revise theory (Eisenhardt 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007; Siggelkow 2007). Considering the uniqueness of the CCACSA multiple relationships, a case study about this organization's active management of relationships appears to be the appropriate strategy to examine interorganizational relationships.

Through an examination of organizational documents (e.g., Strategic Plan, News/press releases, meeting minutes, and interorganizational contracts) and a working knowledge of the CCACSA (two of the authors were employees), four semi-structured interviews from key CCACSA administrators (e.g., Executive Director, Director of Student Affairs, Manager of the Shaquille O'Neal Lifeskills Program, and Manager of Tutorial Programs) were developed to follow the shared procedures offered by a variety of works (e.g., Corbin & Straus, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Semi-structured interviews were selected to allow these key personnel to provide information (e.g., direct thoughts and organizational literature) on IORs following a formal introduction of the concept to each of them individually. This interview option was preferred because it embraced opportunities for the researchers to ask follow-questions tailored to each participant's unique responsibility within student-athlete academic services.

Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and data was recorded for analysis by the researchers. Member-checking of information collected from interviewees occurred from which data emerged that could be grouped together (Andrew, Pedersen, & McEvoy, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Based on similarity, the grouped data eventually became the subsequent themes



provided below. The themes emerged through individual coding efforts by the researchers and a collective discussion by the researchers, which involved inductive analysis. Patton (1990) highlighted inductive analysis as “. . . patterns, themes, and categories of analysis . . .” that surface from the initial coding of the data (p. 390).

Information from the aforementioned organizational documents developed in 2006 through 2017 was reviewed through a constant comparative textual analysis. A constant comparative textual analysis involves the observance of any trends and meaning over general reading (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fairlough, 2003). Using this approach, researchers may generate descriptive statistics as a tool to draw conclusions about the intersection between the CCACSA and various outside partners and to initiate or place information about their relationships into specific categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Constant comparative analysis is also selected because it allows interpretation and categorization to be influenced by theory during data analysis (Kassing & Sanderson, 2009). Coding procedures used in the present analysis involved information provided in the literature review and appropriately focused on the types of IORs and contingencies of IORs to answer the main research questions. Discussion and refinement of the IOR types and contingencies occurred to reach consensus in meaning amongst the researchers and produced intercoder reliabilities that exceeded the .8 threshold established by Tan (1985).

## Results/Discussion

The authors of this paper were made aware of more than 30 organizations that the CCACSA has relationships with through the interviews and textual analysis of over 900 organizational documents. Table 1 identifies a sample of the organizations that CCACSA enjoys IORs with, as well as the types of IOR and critical contingencies found in each relationship we feel may be typical of public schools in the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision and Power Five conferences (i.e., Atlantic Coast Conference, Big 12, Big Ten, Pacific 12, and Southeastern) or of relationships we believe they will seek. In terms of athletic academic center activity, we caution generalization to private institutions and to the Group of Five conferences (i.e., American Athletic, Conference-USA, Mid-American, Mountain West, and Sun Belt). For instance, in a recent study, Huml et al. (2014) found student-athletes at private schools were less satisfied with their respective athletic academic center and the resources provided to them than those of public institutions. Additional support for this statement emerged during interviews. As an example, Bodack (personal communication, December 18, 2015) suggested CCACSA administrators with experience at non-Power Five Division I institutions all found it easier to create stronger, more lasting relationships at CCACSA because of available resources, the size of existing networks, and the eagerness of multiple willing partners historically. Of the organizations the CCACSA created relationships with, most focused on helping charitable causes, supporting patient care at hospitals, improving literacy and physical activity rates with youth, serving the homeless and undernourished, and mentoring either school children or the CCACSA student-athletes.

Table 1

*Sample of Interorganizational Relationships of the Cox Communications Academic Center for Student-Athletes*

Organization	Type of IOR	Critical Contingency
Cox Communications	Agency-sponsor linkage	Reciprocity
LSU Athletic Department	Agency-sponsor linkage	Necessity, Asymmetry
Apple	Agency-sponsor linkage	Efficiency
GradesFirst	Agency-sponsor linkage	Efficiency
National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)	Trade association	Necessity, Legitimacy, Asymmetry
Southeastern Conference (SEC)	Trade association	Necessity, Legitimacy, Asymmetry
National Academic Advising Association (NACADA)	Trade association	Legitimacy
National Association for Academic Advisors of Athletes (N4A)	Trade association	Legitimacy
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)	Trade association	Legitimacy
College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA)	Trade association	Legitimacy
Other colleges and universities	Trade association	Reciprocity
Tiger TV, KLSU radio, other media	Social service joint program	Reciprocity
Hospitals and community groups	Social service joint program	Legitimacy, Reciprocity
Bengal Belles	Agency federation	Stability
Tiger Athletic Foundation (TAF)	Agency federation	Stability

### *Types of IORs*

As previously mentioned, Oliver (1990) identified six common types of IORs and the relationships CCACSA has with organizations fall within four of the six common types: agency-sponsor linkages, trade associations, social service joint programs, and agency federations. Agency-sponsored linkages are relationships where there is a regularized flow of essential resources to an organization. Partnering organizations like Cox Communications, the operations side of the LSU athletic department, and Apple could be considered agency-sponsor linkages for CCACSA. The athletic department gives CCACSA information about compliance with NCAA rules and regulations, while Cox Communications donated money for the naming rights of the building. At least once during each academic term, the LSU compliance office conducts training for CCACSA employees (D. R. Kemp, personal communication, December 18, 2015). Cox Communications also has a larger relationship with the university as a whole as an exclusive local media partner (K.O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015). Apple supplies CCACSA with physical resources, such as computers and software for the student-athletes as well as for the employees of CCACSA (K. O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015).

The CCACSA also organizes events for partners and potential partners to recruit employees. As an example, in 2013 the CCACSA held a career symposium that Lauren Adamson, Office Manager at Marucci Sports, suggested was a huge success because she “was able to meet many different athletes as well as other business professionals. I [Adamson] enjoyed being able to talk to the attendees and offer information about Marucci Sports as well as general career guidance” (Kisluk, 2013, para. 1). In 2012, the CCACSA participated in a Marine Corps managed workshop. Captain Adesina Aladetohun of the Baton Rouge Marine Corps Officer Selection Office articulated that the relationship with the CCACSA was desirable because “Attendees will experience newfound understanding of the Marine Corps Officer leadership programs for college students and come back eager to promulgate the Marine Corps Officer opportunities to their students and staff” (para 1.) Aladetohun further argued for the workshop because the Marines believed LSU’s student-athletes were a good group to recruit “future leaders in the Marines Corps and beyond” (para. 2).

Trade associations promote interests of members, and the CCACSA has involvement with trade associations such as the NCAA, Southeastern Conference (SEC), National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes (N4A), National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA). These organizations give CCACSA access to conferences, journals, learning assistance programs, grants and other services that benefit the student-athletes as well as employees of CCACSA (K. O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015). For example, the formation of the student-athlete tutoring special interest group within CRLA was facilitated when a CCACSA employee presented at the N4A national conference and other tutorial center administrators recognized the need for a specialized outlet for networking in this area (D. R. Kemp, personal communication, December 18, 2015). Often associated with these conferences are trade shows which give CCACSA access to new software and other technical products which has led to the formation of relationships with firms such as GradesFirst and Kurzweil (L. A. Bodack, personal communication, December 18, 2015).

Likewise, CCACSA enjoys relationships with academic centers at other colleges and universities, which allows it to share ideas and target potential new employees (K. O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015). CCACSA annually hosts a “drive-in” conference as

well as a regional tutor conference to promote networking and best practices among academic support personnel (D. R. Kemp, personal communication, December 18, 2015). Representatives from nearby institutions have found these conferences valuable in terms of discussing compliance issues and how to better leverage human resources such as graduate assistants (Howard, 2016a). These types of IORs may even be characterized as “coopetition” (Ross, Jr. & Robertson, 2007), as the schools are cooperating to improve the overall quality of academic support for student-athletes, but are also competing for those same student-athletes as well as the best human capital (i.e., employees) during the recruiting process.

Social service joint programs consist of two agencies working together in planning and implementing specific programs. Organizations such as Tiger TV, radio stations in Baton Rouge, hospitals, and other community organizations have social service joint program relationships with CCACSA (K. O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015). As an example, the Shaquille O’Neal Life Skills program is part of CCACSA and works with hospitals, elementary schools, churches and other community organizations to implement different community service programs for student-athletes to be involved in and media outlets cover these programs (K. O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015). The Shaquille O’Neal Life Skills program also provides important career development services to student-athletes. For instance, the program assists student-athletes with career exploration, resume and cover letter writing, graduate school searching and applications and sets up opportunities for job shadowing, internships, and interviewing (“Commitment to Career Development,” 2015).

Organizations that CCACSA has developed social service joint programs with through the Life Skills Program include University Terrace Elementary School in Baton Rouge, St. Vincent de Paul, Our Lady of the Lake Hospital (OLOL), Louisiana Organ Procurement Association, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Big Buddies, and the Salvation Army (Black, 2013; B. A. Sumler, personal communication, December 21, 2015). LSU athletics’ relationship with Our Lady of the Lake Hospital has lasted over 20 years, based on benefits enjoyed not only by the school but also by the patients and staff at the hospital, according to OLOL Community Relations Director Melissa Anderson (Lowe, 2011). Elsewhere, the CCACSA created a relationship with the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room that produced similar appreciation. Specifically, Chief Executive Officer at St. Vincent de Paul Michael Acaldo suggested they serve “over 200,000 meals to the poor, homeless and elderly” and that they “really appreciate the continued support of the LSU sports family. This commitment to our community is critical in these difficult economic times. They gave the best gift they could give - the gift of themselves” (Dunaway, 2010b, para. 1). Overall, we feel these activities may be properly characterized as an enduring IOR based on reciprocity and legitimacy, rather than a short-term transactional relationship (Babiak, 2007; 2008).

Agency federations are networks in which members delegate certain administrative tasks to a central management organization. In the case of the CCACSA, it maintains a strong relationship with the Office of Academic Affairs because the CCACSA is technically under the control of that office rather than the athletic department. Although CCACSA is housed and partially funded by the Office of Academic Affairs, the LSU athletic department, Bengal Belles and Tiger Athletic Foundation (TAF) also fund the CCACSA (K. O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015). The Bengal Belles is a Tiger booster club and TAF is a private, 501(c)(3) status tax-exempt nonprofit corporation that supports LSU athletics through assisting sport-related venue construction and renovation projects, similar to other institutions of higher education who created private fundraising arms for intercollegiate athletics in the 1980s

(Tsiotsou, 2007). Collectively, both the Bengal Belles and TAF helped raise millions of dollars for CCACSA activities, employees, student-athletes and physical infrastructure (“Tiger Athletic Foundation,” 2015). Belles President Aimee Simon articulated that the “Belles are so proud to know their contributions (i.e., money for a Communications Lab) can build confidence and inspire athletes to be better trained at public speaking, and prepares the athletes for the interview process of post-graduation job interviews” (Dunaway, 2010b, para. 1).

Within the university, the CCACSA has additional relationships with the offices of student-life, residential-life, the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), and other organizations and clubs on campus (K. O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015). Further, the CCACSA importantly maintains relationships with the various colleges on campus that student-athletes are enrolled (K. O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015). As an example, the CCACSA created a relationship with the LSU EnvironMentors program, a group housed in the School of the Coast and Environment. Also partnering with LSU’s College of Human Sciences & Education LSYOU program and Louisiana Sea Grant, the CCACSA helped recruit and mentor “young adult leaders from all cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds” to become “active stewards of their communities and the environment” so that they can potentially “open potential pathways for them to move toward successful environmental careers” (Kisluk, 2014, para. 2). In addition to helping academic schools and colleges increase enrollments, relationships with these campus organizations, colleges and departments also opens up the recruitment pool for part-time employees such as tutors and graduate assistants who are integral to the day-to-day operation of the CCACSA Tutorial Program (D. R. Kemp, personal communication, December 18, 2015). While these on-campus relationships may not technically fall into the traditional definitions of IORs, they may be viewed as such in the same way that Ghoshal and Bartlett (1990) considered multinational corporations as interorganizational networks.

### *Critical Contingencies*

The organizations the CCACSA secured relationships with also fit into the six critical contingencies mentioned by Oliver (1990). Many of the relationships exist within multiple contingencies and can evolve from one contingency to another. The NCAA, SEC, athletic department, and all intra-university relations fall under the *necessity* contingency. The CCACSA cannot exist without these organizations. All of those organizations have rules, regulations and resources the CCACSA must follow and need to be a successful organization. The CCACSA must make sure the student-athletes are academically eligible to compete and is required to send reports to the NCAA. They must follow compliance rules from the NCAA, SEC, and LSU athletic department, as well as follow rules set forth by the university, since the CCACSA building is on LSU’s campus.

The relationships with the NCAA, SEC, NACADA, N4A, NASPA, CRLA, and community groups also help establish *legitimacy* for CCACSA. Being a part of those organizations provides opportunities for the CCACSA to receive external endorsement and maintain or increase the number of organizations that provide the CCACSA with resources to further advance academic support for student-athletes. Having a relationship with the aforementioned community groups, such as hospitals and churches, helps CCACSA justify to the university and the community its existence from a social capital perspective and prompt external endorsement. Having the student-athletes help to make the Baton Rouge community a better place shows the social value the CCACSA has to offer. Since the CCACSA answers to many

other organizations, the *asymmetry* contingency is also present. For instance, the NCAA, SEC, and athletic department have the potential to exercise power and control over the CCACSA because they are aware they are necessary for the survival of the CCACSA.

The media, hospitals, student-athlete academic program areas (i.e., majors), and Cox Communications are all part of the *reciprocity* contingency because the CCACSA and those organizations are motivated to work together for mutually beneficial goals. Hospitals work with the CCACSA to get student-athletes to go visit sick children throughout the year, which results in positive press coverage for the CCACSA and benefits the children at the hospitals around Baton Rouge. The hospitals and other partners also find great benefit in working with athletes at CCACSA by way of raising their profiles. For example, Lori Steele, Community Educator for Louisiana Organ Procurement Association, stated, “It is our wish that more and more folks learn the facts about organ, eye, and tissue donation. Student-athletes are natural role models on any campus. The fact that these LSU athletes are taking the lead in this important life-saving mission says a lot about who they are off-campus—heroes!” (Black, 2013, n.p.). Community members and their families who are directly and indirectly affected by CCACSA’s relationships, such as Our Lady of the Lake Hospital, also note how their lives are improved by IORs (Terry, 2012). Cox Communications benefits from having the naming rights of the building, while the CCACSA gets money from the organization. Cox Communications also sought a “long and mutually rewarding partnership with LSU” by virtue of the exclusive regional broadcast rights it was able to negotiate as part of the naming rights deal (Tigerbait.com news services, 2003). The College of Human Sciences & Education, as an example, works closely with the CCACSA for career fairs that the CCACSA hosts and many student-athletes as well as CCACSA graduate assistants are in the College of Human Sciences & Education.

To help with *efficiency*, the CCACSA developed relationships with Apple, GradesFirst and the CRLA among others. Apple provides computers and software that allows student-athletes to possess the best technology to complete their work as effectively and efficiently as possible. GradesFirst is a computer program used by academic advisors and tutors to check student-athletes’ calendars and grades as well as to schedule various appointments for the student-athletes electronically. Finally, both the athletic department and TAF provide the CCACSA with *stability*. Fortunately, the athletic department at LSU is asked to and has been able to successfully fund itself, which has helped it remain largely unaffected by economic fluctuations (e.g., state funding, investment benefits, etc.) and natural disasters (e.g., oil spill, hurricane, and flooding). Expectedly, since the CCACSA is vital to the success of the athletic department, the CCACSA has a level of protection and stability not enjoyed by most other institutions, which may make it unique in some respect when attempting to compare programs, resources, benefits, and partnerships to other Division I FBS schools.

### *Formation and Prioritization of IORs*

We also found IORs at CCACSA are formed, prioritized, and maintained in a variety of ways. One of the benefits that CCACSA enjoys as part of a “Power Five” conference is that there are many local businesses that actively seek out involvement with CCACSA and LSU to bask in that status (B. A. Sumler, personal communication, December 21, 2015). Some of these processes are purposeful and formal while others are more casual or even accidental. As common in many public organizations, there is a formal process for the submission of bids for particular projects by vendors (L. A. Bodack, personal communication, December 18, 2015).

Keeping in part with the framework proposed by Cousens et al. (2006), a need is identified, options for solution are proposed, and proposals are solicited or requested to achieve this solution (L. A. Bodack, personal communication, December 18, 2015).

Another process by which CCACSA creates IORs is through direct solicitation from community groups. For instance, the Life Skills Program receives 10-15 formal requests per day from various organizations requesting access to LSU student-athletes (B. A. Sumler, personal communication, December 21, 2015). Other IORs are created in more casual ways. As noted above, CCACSA employees are involved in a number of trade associations through which they network to find organizations that may help them meet critical contingencies. Existing relationships may also lead to the formation of new relationships. As an example, through CCACSA's work with University Terrace Elementary School, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, which have clubhouses located near the school and serve many of its students, also reached out to CCACSA to create social-service joint programs (B. A. Sumler, personal communication, December 21, 2015). This is an example of a "compound relationship" proposed by Ross, Jr. and Robertson (2007). However, CCACSA administrators must be careful to investigate the motives of some outside organizations. For example, in addition to the brand recognition of being affiliated with LSU, some potential partners have inquired about "in-kind" benefits and access to the athletic program in the form of complementary tickets and other benefits (L. A. Bodack, personal communication, December 18, 2015).

The key factor for the CCACSA in prioritizing which partners to work with involves consistency with internal organizational goals (K. O. Miles, personal communication, April 21, 2015). The primary question to be answered is how the prospective relationship will benefit CCACSA's primary stakeholders—student-athletes themselves (L. A. Bodack, personal communication, December 18, 2015). In this vein, CCACSA follows the "prime beneficiary" principle proposed by Chelladurai (1987), in which an organization's effectiveness is measured by how well it serves the primary group for whose benefit the organization exists, in this case the LSU student-athletes. For example, within the Life Skills Program, partners are selected with the goal of exposing student-athletes to as much direct community interaction as possible (B. A. Sumler, December 18, 2015). As a result, LSU athletes often make note of how much they actually get out of the service opportunities and community outreach events presented through the CCACSA (Cavaretta, 2015; Lowe, 2011). Another important component in selecting and prioritizing relationships is the cost to the CCACSA of establishing or maintaining the relationship (L. A. Bodack, personal communication, December 18, 2015).

Finally, geography is a consideration. As both an investor and stakeholder in the greater Baton Rouge community and State of Louisiana, the CCACSA seeks social-service joint program relationships that will directly benefit local populations and businesses as much as possible (B. A. Sumler, personal communication, December 21, 2015). LSU student-athletes from the CCACSA have been closely involved not only with fundraising but also with direct cleanup efforts in the wake of natural disasters that affected Louisiana such as Hurricane Isaac in 2013 (Vincent, 2013). As noted above in the examples above, geographic and personal connections among external organizations also influence IOR formation and prioritization. An administrator from nearby University Terrace Elementary School, commented specifically on having athletes from the Baton Rouge community working with her students at their field day: "It shows the kids that people just like them, who come from places just like them, don't forget about the students. They come to give back to the community, and encourage the students to have fun, do their work, and live a productive life" (Howard, 2016b).

## Conclusion

IORs are critical for organizations to succeed in the modern economy and even in non-industry settings such as higher education. The CCACSA at LSU created a number of IORs in order to satisfy the six critical contingencies identified by Oliver (1990): necessity, legitimacy, asymmetry, reciprocity, efficiency, and stability. Furthermore, these relationships took various forms, including trade associations, agency federations, social service joint programs, and agency-sponsor linkages. Being positioned within a Power Five Division I FBS conference and situated in an urban environment which is the seat of the state government gives LSU and CCACSA an advantage in recruiting and formatting IORs that may not be generalizable to other institutional settings. In many cases, community groups and vendors reach out directly to the CCACSA in hopes of establishing these relationships. In these circumstances, as with many public sector organizations that must create multiple cross-sector relationships, the CCACSA administrators must be careful in evaluating the motives of these potential partners.

Applying IORs to academic centers for student-athletes is not a topic that has been heavily studied or researched since academic centers for student-athletes are still very young (Huml, et al, 2014). The CCACSA is an interesting example of how a public sector organization must form and maintain multiple complex cross-sector relationships in order to be effective. As part of both the LSU athletic department, which is financially independent, but also the greater university, the CCACSA has a unique ability to benefit from a diverse array of relationships, from large international corporations to local community service programs. However, this status does not come without difficulties. All IORs must be consistent with the organization's values. As suggested by many researchers, mutual goals, values, and missions are key in creating successful and enduring IORs (Cousens et al., 2006; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Kezar, 1995; Oliver, 1990). Identifying specific needs to be met by each relationship, and ensuring that the ongoing relationship in meeting these needs, is also paramount. Further, differences in organizational structure and culture may complicate the relationships. It is the hope of the authors that other academic service organizations can recognize the IORs that the CCACSA has formed and has yet to form are potentially reproducible within their own environments.

Case studies and longitudinal study of multiple IORs could be interesting topics related to innovation in student-athlete academic services and what determinants are necessary for academic centers to know so they can effectively create relationships with organizations without halting innovation or the diffusion of relationships. One known determinant that could be researched further would be the power structure of the organizational relationships, fueled mainly by the type of university the academic center is in, whether it be private, public, Christian, HBCU, etc. The type of university and the power structure within the university could influence the types of IORs an academic center has and it would be an extremely interesting area of future research empirically. Next, the cultural factors that determine the foundation and continuance of relationships could be empirically studied in the context of higher education. Continued research on the relationships academic centers have with organizations and how stakeholders are affected could be another area of future research. Looking at what relationships and organizations affect stakeholders as well as investigating the strength of ties and/or embeddedness would be the next step to take with the research done on IORs with CCACSA.

As far as general research on IORs is concerned, there should be more research on the effect geographic proximity has on IORs. Pieters et al (2012) found that geographic proximity did not have an effect on types of IORs developed, even though it was hypothesized that it would



and that result was surprising. Although technology and globalization exploded over the past 30 years, it seems plausible geographic proximity would still produce some effect on whether organizations develop positive relationships with each other, particularly when organizations, like the CCACSA, have so much invested in relationship-building with their internal and external constituents. The CCACSA social service joint programs are heavily influenced by geography. In cooperation, as outlined by Ross, Jr. and Robertson (2007), it is foreseeable that schools competing within the same conference (i.e., geographic area) will utilize and/or embrace similar relationships which will provide them resources to avoid failure and/or improve their collective brand (e.g., SEC, NCAA, etc.). These relationships, in this manner, serve as resource buffers to provide access to information, material resources, or technology (Bergenholtz & Waldstrom, 2011; Hillman, et al, 2009, Zaheer, et al, 2010).

Another worthwhile endeavor for scholars would be to reexamine the types of IORs defined by Oliver (1990), Ring and Van de Ven (1994) and Barringer and Harrison (2000). Some of the relationships that CCACSA has, such as those with other academic centers for student-athletes and with some intra-university offices, do not fit squarely within the traditional framework. It may therefore be necessary to develop new vocabulary for these IORs to help with the potential practical recognition and implementation of IORs. Finally, another future research project that could be done involves the impact of new IORs on old IORs and their ability to prohibit, advance, or maintain organizational success. In the case of the CCACSA, the strength and public or private presence of previous relationships often prompted the initiation and maintenance of future relationships.

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