



Trust Me, Don't Trust Me: Administrative Governance and the Shift to Big-Time Athletics at Towson University

Ryan King-White
Towson University

Adam Beissel
Miami University

Samuel Clevenger
Towson University

Neoliberalism on American college campuses has undoubtedly shaped the way administrators, faculty, staff, and students experience contemporary education. This manuscript utilizes extensive archival research at Towson University to examine the inception of neoliberalism influenced leadership by the President, his staff, faculty, and students in the late-1960s thru the early-1980s as they relate to intercollegiate athletics. We argue that the way(s) they reacted to socio-political arrangements and political movements during this time had an impressive a/effect on how University life is experienced today, particularly the ways in which intercollegiate athletics. In so doing, the goal of this manuscript is to reveal some of the positive aspects that neoliberal governance has had at Towson, whilst maintaining a critical eye on the unfortunate outcomes of such an approach. We conclude by arguing that not only is our analysis of intercollegiate athletics development at Towson important to better understand collective decision-making processes and logics that played out historically, it is instrumental in understanding the ways University, and its athletic programming, is organized and experienced today.

Keywords: neoliberalism, administrative governance, intercollegiate athletics, historical narrative

For more than a century, big-time college sports has been a wildly popular, but consistently problematic, part of American higher education (e.g. King-White, 2018a, 2018b). Sport historians and sociologists have documented how modern intercollegiate sports have long been impacted by their fundamental contradiction of being, at one and the same time, a commercial spectacle and an extracurricular activity (Ingrassia, 2014; Oriard, 2009; Sperber, 1990). College football has played an essential role in shaping the modern American university and the uneasy alliance between football and university has generated considerable debate over institutional priorities, strategic decision-making, and the university's overall educational mission (Ingrassia, 2014). The challenges posed to traditional academic values have been recognized for a long time, but have grown more ominous in recent decades as the ever-growing corporatization, commercialism, and spectacularization of college sports, and the emergence of the multi-billion dollar college sports economy (Clopton & Finch, 2012; Sack, 2009), have transformed sport into a means for capital accumulation and economic growth (Clotfelter, 2011).

Critiques have long been levied against Universities from spending exorbitant sums of money on stadia renovations, practice facilities, and campus space to practice arrangements that leave little time for athletes to be students among a myriad of other concerns (e.g. Council, Hodge & Bennett, 2018; Southall & Southall, 2018). Decriers warn that too much commercialism and too little academic emphasis in college athletics would result in athletes becoming sporting "professionals" rather than students first (Hawkins, 2013; Jozsa, 2012; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013; Zimbalist, 2001). University presidents, student and faculty groups, governing boards, and university alumni waged reform efforts to protect the "academic integrity" of education, restrict those "unsavory practices" associated with commercialized sports, and ensure the financial solvency and competitiveness of the institution (Smith, 2011).

Universities were being reshaped by the logic of the market and private enterprise, with an intensified focus on "accountability, efficiency, strategic planning, and managerialism" (King-White, 2018b, p. 7). This transformed the idea of the university as a place of higher learning into the modern idea of the university as a "corporate enterprise whose primary concern is with market share, servicing the needs of commerce, maximizing economic return and investment, and gaining competitive advantage in the 'Global Knowledge Economy'" (Shore, 2018, p. 282). Importantly, for this manuscript, this challenges the argument that neoliberal corporatization can *only* be used towards the ends of generating a recognizable profit, but rather that the ethos of neoliberalism was so pervasive that even leaders at non-profit institutions operated in a neoliberal manner which often trades direct economic surplus for image building and branding (e.g. King-White & Beissel, 2018). By relating the history of collegiate athletics programming to neoliberal capitalism's impact on higher education, this essay productively complicates predominant narratives on the commercialization of college sports and its role in continuing corporatization and "neoliberalization of American life" (Giroux, 2014).

The purpose of this paper is to better understand the impact of neoliberal capitalism on the corporatization of higher education by reconstructing the history of Towson State College's transformation of its collegiate athletics program to Division I "big-time" sports as this economic ideology and practice began taking hold. By reviewing University leadership's decision to reclassify multiple times under the NCAA's umbrella from Division III to Division I we hope to develop a deeper understanding about what the material consequences have been for key stakeholders at the institution. In so doing we believe that this will illuminate the ways in which

neoliberal capitalism shaped the decision-making processes and logic of stakeholders at regional institutions of higher learning in the latter half of the twentieth century. This marked an important institutional shift in the college's approach to athletics, one that signaled the development of a corporatized and commercialized athletics program that could create a distinct university identity and promote the institution's reputation nationally. What follows is a historical narrative of the institutional decision-making processes between 1960-1980 and governance structures that facilitated Towson's shift to Division I athletics. This paralleled Towson's transformation from a largely state-supported, regional institution with a focus on teacher education to a corporate university determined to use branding to create a (quasi-national) institutional identity positioned to be competitive in the neoliberal educational marketplace. We believe that providing such a reading of a relatively mundane school in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States can prove instructive to how most college campuses have developed in the late-20th and early-21st century, because this model is closely related to the ways a majority of institutions have developed during that time as well.

College Athletics and Neoliberal Governance

The term "neoliberalism" refers to the "theory of political economic practices" that since at least the 1980s has come to dominate the social, political, and economic landscape of the United States as well as much of the developed and developing world. Harvey (2005) argued that the central tenet of neoliberal ideology is that "human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills" by re-organizing institutions to value "contractual relations in the marketplace" above all other ethical values and beliefs (p. 2). As Harvey explained neoliberalism, "holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (p. 3). Although neoliberalism is a political ideology in the first instance, it is a series of political economic practices that proposes the reduction of the state apparatus in all aspects of life. The role of the state and institutional administrators, therefore, is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to the practices of ensuring strong private property rights, enforcing and honoring contracts, and guaranteeing the proper functioning of free trade and open markets. And in the instance that markets do not exist, then they must be created through state intervention, by force if necessary.

Although the political machinations of neoliberalism began to take shape in the 1960s and 70s, neoliberal ideology and policy rose in influence in the 1980s. In the United States neoliberalism was driven by the deregulation policies of President Ronald Reagan's administration and attempts by political leaders to revive a "stagflating" national economy they believed was encumbered by post-World War II "Keynesian" economic and social welfare policies and suffering from rising oil prices, unemployment, and inflation (King-White, 2018b). By shifting governmental support toward big business, privatization, and radical individualism, the economy became what might best be described as privileging the commodification of everyday life over and above most other social concerns. This notably impacted and continues to impact higher educational institutions. Once prominent social thinkers such as Jane Addams and John Dewey argued that education should be "focused on enabling young people to develop the values, skills, and knowledge required for them to enter adult life as critical citizens" (Giroux, 2012, pp. 2-3). However, under neoliberal hegemony, educational institutions became the targets for privatizing the educational experience and corporatizing school business (Giroux, 2012). The

dispiriting consequences of the corporatization of higher education has created what Giroux refers to as a “university in chains” – a model of higher education that reshapes the institution, where the university becomes a ‘franchise’, redefines faculty, students and adjuncts as entrepreneurs, customers, or clients, and is stripped of its role as a democratic public sphere and largely indifferent to furthering democratic public life.

The neoliberal university has often turned toward intercollegiate athletics to advance its aspirational and corporate vision(s) with “Big-Time College Sports” emerging as a mass consumer spectacle for the enhancement of its brand identity and market value. Several studies have been conducted in the sociology and (recent) history of sport that critically evaluate the relationship between neoliberalism, higher education, and sport. Notably, Peterson-Horner and Eckstein (2015) have outlined the close ties the mythological “Flutie Factor” (or “Flutie Effect”), or the mythological notion that the number of applications rises with on-field and on-court athletics success, while King-White and Beissel (2018) have demonstrated the shift in focus for administrators from education to providing the quintessential “college experience” via sport and its material consequences for key stakeholders at the University. Further, Ryan King-White’s edited book *Sport and the Neoliberal University* (2018) offers several chapters outlining a variety of concerns related to the neoliberal-institutional nexus ranging from administrative bloat, athlete abuse (Giroux, Giroux & King-White, 2018; Hawzen, Anderson & Newman, 2018), recruiting (Bustad & Mower, 2018), marketing (Southall & Southall, 2018), programmatic cuts (DeLuca & Batts-Maddox, 2018; Rick, 2018), Title IX (Staurowsky, 2018), consulting firms (King-White, 2018), reallocated state funds (Ternes & Giardina, 2018), and even international student athletes (Beissel, 2018).

While these manuscripts describe the influence neoliberal leadership has had on institutions, few have evaluated the reclassification process for an institution or institutions as some Universities have attempted to gain (inter)national notoriety via an increased focus on big time athletics. Notably within the pages of this journal, Weaver (2010) as well as Dwyer, Eddy, Havard, and Braa (2010) have provided critical analysis and cited other research on reclassification as it relates to administrative decision making and stakeholder perceptions respectively. These contributions, as important and insightful as they may be, do not take the step to dialectically link the focus of their studies to the neoliberal ideological and policy driven context from which they emerge. In this sense the manuscript at present seeks to fulfill the promise of what David Andrews (2002) would define as a (physical) cultural studies. More specifically, it aims to provide a depth of analysis on the nuts and bolts behind administrative decision making at Towson University leading to reclassification whilst also dialectically linking it to and within the developing neoliberal norms that were taking place at the time.

In some ways, the political machinations behind the reclassification process serves as a good example of neoliberal policy, but also demonstrate administrative willingness to trade future consequences for stakeholders (e.g. students’ finances, educational experience, faculty well-being) for short term political gains. Studied through the case of Towson’s athletics programming, we conceptualize the *neoliberalization of college sports* as a historical shift in institutional decision-making favoring the corporatization and marketization of sports programs and the re-organizing of sports programs according to the logic of a business. For some time, historians and scholars of college sports have examined the longstanding history of commercialization in American intercollegiate athletics and the evolution of college sports as what Oriard (2015) called a “commercial spectacle.”

This essay expands from these histories by considering the role of neoliberal hegemony in the commercialization of college sports in the twentieth century. By studying the transformation of Towson's athletics program through the lens of a developing neoliberal ideology, we highlight the ways in which university administrators re-conceptualized the importance of athletics on campus from a pedagogical activity associated with physical education to an institutional entity operating like a business via reclassification. For many American institutions the shift away from athletics as a site of learning toward spectacular sites of consumption fits in lockstep with the free-marketization and corporatization of neoliberalism. The case of Towson's athletics program in the late twentieth century allows us to trace this development, as the changes and political maneuverings required to disconnect the institution's sports teams from the academic realm took place roughly along the same timeline that most economic critics would place neoliberalism's rise to prominence - as well as the social and economic costs associated with it. The commercialization of college sports, and by extension the decline in viewing college sports as an important component in the university's physical education mission, was shaped by, and indeed worked to reproduce, the rise in neoliberal hegemony.

Importantly this is not to say that institutions just started moving toward big-time athletics in the neoliberal era. Some would point out that college sport had already been big-time before neoliberalism replete with its own problems (e.g. Smith, 2011). However, what we argue clearly separates Towson University's, and other similar schools, shift to incorporate (mid-)major college athletics under their institutional umbrella was the mindset, arguments, and material effects that generated and were realized by the move in a neoliberal context. No longer was big-time sport necessarily connected and sold to stakeholders by things like Muscular Christianity (Park, 2012; Setran, 2005), competitiveness and communal values (Austin, 2015) and American Cold War athletic superiority (Mondtez de Oca, 2013), but rather what a growing University should "look like." Indeed, as we will point out later, the decision to move Towson University athletics away from the Physical Education department to University Development (the private fundraising arm for the institution) is a clear indication for how leadership saw the role of athletics at a modern university.

Methodological Considerations

In an attempt to answer these questions, we used a multi-faceted qualitative approach to construct a historical narrative regarding the institutional decision-making processes and governance structures of intercollegiate athletics at Towson University. Day and Vamplew (2015) suggest that good historical research needs to clearly reveal where the researchers obtained resources so that another person could access the primary and secondary sources and replicate the study. They further argue that historians hold "a personal relationship with the subject" (p. 1715) that can dramatically shape their narrative presentation. By way of transparency the three contributing authors have had some connection with Towson University since 2004 as an undergraduate student, graduate student, and/or faculty member, and two remain employed there. Each have had some experience working with athletics in some capacity during that time, as well as intimate first-hand experience and access that few others would be able to offer to the study. Admittedly each individual could be critiqued as being "too close" to the subject to offer the objectivity some value in research. However, working from a more post-modern lens we are each accepting of this critique, because we believe the depth of knowledge

and experience brought about by the trade-off would seem evident. Further, in this particular version of the research we are studying a time period that has no doubt informed and shaped our personal experiences, but was from a past that we were not a part of.

To do so, we initially leaned heavily on archival data gleaned from the independent student newspaper *The Towerlight*. There is much debate within historical and managerial circles within sport (e.g. Wrynn, 2016) and in general (e.g. Hagemen, 2008; King, 2016) about the relative strengths and weaknesses archival work utilizing newspaper articles presents. In this regard Day and Vamplew (2015) state:

many sources are biased, most of them distort or filter the ‘truth’, and all of them need interpretation, there are important lessons for the sports historian. First, they should continually interrogate the archive to assess their sources carefully and to be able to defend any privileging of material. Second, they should accept that there are different versions of events depending from whose viewpoint the narrative is being constructed: historical perspective is a contested terrain with a plurality of meanings and sports historians can offer only one (their) interpretation of the past. (p. 1720)

For, on the one hand, the stories within *The Towerlight* pages are narrative accounts presented as “truths” that cannot easily be disentangled from the subject-positions of those who are writing them (often in our case young, white, and male). Furthermore, given the amount of time between writing and analysis, reflection by the authors and subjects in the stories can be illustrative of contemporary issues more so than the time they were originally put into print.

Yet, what is exceedingly clear, is that while newspaper articles are narrativized versions of the “truth,” shaped by the political underpinnings of the author and the times in which they were writing, these stories were and remain some of the most relevant forms of public truths that exist. Following Hill’s (2016) contention that supplementing these stories with the scant amount of Presidential papers, University Senate and Athletic committee meeting minutes that do exist “would intensify the empirical base of our (study), to be sure. But in itself this simply reaffirms conventional beliefs about the nature of sources” (p. 119). If we have learned nothing else from America under Trump it is that more facts matter little when paired against public truth (see: King-White, 2018b; Leitch, 2015; Roth, 2020). It is with that in mind that while the balance of this paper is perhaps overly reliant on *The Towerlight* articles it could be argued that these help encapsulate public sentiment on campus during the late-1960s through the early 1980s. Yet, at some points, where and when we could, some of the information we were able to glean from this period did need corroboration – dare we say more *facts*.

For our archival work, we combed through extensive Towson’s history, reading and taking notes on the development of the athletics department from documents in the University archives. During the data collection process much of the source material was being digitized into the Cook Library Special Collections online (<https://archives.towson.edu/>), and the two lead archivists (at the time as one has since moved on) at the institution shared source information and documentation that they had regarding the development of the athletics program.

This collection provided several empirical materials and historical documents:

- 1: Over fifty years of *The Towerlight*.

- 2: Every university budget since 1952 that contained important financial information such as tuition and mandatory fees for students.
- 3: More than fifty years of the Towson University annual bulletins, a catalogue that provided a unique snapshot into institutional and campus life.
- 4: Athletics and campus construction plans, annual athletic department budgets, and general athletics communication to internal and external audiences (like the variety of task forces the institution put together with the members of the campus community and Board of Visitors to shape decision making processes which became more “official” in the years after the one’s examined in this manuscript).
- 5: Official university communications that shared important announcements and updates on the evolving role of university athletics at Towson University (senate minutes and Presidential papers).
- 6: Articles in the Baltimore Sunⁱ covering the development of athletics on campus.

The importance of examining historical texts to understand organizational decision-making and power is not new. As Giddens (1985) reminds us, written texts have long been associated with forms of administrative power. In the sporting context Joseph Maguire (2011) proclaims “such an approach facilitates an analysis of how the present is connected to the past and how exponents of these disciplines need to examine the structured processes within which sport development occurred” (p. 874). Indeed the production of written documents may well be the most distinctive quality of modern organizational life and it is through the modern bureaucratic organization that the production and use of documents may be its most full and powerful expression.

To clarify our understandings from these primary sources we reached out to numerous individuals for unstructured interviews who were able to provide a more nuanced understanding of administrative decisions prior to and after the reclassification period (1966-1984) about the external pressures facing individuals as well as the institution. This has led to numerous discussions both “on-the-record” and “off the cuff” (Amis, 2005; Silk, 2005) with individuals who were able to speak directly on many of our questions and, often, created further avenues of inquiry. As Patton suggested, “interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Interviews can be a valuable source of data for researchers to gain an insider view on the experiences of individuals. These first person accounts are strategies for exploring in depth the thoughts and feelings that individuals as well as offering insight into phenomena of interest to researchers.

Specifically, our lead investigator interviewed three living former institutional leaders James Fisher who served a direct role as President during much of the time period under review (1969-1979), Robert Caret who was Provost (1988-1994), President (2003-2011), then Chancellor of the University System of Maryland (2015-2020), and Timothy Chandler whose role at the University oscillated between Provost, interim President, back to Provost, then colleague between (2012-present). Questions centered, but were not solely focused on: What role athletics played in the development of the institution? What the nature of their relationship was with student (media) groups like *The Towerlight*, the Student Government Association, and

Athletics Department? What role did shared governance play in this development? What constraints and influences were behind University expansion?

Interviews were recorded and each subject was permitted to review any direct quotes included in the document for accuracy of meaning. Informed consent was obtained through oral and/or written consent. Given the specificity of the time period in question, no anonymity was provided to these *key actors* because they would be easily identifiable. Additionally, any potential harm to these particular participants would be minimal as they have all moved on from their positions and/or are retired. All research protocols were approved by the Towson University Institutional Review Board. In a sense, this approach has made us more understanding of administrative decisions over the years, as we have come to learn about external pressures they have had to contend with during that time.

Beyond relying solely on administrative leaders, under condition of anonymity and IRB approval, we also connected with:

- 1: Senior faculty who shared memories of their relationships with past Presidents, athletic administrators, and student-athletes.
- 2: Librarians and archivists who would willingly engage in deep conversations about the University's development particularly as it pertained to sport, and often provide new avenues of inquiry.
- 3: Veteran student government leaders openly discussed the struggles they had in drumming up fellow student interest in athletics, conflicts with administration over tailgating, and who had control of the student groups that would occasionally form to support intercollegiate sport teams.
- 4: Former and current coaches who often waxed poetic about when college athletics was seemingly more idyllic, and quite the opposite from the spectacle driven programming justifying the administrative glut in sport today.

Former and current coaches who often waxed poetic about when college athletics was seemingly more idyllic, and quite the opposite from the spectacle driven programming justifying the administrative glut in sport today.

The empirical material collected from our archival work and interviews was analyzed to construct a historical narrative documenting the transformation of the athletic department at Towson University during the 1960s-1980s. The lead on this project utilized content analysis on all written records in conjunction with personal interviews. This data was later analyzed and developed into interpretive themes. They then passed the information on to the other two investigators to conduct a similar review and follow up questions were posed of the lead and her/his interview subjects. Through discussion we developed several thematic categories, and presented to participants for member checking. The stories they shared have had a dramatic effect on our interpretations. We then held several discussions and made tough decisions about what seminal moments to include and remove from the manuscript based on what Gary James (2016) suggests contributed to the "general tendencies of sporting activity over time" (p. 1173) at Towson University.

Importantly, this study is not possible to generalize across *all* institutions, but it does provide a deep understanding of how neoliberalism and a singular institution has interacted. Other institutions have their own histories ones that, we believe, are closely related to Towson and this study can provide a means and methodology with which to understand them. Surely, our methodology could be critiqued as being incomplete, as all histories invariably can be, and that it could be done in better and more incisive ways. However, we believe that the research methodology for this manuscript was sound, is verifiable, and replicable in such a manner as to be considered a *good* representation of the historical struggle incorporating neoliberal ideology into the athletic development at the University.

Going Big(-Time) or Going Bust

Throughout the data collection process, and guided by numerous discussions with the archivists, it appears that administrative leadership led, at that time by President James “Jim” Fisher, made major changes in an effort to fulfill his vision that the University service the needs of the state. By 1971 an official University publication stated:

President Fisher believes no other institution in America has changed more in the past two years than Towson State. During his first years, through the anguishing and fulfilling efforts of faculty members, staff, and students working together, there were major changes in the basic fabric of the institution: a new College governance format based on the premise that those affected by decisions should have a voice in their making was instituted; new standards of evaluation and grading based on long known but little used premises of human learning were adopted; changes were made to provide both academic substance and student freedom in selecting courses; and there were changes in admission which were more consistent with the literature of the prediction of college success. (Extra, 1971, p. 10)

In sum, this meant that the institution would lurch forward by taking on a more managerial mentality from leadership, grow a much larger student body population, and drag the intercollegiate sport program along with it.

Towson University’s shift from a small College and Division III school designed to train future school teachers toward one that has become more enamored with looking the part of a big-time research University “now reflects a commercialized and corporate university where branding, marketing, and profit maximization has supplanted educational substance and the university as a democratic public sphere” (King-White & Beissel, 2018, p. 336) did and has not progressed seamlessly. What this genealogical portion of the project found was that as administrators ever so slowly guided the institution in ways that reflected brand image and “looking the part” of a big institution without the state funding to support it (e.g. Fisher, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977) many stakeholders balked. From our data collection themes of conflict around growth, management, and appearance of the institution as it pertained to sport were consistently written about and discussed in *The Towerlight* but not so heavily in internal documentation saved by the archives. In what follows we attempt to provide a coherent narrative around these themes to tell the story about how a singular institution developed at the dawning of the age of early-neoliberalism.

Physical Education at Towson State College

As late as the 1960s, then-Towson State College continued to promote, at least in its institutional publications, the longstanding notion that higher education should prepare students for their eventual responsibilities as citizens in a democratic society. In a 1960 college catalogue, Towson declared one of their aims to teach students to “practice the values of democracy” and accept “the responsibilities as well as the privileges involved” (*State Teachers College at Towson Catalogue*, 1960). In this context, campus opportunities for athletics were often administered in conjunction with physical education and continued to buttress the institution’s complementary goal of helping students foster optimum physical and mental health. The stated purpose of the college in 1960, then named State Teacher’s College at Towson (STC), was to “provide learning experiences through which students may acquire a broad cultural background, professional knowledge and skills, and a philosophy of education.” This included a list of principles associated with not only lifelong learning but the maintenance and improvement of each student’s physical and mental health. During this time, admission to the college required that incoming students “meet acceptable standards of health and physical fitness” (*State Teachers College at Towson Catalogue*, 1960).

According to departmental records in the library special collections, Towson athletics started in 1927 with the creation of a men’s soccer team, while tennis, basketball, baseball, and track followed soon thereafter. By 1938 Towson men’s sport joined the Mason-Dixon conference as a “college” and remained in the conference as a Division II school from 1973 until it disbanded in 1978 and the joined the East Coast Conference (ECC) for the balance of the time period this manuscript reflects on (Special Collections, 2021). From 1965 to 1975 enrollment expanded over 400% from ‘the low 3,000s to the mid-13000s’ (King-White & Beissel, 2018, p. 338) while more formalized women’s athletics and football were added to the docket. Women participated in the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) until 1982, and football started at the Division III level until 1980 when it made the jump to Division II, then to Division IA (FCS) in 1987 where it remains. Thus, the time period we are looking at reveals the shift from a deemphasized sport and physical activity structure toward one that is carefully managed, professionally coached, and re-formed into modern sporting spectacle (e.g. King-White, 2018c; King-White & Beissel, 2018).

Initially, the campus athletic facilities created to carry out these principles reflected the institution’s continued association of athletics with physical education. Towson’s primary athletics facility was the Wiedefeld Gymnasium, named after former STC president Dr. M Teresa Wiedefeld. In 1960, the gymnasium was arguably a space for physical education and exercise. Weidefeld housed “offices, special rooms for individual physical education work, and shower, locker and dressing room facilities” along with a “large playing floor” and “spectators’ balcony” presumably for athletic contests. In addition to the gymnasium, the campus included an “Athletic Field” surrounded by a quarter-mile cinder track, used for sports like track, soccer, and baseball. The college did not yet have specialized fields and facilities for specific sports. This type of treatment for sport was not unique to Towson in the state as the University of Maryland utilized Ritchie Coliseum in similar ways until 1955 when Cole Field House opened (Holliday & Moore, 2006), and others regionally like Rec Hall at Penn State University (Penn State News, 2011)

These facilities were accessible to the entire student population and were sustained in part through a “student athletic fee” of fifteen dollars a year, that begat a cottage industry of often

unwitting donors to intercollegiate athletics (e.g. Ridpath, Porto, Gurney, Lopiano, Sack, Willingham & Zimbalist, 2015). The college planned to build more facilities for athletics and physical education, specifically a “new physical education building” and “additional playing fields.” The early 1960’s catalogues indicate that the college sought the construction of facilities related to physical education and general student athletics, rather than specialized, “big-time” sporting facilities (*State Teachers College at Towson Catalogue*, 1960; *Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*, 1964). According to the scant few Presidential and Athletics documents from that time period, as well as in consultation with the University Archivists, it appears that President Earle Hawkins (1947-1968) was more interested in growing the infrastructure of the institution with campus buildings, new major offerings, and enrollment than any specific focus on sport (Knox, 2020, personal communications)

During the 1960s, intercollegiate athletics opportunities at Towson continued to be governed by a sex segregated system, reflecting predominant gender norms of the period. As late as 1969, student athletics at Towson were administered through two gender-defined administrative bodies: the “Men’s Intramural Activities Association” and the “Women’s Athletic Association” (*State Teachers College at Towson Catalogue*, 1969). Each were tasked with overseeing the athletics and recreational opportunities on campus for male and female students. Towson College catalogues during the decade note that men’s competitive sports teams play in the Mason-Dixon Conference, the now defunct Division II athletics conference. Women’s athletics were organized in cooperation with the “Women’s Physical Education Department,” coordinating opportunities for sports such as hockey, soccer, tennis, golf, basketball, swimming, volleyball and softball, as well as other sporting activities such as archery, bowling, badminton, and dancing. Though not unique to Towson, given that there existed no NCAA women’s sport option until 1971, the fact that men’s athletic opportunities were organized in association with Division II competitive sports while women’s opportunities were coordinated with physical education demonstrates the complex ways in which physical education intertwined with athletics opportunities along gender lines (*State Teachers College at Towson Catalogue*, 1960; *Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*, 1964; *Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*, 1968; *Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*, 1969).

By organizing athletics opportunities in relation to physical education and the democratic intentions of the institution, Towson’s administrative logic in the 1960s exemplified the influence of Cold War body politics. According to Verbrugge (2012), American political officials during the Cold War approached physical fitness as a matter of national security. “[T]o ensure vitality here and abroad,” political leaders argued, “American education, capitalism, technology, and defense must be augmented through heavy investments in scientific research, military readiness, and economic growth” (p. 202). In 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower organized the President’s Council on Youth Fitness specifically to promote and improve the fitness, exercise habits, and overall health of American youth in anticipation for possible conflict with the Soviet Union (Verbrugge, 2012). This national discourse on national fitness levels articulated postwar gender ideologies, with the federal government increasingly worrying that a “muscle gap” between American and Soviet men threatened American domestic and international interests (Montez de Oca, 2005).

In this politicized context, with college football and collegiate sports increasingly tied to long held questions and concerns of American “softness” and the national interest (e.g. Zang, 2001), Towson continued to promote student opportunities for athletics in tandem with physical education and the institution’s overall objective of cultivating physical and mentally healthy,

democratic American citizens (Montez de Oca, 2013). Donald “Doc” Minnegan who was the athletics director and coached numerous athletics teams at Towson adhered closely to the belief that “sport is an opportunity to grow a person, and grow a person as somebody who would give back to society...he was *the* coach here during World War II and one of his major concerns was that any student he sent out into war would be prepared for what they would encounter” (Towson Athletics, 2018). Thus, pre-dating the era of big-time competition, spectacle, and branding sport at Towson was really about creating the whole person, but because football was around the corner the infrastructure was in place for Towson administration to seize upon it in neoliberal ways.

More to the point, while Towson fielded competitive teams in men’s and women’s sports in the 1960s, the available athletics facilities on campus, combined with the information in the college’s catalogues, suggests that the institution continued to understand athletics in terms of pedagogy and its relation to physical education. Multiple competitive teams practiced and competed on the campus “athletic field,” often adjacent to spaces used for activities associated with physical education (for example, Towson included an archery range near the athletic field during the 1960s). The college catalogues in the 1960s often detailed sex-segregated opportunities for physical educational options. Until 1969, the college required that students continue to pay an “athletic fee,” ranging from fifteen to twenty-five dollars per year, that was “assigned to the [student] athletic associations and used for the athletic and physical education program” (*State Teachers College at Towson Catalogue*, 1960).

Towson’s athletic program did not include opportunities to play football until 1969, when the college created a “J.V. football” team for the male students (*Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*, 1968). In the “Football Feasibility Summary” published in 1966:

according to projections, Towson State’s enrollment will reach 6,000 by 1968, including 2,400 male students. As a result of Baltimore County’s high school football program, more men could reasonably be expected to attend the college if it offered football” (Minnegan & Case, 1966, p. 1).

This suggests that, until the arrival of the 1970s, Towson’s athletics program continued to operate in the logic of providing opportunities for competitive sports in tandem with the need to instill physical education in the students and fulfill the democratic and educational aims of the institution.

Early in his tenure, President Fisher intimated that his logics for leadership were guided by the cold war notion of body politics that emphasized holistic physical activity and well-being among its college students intertwined with a growing number of students entering college, administrators deciding how to woo them, house them, and educate them (e.g. Fisher, 1969, 1970, 1973). The organization of physical activity and athletic teams both reflected and reproduced dominant discourses of holistic physical education through the use of available physical facilities and spaces which were available to everyone on campus. These physical education spaces were constructed and funded through a nominal student athletic fee (\$15-25 per annum) assed to all students. The purpose of these communal spaces was clearly to promote the physical activity and community of the entire student population.

Yet, by the 1970s, as “the bureaucratic and corporate logics of neoliberalism and late capitalism” came to “dominate the way(s) modern American universities are administered and experienced,” there was “a marked shift away from these aforementioned goals (King-White &

Beissel, 2018). It was during the lead up to and throughout 1970s that Towson State College promoted their membership in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), embraced “big-time” college sports like football, Men’s basketball, and lacrosse and committed itself institutionally to “comprehensive intercollegiate and intramural athletic programs for men as integral parts of the student’s total education experience.” (*Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*, 1968).

Discussion

Major changes in administrative direction at Towson in the 1970s led to a transformation of athletics policy. The year 1969 saw the arrival of a new president, the former U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer Dr. James Fisher. During Fisher’s tenure as president from 1969 to 1978, Towson State College underwent significant growth in terms of campus construction, the reorganization of educational programs, and the number of enrolled students. By 1975, over 15,000 students were enrolled at Towson, a dramatic increase from 8,000 just six years previous. According to an institutional history of Towson, Fisher guided the college through an impressive expansion of the student body and new building construction during his tenure (see: King-White & Beissel, 2018). Towson’s growth was guided by the twin forces of a) an increasing number of potential students as baby boomer generation aged into young adulthood and b) a moral commitment to increasing opportunity and access to higher education throughout the state of Maryland and the nation (Fisher, 1970, 1971, 1972). This expansion, importantly, occurred during a period marked by widespread social unrest and national movements for civil rights. Towson, having only a few years previous declared for the first time that admission “shall be determined without regard to race, color, religion, or sex,” continued to be marred by racial segregation on campus (Esslinger et al., 2016, p. 82). It was in this context that President Fisher sought to enhance Towson’s brand and image through the expansion of the university and its athletic program – a key tenant of neoliberal style leadership that was beginning to take hold.

As president, Dr. Fisher became the key administrator in the redefining and re-organizing of Towson athletics. In the early 1970’s he teamed with Wayne Schelle, Towson’s director of business and finance, to obtain the funds from the state of Maryland to develop the college’s infrastructure and accommodate the significant growth in number of enrolled students. Vice President, Paul Wisdom would also suggest in a public address that “during the past several years the College has taken deliberate steps to enhance its public image and attractiveness... to establish closer and more meaningful relationships with the external community” (1973). This included the dramatic expansion and construction of specialized athletics facilities on campus (Stetka, 1976).

In the 1970s, Fisher secured \$12 million for the construction of the 5,200-seat Towson Center athletic arena, complete with locker rooms, athlete training facilities, and offices for athletic administration. (Bankert, 1975) The arena was promoted to be a facility for multiple college sports teams, including basketball and volleyball (Gilmore, 1976). The Towson Center also provided administrative offices and classroom space for the physical education program as well as racquetball courts and exercise rooms accessible by the general student population. The strategic design of the Towson Center as a multi-purpose facility for both physical education and the administration of athletics allowed Fisher to secure state funding and defend its construction as a means of furthering the academic mission of the university. The Towson Center’s construction also portended a sign of the times that began to blur the boundary between physical

education and university athletics as other institutions started to build or expand upon grand cathedrals and coliseums in sport.

The construction of the Towson Center arena was followed in 1978 by a \$10 million football stadium, a project plagued by delays and controversy (Gounaris, 1978). What was clear, however, was that Towson sports facilities under Dr. Fisher's tenure became increasingly spectacularized in terms of cost and scale, and specialized in their focus on big-time sports like football and basketball. This construction and expansion of athletics facilities occurred as Dr. Fisher publicly addressed the official athletics policy of the institution: "the academic mission of the University must remain foremost in all endeavors undertaken by programs within the University, including athletics..." Emphatically, Fisher declared that "there will be no 'big-time' athletics at Towson State" (Haas, 1977a).

Towson's overall expansion in the 1970s occurred during a time in which administrators increasingly debated moving men's sports teams to Division I athletics as part of their goal of enhancing their overall image. Up until the 1979 men's sports at Towson competed at the Division III level for football and the Division II level for the other teams, while the women's teams competed in the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW). By 1976, however, the Towson administration initiated marketable measures to "enhance the image of Towson State with people," specifically renaming the institution Towson State University, which, and according to Dr. Fisher, was a "cosmetic worth having" (Stetka, 1976). Indeed, Fisher was quoted in a front-page article in *The Towerlight* proclaiming that big-time college sports had "reached such dimensions that it must be questioned by all educators and concerned citizens." Fisher wanted "no misunderstanding in or outside the university community concerning the philosophy under which our program will be administered" (Binns, 1976).

The new Towson Center arena, according to Fisher, "would not be the beginning of big time athletics at Towson," and that the building was "to be used for physical education rather than athletics" (Binns, 1976). While the construction of specialized athletics facilities and re-branding of the institution's name to Towson State University indicated a shift in emphasis towards marketability and commercialization, Dr. Fisher continued to emphasize the link between the administration of athletics and physical education in the campus newspaper. This link was perhaps most discernable in the dual appointments of university athletic coaches as physical education faculty at Towson. Three Head Coaches of the most popular sports at Towson – Carl Runk (Lacrosse), Vince Angotti (Men's Basketball) and Phil Albert (Football) – were also full-time faculty in the physical education department, a feature that Fisher highlighted often when facing criticism that university athletics was somehow incompatible with the university's broader mission while they privately seethed over perceived under compensation (personal communications, 2018). Of course, at the time, and even well beyond varsity coaches of all sorts taught courses at institutions across the United States.

The decision to move men's sport teams to Division I revealed gender divisions within Towson sports. Whereas men's athletics became increasingly organized and administered according to market logics, with administrators seeking to enhance the status of the programs in order to enhance the overall brand of the institution, women's athletics at Towson remained "under the sponsorship" of the Women's Physical Education Department and preserved the segregation of college athletics according to sex as "women were determined to keep athletics in an educational environment" (Bell, 2008, p. 2). According to Towson's 1970-1971 college catalogue, the college discontinued a men's athletic association, a campus organization tasked with administering opportunities for athletics in which all male students were members. In its

place, the catalogue emphasized that the men's sports teams were affiliated with the NCAA and the Mason-Dixon Conference, while noting that an "opportunity is provided for all students who desire to participate" (*Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition, 1970*). By comparison, the catalogue stated that the "Women's Physical Education Department and the Women's Athletic Association promote an active sports program for all women enrolled at Towson State College" (*Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition, 1970*). A year prior to the passage of Title IX, in which the U.S. government declared that extracurricular opportunities at federally-funded educational institutions could not discriminate on account of sex, Towson's commercialization of sports appeared to reinforce the distinction in terms of the potential lucrateness of big-time men's sport teams (Brake, 2010).

Moreover, the contradiction between the administration's defense of the institution's "academic mission" and the dramatic construction of multi-million-dollar athletics facilities demonstrated the class politics of "amateur" college sports in the United States at the time. The commercialization of college sports, an issue present since the emergence of organized intercollegiate competitions in the mid-nineteenth century, has long been accompanied by institutional efforts to supervise and control athletics and protect the educational mission of colleges and universities. Along with the formation of the NCAA in 1905, schools through the twentieth century regulated their athletics programs by instituting a "code of amateurism," and argued sport should be played "for sport's sake." As Pope (1997) explained, amateurism was "invented" in the 1800s by members of the British upper-class who sought to distinguish their practices along racial, gender, and class lines to create an exclusive sporting tradition that was more "civilized" than the professional sporting tradition of the working class.

The later emergence and popularization of the term "student-athlete" – an invented term in 1964 by then NCAA Executive Director Walter Byers to counter attempts to require universities to pay worker's compensation – circulates as a symbolic reminder of the code of amateurism and the educational values of university athletics. The instituting of a code of amateurism by colleges and universities, however, did little to stem the increasingly commercialization of intercollegiate athletics. For most of the twentieth century, colleges and universities publicly pledged their allegiance to amateur sporting ethics and the usage of the term "student-athletes" as a way of protecting their academic mission, while in reality "sustaining the trend toward professionalism and commercialism" by capitalizing on the popularity and revenue-generating capacity of big time athletics programs (Chudacoff, 2015). Similarly, President Fisher's athletics policy served to publicly shield the administration from the criticism that their apparent move to big time athletics would jeopardize the academic mission of the institution. By trumpeting the dual appointment of coaches as physical education faculty, and the inclusion of physical education classrooms in Towson's most visible athletic facility Fisher made it difficult to argue that Towson was diving headlong into the commercial arena. However, much like Emperor Palpatine in *Star Wars* films, in retrospect, it appears that he had long been laying plans to do just that.

The decision to move men's competitive sports to Division I was not the result of universal agreement at the institution as the *Towerlight* reported division in the University Senate ("No Wine and 'Roses' for TSU Sports," 1976). However, according to the late football coach, Phil Albert, "Jim was always going to make us Division I . . . to keep up with the Jones's" (personal communication, 2019). A commentary in *The Towerlight* suggested many people within the community felt that "Towson State, along with becoming a University, should step up

their athletic program to compete on a big-time level in several major sports, such as football basketball and lacrosse” (“No Wine and ‘Roses’ for TSU Sports,” 1976).

The rationale of the commentary was that Towson State with a “larger enrollment than many major colleges including Duke University, the University of Mississippi, Notre Dame University, and Wake Forest University,” should follow the footsteps of these schools who achieved higher status through big-time sports and “the necessary evil of money” (No Wine and ‘Roses’ for TSU Sports, 1976). Then-Towson Athletic Director Thomas Meinhardt, however, seemed to view President Fisher’s policy on athletics as a reminder of the athletics staff’s “responsibilities to work towards excellence under the ‘parameters of small time athletics,’” a reference to the university’s status as a Division II and III athletics program (Meinhardt, 1976). In the mid-1970s, the big three men’s sports teams at Towson—football, basketball, and lacrosse, enjoyed considerable success. The basketball team was ranked number one in the country for much of the 1976-1977 season, the football team reached the 1976 Division III national championship, while the lacrosse team won the Division II national championship in 1974. This allowed administrators to state publicly that Towson athletics could be successful without appearing to succumb to commercialization of big-time athletics. President Fisher was quoted in *The Towerlight* as saying the achievements in men’s sports affirmed that “we did it the right way...we became #1 without prostituting ourselves. It is a philosophy that should permeate the entire college scene” (Haas, 1977a).

Multiple unplanned factors, however, pushed the Towson athletics program towards financial benefits of Division I competition. First, the success of multiple men’s teams led the football, basketball, and lacrosse coaches to ask for salary increases as well as call for scholarship resources to recruit elite talent, revealing the financial and recruiting limitations of the program. As explained in a 1977 article in *The Towerlight*, the recruitment of athletic talent in the 1970s depended on each coach’s recruiting skills and lowered admission standards that allowed the Athletic Department to place athletes with unsatisfactory admissions requirements into a “special skills program” that could guide the student-athletes “into a curriculum that fits their particular needs...” (Haas, 1977b). Still, basketball coach Vince Angotti argued for more scholarship resources for recruitment: “The success of our team...only gets me in the door...Then it gets down to dollars and cents” (Haas, 1977b). Towson coaches, at this time, also taught in the physical education department and received little to no compensation for their coaching labor. Athletic Director Thomas Meinhardt, however, stated that Towson’s “no coaching salary” policy would not change “in the near future.” With no hope for a salary increase, Vince Angotti announced he would resign following the conclusion of the 1977-78 season to pursue a graduate degree in physical education, tendering his resignation to Athletic Director Meinhardt who at the time was still affiliated with the physical education department at Towson (Jones, 1977). Lacrosse coach Carl Runk, also affiliated with physical education, began teaching sign language courses as a salary supplement (Scally, 1977).

Second, Towson men’s competitive sports in the 1970s were affiliated with the Mason-Dixon Conference, a Division II athletics conference that was “on its death bed” at the time due to member schools joining other conferences. The decline of the Mason-Dixon Conference led Towson administrators like President Fisher and Athletic Director Meinhardt to consider moving Towson athletic to Division I level, which would entail a dramatic increase in the amount of funds dedicated to athletic scholarships and recruitment (Gring, 1978). Meinhardt indicated that there were “mixed feelings” amongst Towson faculty regarding whether the athletics program should move to Division I competition. “There’s an inherent fear in people of ‘big time’

athletics,” Meinhardt said, “and I think the faculty in general feels that athletics going ‘big time’ will tend to make the academic area less important, and that’s not the case” (Gring, 1978). Dr. Norman Sheets, the Dean of the Applied Sciences, which governed the physical education department and athletic program at the time, argued that “all [athletics] grants should be based on need,” and believed the amount athletics received at the time, \$30,000 in total, was “an ample amount” (Gring, 1978). Sheets believed “athletics is a very important part of the physical education program...I feel we are in a situation that best fits our academic needs” (Gring, 1978). Meinhardt, however, supported the move to Division I. He points to the success of Division I programs at prestigious schools like Notre Dame and Ohio State, and argued, “The athletic program doesn’t take away from the academics. I think it enhances it” (Gring, 1978).

What is clear from this reconstructed narrative is that the transition of the Towson athletic program to Division I competition was a complicated, oscillating process, involving multiple stakeholders who held opposing views regarding the benefits of entering the realm of “big time” athletics. Through late 1970s, the university’s athletic department, including men’s and women’s sports, like many other schools, was located within the department of physical education. When basketball coach Vince Angotti tendered his resignation, the resignation was received by Athletic Director Meinhardt but needed to be accepted by the physical education department (Jones, 1977). As the previous quote by Dr. Sheets demonstrates, Towson athletics continued to be understood and approached in terms of its relation to physical education, academics, and the pedagogical mission of the institution. This, however, was also the same decade in which, under the director and leadership of Dr. James Fisher, Towson constructed specialized, multi-million-dollar athletics facilities with the intention of enhancing Towson’s image, status, and overall brand. This process of corporatization occurred and continued, often in contradiction with the public statements of Towson administrators and the seeming demand of the student population. Around the same time that Athletic Director Meinhardt announced his support for moving men’s competitive sports to Division I, he wrote an editorial in *The Towerlight* voicing his support of the basketball team and exhorting the student body for its lack of support. Even though “Towson has one of the finest facilities in this part of the country, the Towson Center,” Meinhardt wrote, “[t]he average attendance is about 700-800 people (sometimes more than half for the opposing team): the vocal support is almost non-existent, and there is *no* pep band” (Meinhardt, 1978). The neoliberalization of Towson athletics in the latter half of the twentieth century, in short, occurred in context defined not by seamless transition, but by conflict, disagreement, and ambivalence.

In addition, the transition to Division I revealed the gender divisions in the way the institution understood athletics. At the conclusion of the 1977-1978 athletics season, President Fisher appointed a “task force” to help determine whether Towson State should move forward in transitioning their men’s competitive sports to Division I. The idea of moving competitive sports to “big time” athletics seemed at odds with Fisher’s own athletic policy issued in 1976, which stated that “[w]hile ‘big time’ athletics may not preclude the possibility of a balanced and important academic experience for athletes and others...it has reached such dimensions in America that it must be questioned by all responsible educators and concerned citizens...” (Binns, 1976). The task force, however, did not seem to concern itself with women’s competitive sports teams and their affiliation with physical education. Judging by the university catalogs and published discourse in *The Towerlight*, it was not a matter of controversy that women’s athletics remained wedded to the department of physical education as the administration contemplated moving men’s competitive sports to Division I. President Fisher’s task force, it must be

remembered, was organized just six years after the monumental passage of Title IX, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex at federally-funded institutions (Brake, 2010). However, in 1978, the focus of the administration appeared to be on the status and potential benefits of transition men's competitive sports to a level of competition that would entail a dramatic increase in scholarships, expenditures, and revenue generation (Gring, 1978).

Nonetheless, the Towson's president's task force on athletics unanimously agreed that the program should move up to Division II for football and Division I for all other men's sports at the university. This decision was reached despite scant evidence of public support for such a decision from faculty, students, or even the university president. Though the decision conflict with President Fisher's athletics policy just two years previous, he announced that he was "accepting the report of the task force and would use the summer months to plan for the implementation of the new athletic direction" (Jones, 1978). "[I]t remains a fact," reporter Steve Jones of *The Towerlight* wrote, "that in a few short years" Towson's athletic program "has moved from little Wiedemeyer Gym and an embryonic sports program to a modern, spanking new athletic facility in the Towson Center and an athletic program which is ready to hit the pinnacle of American college sports, the NCAA's Division I" (Jones, 1978). The new direction in athletics, Fisher asserted, would "not diminish the academic standards of the university, which will continue to be as stringent as possible" (Jones, 1978). While some in the Towson community lamented the demise of the "small-college sports atmosphere," others agreed with the move, pointing to the fact that "a big-time atmosphere has existed at Towson over the past several years," augmented by the "the construction of multimillion-dollar sports complexes such as the Towson Center and Stadium and the national exposure that the program has received because of its top-ranked teams" (Jones, 1978).

There was plenty of disagreement on the Towson campus regarding this decision. Then-wrestling coach Bill Forbes disagreed with the move to Division I "big time" sports, warning, "They are making a monumental mistake if they move up to Division I status... First of all, where are they going to get the money that is going to be the tagline for monetary inducements? You're talking about a lot of money that is only theoretical at best" (Gounaris, 1978). Basketball coach Vince Angotti, however, argued that "other area schools [are] initiating scholarship programs, and I wonder just how well we'll be able to compete around here for long... [A] lot of schools are going all out in this respect, and we just can't sit back without any action of our own" (Gounaris, 1978). Towson women's basketball coach Rita Yerkes wisely remarked that Division I athletics "can produce one of two situations: we can abuse the resources and power... with all sorts of illegal recruiting violations and other problems; or we can go along... winning titles for ten straight years without any questionable instances whatsoever" (Gounaris, 1978). The key, Yerkes explained, "the people running the show, the administrators, who can prolong respectability" (Gounaris, 1978). *Towerlight* reporter Tim Gounaris, who understood that "anything gridiron costs a lot of dough" and that a "good deal of financial drainage would go to these guys," asked football assistant coach Tim Wanless for a comment (Gounaris, 1978). Wanless said, "This school has seen success in so many other areas, culturally and academically, so why not a transfer over into athletics? It's just another way to enhance Towson's attempt to be the best in whatever endeavor, making us a greater service to the community and the students" (Gounaris, 1978).

In the summer of 1978, Dr. James Fisher, who served as president of Towson State University throughout the 1970s, resigned his post to join the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (Gilmore, 1978). Fisher's immediate replacement, Dr. Joseph Cox, decided

that because there was now an “increased emphasis on Intercollegiate Athletics” at Towson, it was necessary to separate the athletics program from physical education and “place competitive athletics in a business atmosphere rather than an academic atmosphere” (Malachin, 1978). Towson faculty openly questioned this move and the fact that it was “made without academic council support” (Dunn, 1979a). Angotti, the men’s basketball coach supported the move to Division I: “It doesn’t matter if we are Division II or Division I...I think we should go Division I” (Dunn, 1979a). Women’s Basketball coach Rita Yerkes added, “The damage [moving back to Division II] would do to the prestige of the University is unreal, I don’t think anyone is opposed to upgrading the program but we must work out the problems” (Dunn, 1979a). In July of 1979, Thomas Meinhardt resigned as Athletic Director for Towson State University. Meinhardt was a full professor in physical education, and would go on to coach the men’s tennis team. Acting President Cox, in response to Meinhardt’s resignation, announced that the new athletic director “will be a contractual position” and “will not teach classes.” With athletics now severed from physical education, the new athletic director was to be placed under “institutional development” rather than “academics” (Dunn, 1979b).

This was not unique to Towson. According to Ronald Smith (2016), Penn State did the same when they took “the entire athletic department out of an academic unit and place[d] it in a business-financial office of the university,” and “helped transform a “cow college” in central Pennsylvania into a major university” (p. 10). Eventually the school was able to raise its academic profile through sport in such a way as to be asked to join the Big-10. While Towson University has not been able to match that meteoric rise the marketing-first thought process was the same. The intermingling of money, power, and the status quo laid out by neoliberal leadership is such that there have been a number of moral and ethical costs to doing so. Smith (2016) describes this with regard to the numerous ways Penn State was corrupted in and through athletics over the years, Giroux, Giroux and King-White (2018) compound that with the reprehensible way(s) sport was used to hush critical research on hydrofracking, while King-White (2018a, 2018b) and King-White and Beissel (2018) describe how neoliberal governance negatively shaped Towson, and this the groundwork for those decisions was laid out in the leadership of the 70s and 80s.

Conclusion

Our historical narrative of intercollegiate and academic development at Towson between 1960-80 examines the institutional decision-making processes during the *neoliberal turn of higher education*. The collegiate athletic program was a product of, and producer for, the *neoliberalization of the University*. Key here is the notion that just because Towson University is a state-institution (though support from Maryland has diminished significantly over the years) and that the way funding works is different than in a private firm it has become more corporatized under neoliberal leadership. Put differently, it is a state institution in the United States – a nation-state that has long been critiqued for promoting a neoliberal agenda (Ingham, 1985) – and though it may complicate matters to disentangle these decisions from neoliberalism, that would be far too simplistic. Even though the university continues to pour millions of dollars annually into the athletic department budget through institutional subsidies speaks to the importance of having a heavily-branded, carefully marketed, and nationally recognized athletics program to enhance the overall student experience. Although Towson is simply moving money from one pocket to another does not indicate a slow encroachment of the state in athletic

concerns. Rather, it should lead us to question how that money was accumulated in the first instance (tuition revenue and student fees largely paid by students) and the motivations behind this intra-university funds transfer (creating and increasing the student experience)—both of which speak to an institution guided by the policies and practices of neoliberalism.

Further, the particular circumstances of Towson University are perhaps somewhat unique, and not fully generalizable to all institutions, they speak to a broad set of political economic conditions that guided a historical shift in higher education during a particular milieu. More importantly, these developments set the stage for what would happen over the subsequent decades (from the 1980s onwards), as Towson transformed into an archetypal neoliberal institution that increasingly sought to intercollegiate athletics as a way to brand the university and render a consumer (read: student) experience.

Had the events between 1960 and 1980 occurred in a different manner (athletics remained Division III), or university administrators saw a different vision for the university (student enrollment remained unchanged), we might be looking at a very dissimilar Towson University [Athletics] in the contemporary moment. Although the thrust of neoliberal capitalism would inevitably have extended its tentacles to campus and community life, neoliberal Towson would be fundamentally different and perhaps not resemble the university we know today. In this alternate reality of Towson, perhaps it more closely resembles other Maryland state-universities (e.g. Salisbury, Frostburg, UMBC) and is a comparatively smaller institution than it is today and whose: a) entire university's brand identity is not linked to the success of its aspirant athletic programs; b) athletic department serves an alternate purpose (holistic well-being rather than brand extension); and c) operates on a fraction of the budget (funded largely by institutional subsidies and student fees). In other words, this history of intercollegiate athletics and academic development at Towson is instructive in thinking through how these and other processes might have played out differently.

Not only is this history critically important to better contextualize the collective decision-making processes at Towson, it is instrumental in understanding the ways the University is organized and experienced today (e.g. King-White & Beissel, 2018). Indeed, it set the tone for the way that the school would navigate Title IX issues in sport, and laid the foundation for a neoliberal governance style. As King-White and Beissel (2018) have demonstrated elsewhere the key drivers for how the school moved forward were a relatively small number of very powerful administrators, staff, students, and faculty (in that order) who held a very narrow view for growth – one centered on maintaining costs for educating students whilst simultaneously utilizing educational funding to build athletic meccas, revenue producing buildings (read: University Union, dormitories and other housing, and fitness centers). The outcome of this is a University that relies on consumptive spaces and carefully branded student experiences to entice growing student enrollment whilst placing educational needs as a secondary concern.

To wit, the University's middle-class and working-class has seen their salaries and political voice in the governance structure of Towson University remain the same across over the course of the past 40 years while administrative and specialized coaching positions (the University's upper-class) have watched their salaries and positions of import at the University grow markedly during this time. What this has meant is that faculty and staff have become relatively disposable while the University has placed a focus on sport and other forms of entertainment as paramount for contemporary University experience. Despite this shift, and some semblance of recent success on the athletic fields in the four major sports at Towson (football, Men's and Women's basketball, and Men's lacrosse) - with a runner-up finish in the FCS

National Championship game, three trips to the NCAA's March Madness tournament, and two runner-up finishes in the NCAA lacrosse National title game's - most students at the University remain apathetic toward intercollegiate athletics on campus. Still, upper administrators, who argue that these sports remain vital aspects to the college experience, sites of campus communal gathering, and potential breeding grounds for donations toward the University's growing endowment maintain unwavering support for them.

In so doing, and with a major assist from the governing structure set in place by President Fisher in the 1970's Towson has become an emblematic expression of neoliberal education. Class sizes have doubled, educational buildings are falling woefully behind in space and relevance in terms of what types of learning they can help foster while sites of consumption are constantly updated all over campus. Given that this type of development has become the norm across the country very little mind is paid to what has happened at Towson University as being detrimental to the educational growth of the population of students that it serves. As we enter a contemporary age of critical self-reflection within the nation during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (read: renewed Black Lives Matter protests, the renaming of the Washington NFL football team, and student-athletes banding together in hopes of being compensated for putting themselves in danger during this health crisis) perhaps now is as good a time as any to reflect on this past in order to lay a new foundation that borrows from the best that Cold War and contemporary sport on campus has had to offer whilst setting up for an uncertain educational and intercollegiate sporting future.

References

- Amis, J. (2005). Interviewing for case study research. In D. Andrews, D. Mason, & M. Silk (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods in Sports Studies* (pp. 104–138). Berg.
- Austin, B. (2015). *Democratic sports: Men's and women's college athletics during the Great Depression*. University of Arkansas Press.
- Bankert, J. (1975, December 5). \$33 million construction going on. *The Towerlight*, 3.
- Beissel, A. (2018). Confessions of a human trafficker: Inside the global network (of international student-athletes in NCAA football). In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 170-192). Rutgers University Press.
- Bell, R. (2008). A History of women in sport prior to Title IX. *The Sport Journal*, 1-8.
- Binns, P. (1976, September 10) Tigers will not play 'big time sports.' *The Towerlight*, 1.
- Brake, D. L. (2010). *Getting in the Game: Title IX and the Women's Sports Revolution*. NYU Press.
- Bustad, J., & Mower, R. (2018). Welcome to the factory: College athletics and corporatized recruiting. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 193-207). Rutgers University Press.
- Chudacoff, H. P. (2015). *Changing the Playbook: How Power, Profit, and Politics Transformed College Sports* (1st edition). University of Illinois Press.
- Clopton, A., & Finch, B. (2012). In Search of the winning image: Assessing the connection between athletics success on perceptions of external prestige. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 5, 79-95.

- Clotfelter, C. T. (2011). *Big-Time Sports in American Universities* (Stated First Edition edition). Cambridge University Press.
- Council M., III., Hodge, S. & Bennett R., III. (2018). *The Collegiate Athlete at Risk: Strategies for Academic Support and Success*. Information Age Publishing.
- Covaleski, M. A., & Dirsmith, M. W. (1988). An institutional perspective on the rise, social transformation, and fall of a university budget category. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 33(4), 562–587.
- Day, D., & Vamplew, W. (2015). Sports history methodology: Old and new. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32(15), 1715-1724.
- DeLuca, J. & Batts Maddox, C. (2018). Fixing the front porch? Maryland's move to the Big Ten. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 54-74). Rutgers University Press.
- Dunn, K. (1979a, February 9). Towson's sports future in doubt. *The Towerlight*, 1–2.
- Dunn, K. (1979b, May 11). AD Tom Meinhardt resigns. *The Towerlight*, 1.
- Esslinger, D., Knox, F., & Nasr, N. (2016). Towson University: The First 150 Years. In *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-1968* (pp. 82–4). Towson University.
- Extra. (1971). Administrative team features flexibility, commitment to serve students. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Fisher, J. (1969). President's address to faculty. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Fisher, J. (1970). President's address to faculty. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Fisher, J. (1971). President's address to faculty. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Fisher, J. (1972). President's address to faculty. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Fisher, J. (1973). President's address to faculty. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Fisher, J. (1974). President's address to faculty. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Fisher, J. (1975). President's address to faculty. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Fisher, J. (1976). President's address to faculty. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Fisher, J. (1977). President's address to faculty. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Giddens, A. (1985). *The Nation-state and Violence*. University of California Press.
- Gilmore, P. (1978, September 8). Fisher looks back over a decade. *The Towerlight*, 5.
- Gilmore, P. J. (1976). Bullets win amid cheers as Towson Center opens. *The Towerlight*.
- Giroux, H. A. (2012). *Education and the Crisis of Public Values: Challenging the Assault on Teachers, Students, and Public Education*. Peter Lang.
- Giroux, H. A. (2014). *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*. Haymarket Books.
- Giroux, H. A., Giroux, S. S., & King-White, R. (2018). Truth for sale: Penn State, (Joe) Paterno, and (Terry) Pegula. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 21-34). Rutgers University Press.

- Gounaris, T. (1978, April 21). Coaches speak out on grants. *The Towerlight*, 11–12.
- Gring, J. (1978, April 14). Uncertainty looms over TSU athletic horizon. *The Towerlight*, 12.
- Haas, S. (1977a, May 6). Towson State athletics: More than a game, less than a business. *The Towerlight*, 10.
- Haas, S. (1977b, May 13). Scholarships needed in Towson athletics. *The Towerlight*, 9.
- Hageman, A. (2008). A Review of the strengths and weaknesses of archival, behavioral, and qualitative research methods: Recognizing the potential benefits of triangulation. *Advances in accounting behavioral research*, 11, 1-45.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Hawkins, B. (2013). *The New Plantation: Black Athletes, College Sports, and Predominantly White NCAA Institutions*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hawzen, M., Anderson, L., & Newman, J. (2018). Football, rape culture, and the neoliberal university (as brand: Reflections on institutional governance in the Jameis Winston rape investigation. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 75-96). Rutgers University Press.
- Holliday, J., & Moore, S. (2006). *Hoop Tales: Maryland Terrapins Men's Basketball*. Globe Pequot.
- Ingham, A. (1985). From public issue to personal trouble: Well-being and the fiscal crisis of the state. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 2(1), 43-55.
- Ingrassia, B. M. (2014). *The Rise of Gridiron University: Higher Education's Uneasy Alliance with Big-Time Football* (Reprint edition). University Press of Kansas.
- James, G. (2016). Historical frameworks and sporting research. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 33(10), 1169-1187.
- Jones, S. (1977, September 9). Angotti resigning to pursue doctorate. *The Towerlight*, 12.
- Jones, S. (1978, Summer). Task force asks greater emphasis on Tiger athletics. *The Towerlight, Summer Edition*.
- Jozsa, F. P. (2012). *College Sports Inc.: How Commercialism Influences Intercollegiate Athletics*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- King, M. (2016). Working with/in the archives. In S. Gunn and L. Faire (Eds.) *Research Methods for History* (pp. 19-30). Edinburgh University Press.
- King-White, R. (2018a). *Sport and the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy*. Rutgers University Press.
- King-White, R. (2018b). Introduction: Context and Constraints in Contemporary Intercollegiate Athletics. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport and the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics, and Pedagogy* (pp. 1–18). Rutgers University Press.
- King-White, R. (2018c). “Some kind of joke”: Consultancy firms and college athletics. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 208-222). Rutgers University Press.
- King-White, R., & Beissel, A. (2018). Sport in the aspirational corporate university: A genealogy of athletic programming development at Towson University. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 35, 334.
- Leitch, W. (2015). Nobody cares if you lie. *Deadspin*. Accessed June 3, 2021 from <https://deadspin.com/nobody-cares-if-you-lie-1750284878>.
- Maguire, J. A. (2011). Studying sport through the lens of historical sociology and/or sociological history. *Sport in Society*, 14(7-8), 872-882.
- Malachin, D. (1978). The Towerlight Supplement. In *The Towerlight*.

- Meinhardt, T. (1976, September 24). Things We've Heard – Fisher stand applauded. *The Towerlight*, 2.
- Meinhardt, T. (February 24, 1978). Fan support lacking. *The Towerlight*, 2.
- Montez de Oca, J. (2005). "As Our Muscles Get Softer, Our Missile Race Becomes Harder": Cultural Citizenship and the "Muscle Gap." *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 18(3), 145–172.
- Montez de Oca, J. (2013). *Discipline and Indulgence: College Football, Media, and the American Way of Life During the Cold War*. Rutgers University Press.
- No wine and 'roses' for TSU sports. (September 17, 1976). *The Towerlight*, 2.
- Minnegan, D., & Case, P. (1966). Football feasibility summary. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Oriard, B. O., Smith, P. P., Chudacoff, H. P., & Ingrassia, B. M. (2015). *Changing the Playbook: How Power, Profit, and Politics Transformed College Sports*. University of Illinois Press.
- Oriard, M. (2009). *Bowled Over: Big-Time College Football From the Sixties to the BCS Era*. The University of North Carolina Press.
- Park, R. J. (2012). 'Soldiers may fall but athletes never!': Sport as an antidote to nervous diseases and national decline in America, 1865–1905. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29(6), 792-812.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Peterson-Horner, E., & Eckstein, R. (2015). Challenging the "Flutie Factor:" intercollegiate Sports, undergraduate enrollments, and the neoliberal university. *Humanity & Society*, 39(1), 64-85.
- Penn State News. (2011). Rec Hall has colorful history at Penn State. Accessed June 3, 2021 from <https://news.psu.edu/story/157407/2011/06/08/rec-hall-has-colorful-history-penn-state>
- Pope, S. W. (1997). *Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926*. Oxford University Press.
- Rick, O. (2018). Is this the Beginning of the end? Small colleges and universities are questioning the value of an NCAA program for their student body. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 153-169). Rutgers University Press.
- Ridpath, D., Porto, B., Gurney, G., Lopiano, D., Sack, A., Willingham, M., & Zimbalist, A. (2015). The Drake group position statement: Student fee allocations to fund intercollegiate athletics. Accessed June 3, 2021 from <chrome-extension://gphandlahdpffimccakmbngmbjnjiihp/https://drakegroupblog.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/position-statement-student-fees-final-3-2-15.pdf>.
- Roth, D. (2020). Only Donald Trump gets to lie like this. *Defector*. Accessed June 3, 2021 from <https://defector.com/only-donald-trump-gets-to-lie-like-this/>.
- Sack, A. (2009). Clashing models of commercial sport in higher education: Implications for reform and scholarly research. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 2, 76-92.
- Scally, R. (October 14, 1977). Runk switches departments to teach sign language class. *The Towerlight*, 3.
- Setran, D. P. (2005). Following the broad-shouldered Jesus: The college YMCA and the culture of muscular christianity in American campus life, 1890-1914. *American Educational History Journal*, 32(1), 59-66.

- Shore, C. (2018). Audit culture and Illiberal governance: Universities and the politics of accountability. *Anthropological Theory*, 8(3), 278–298.
- Silk, M. (2005). Sporting ethnography: Philosophy, methodology, reflection. In D. Andrews, D. Mason, & M. Silk (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods in Sports Studies* (pp. 65–103). Berg.
- Smith, R. A. (2011). *Pay for Play: A History of Big-Time College Athletic Reform*. University of Illinois Press.
- Smith, R. A. (2016). *Wounded Lions: Joe Paterno, Jerry Sandusky, and the Crisis in Penn State Athletics*. University of Illinois Press.
- Southall, R. M., & Staurowsky, E. J. (2013). Cheering on the collegiate model: Creating, disseminating, and imbedding the NCAA's redefinition of amateurism. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 37(4), 403–429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723513498606>
- Southall, R. M., & Southall, C. (2018). The National collegiate athletic association's "nothing short of remarkable" rebranding of academic success. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 131-152). Rutgers University Press.
- Sperber, M. A. (1990). *College Sports, Inc.: The Athletic Department Vs. the University* (1 edition). Henry Holt & Co.
- State Teachers College at Towson Catalogue*. (1960). Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C Cook Library, Towson University.
- Stebbins, R. (2008). Exploratory research. In L. Given (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 327–329). Sage.
- Staurowsky, E. (2018). College athletes as employees and the politics of Title IX. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 97-128). Rutgers University Press.
- Stetka, B. (April 23, 1976). Towson university bill awaits Mandel signature. *The Towerlight*, 3.
- Ternes, N., & Giardina, M. (2018). "A Common-sense, fiscally conservative approach": Sport, politics, and the death of higher education in Wisconsin. In R. King-White (Ed.), *Sport in the Neoliberal University: Profit, Politics and Pedagogy* (pp. 33-53). Rutgers University Press.
- Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*. (1964). Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C Cook Library, Towson University.
- Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*. (1968). Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*. (1969). Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Towson State College Bulletin, Catalogue Edition*. (1970). Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Ventresca, M. J., & Mohr, J. W. (2017). Archival Research Methods. In J. A. C. Baum (Ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Organizations* (pp. 805–828). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405164061.ch35>
- Verbrugge, M. H. (2012). *Active Bodies: A History of Women's Physical Education in Twentieth-Century America*. Oxford University Press.
- Wisdom, P. (1973). Public relations address. Special Collections and University Archives, Albert C. Cook Library, Towson University, Maryland.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2010). *Ethnography Lessons: A Primer* (1 edition). Routledge.

- Wrynn, A. (2014). Sport history: We're more than just back in Back to the Future. *Kinesiology Review*, 3, 71-79.
- Zang, D. (2001). *Sport Wars: Athletes in the Age of Aquarius*. Fayetteville, AK: Arkansas University Press.
- Zimbalist, A. (2001). Unpaid professionals: Commercialism and conflict in big-time college sports. In *Unpaid Professionals*. Princeton University Press.
<https://princetonup.degruyter.com/view/title/511918>

¹ During the time period we reviewed specifically for this manuscript *Baltimore Sun* articles were rarely, if ever, more depthful than those written by authors whose lives centered on and around campus. Indeed, it has generally only been during times of massive social and political upheaval (e.g. Authors, 2018) that the *Baltimore Sun* has chosen to do in-depth reporting at and on the institution (e.g. Chris Korman's extensive investigative work on the development of a new on-campus Arena and satellite campus while athletics removed the Men's soccer team from its roster and attempted to cut the baseball team during the 2012-3 academic year, and Maya Earls, Justin Fenton, Alison Knezevich and Pamela Wood's coverage of the Swimming program's scandal in 2015-2016).