



NCAA Coaches and Academic Professionals Perceptions of Importance, Commitment, and Effectiveness of Organizational Culture and Student-Athlete Experience

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Research in sport management has found a trend of workaholism, burnout, and turnover within collegiate athletics. However, positive organizational culture, leadership styles, organizational commitment, organizational effectiveness, and organizational communication can negate these negative outcomes. Thus, this study explored the impact of personal importance, organizational importance, and effectiveness in six department categories among current NCAA coaches and athletic academic support professionals. A sequential mixed method design of 240 individuals was conducted, and from their perspective, a clear disconnect between what an athletic department aims to do and what they are able to accomplish exists. Specifically, the quantitative results highlighted significant mean difference and interaction effects for the ways coaches and academic administrators viewed the importance of, the organization's commitment to, and the organization's effectiveness of organizational priorities. From the qualitative findings, three themes emerged to support the quantitative results: (1) revolving door of leadership with a subtheme of lack of transparency and consistency, (2) criticism over athletic departments' funding and allocations, and (3) further leadership emphasis needed for developing S-A culture. The findings suggest athletic departments should continue to focus on providing resources and create policies and procedures to enhance organizational goal alignment, effectiveness, and communication.

Keywords: collegiate athletics, athletic administration, job turnover, organizational culture

One common university metaphor is that an athletic department is the front porch for the university (Pratt, 2013). This has been said of football and men's basketball programs at the Division I level, as the visibility provided by news outlets and game coverage allow institutions a constant source of advertising and public relations, as well as driving the ranking of the institution, again driving publicity and exposure (Mulholland et al., 2014). High-profile athletics also provide an opportunity for alumni and current student engagement, both important services for institutions looking to raise revenue through donations and endowments (Kelly & Vamosiu, 2020). More specifically, Kelly and Vamosiu (2020) found donors gift size was highly influenced by the winning of the athletic teams and the athletic department as a whole. However, what happens behind the front door of an athletic department, borrowing from the front porch metaphor, rarely sees the light of day unless a high-profile scandal unfolds. The public rarely sees the constant turnover among staff, the power struggles for resources, and the endless triage to keep the S-A experience positive despite immense pressures of athletic and academic performance, not to mention the general social pressures of being a young adult.

There is academic literature to back up these issues for athletic departments. For instance, job burnout and occupational turnover have been found among athletic department employees with the most interaction with S-As: athletics academic support professionals (Gellock, 2019; Leiter & Maslach, 2017; Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018), athletic trainers (DeFreese & Mahalik, 2016; Oglesby et al., 2020; Whyte et al., 2015) and coaches and athletic administration personnel (Odio & Kerwin, 2017; Soebbing & Washington, 2011; Taylor et al., 2019). For example, Oglesby et al. (2020) found through their systematic review of 83 articles dealing with athletic trainers and burnout that burnout occurred across job titles and types (i.e., graduate assistants, students, staff, and faculty) and that burnout was caused by "work-life conflict and organizational factors such as poor salaries, long hours, and difficulties dealing with the 'politics and bureaucracy' of athletics" (p. 416). Whyte et al. (2015) also found athletic trainers experience burnout due to the long hours and low wages. Alexander (2020) found through their survey of 168 Division I coaches and athletic trainers that "although the specific duties may be vastly different, both coaches and athletic trainers report working 25% more hours than the 40 hours required to be considered a full-time position" (p. 25). Being overworked and underpaid is a theme within the sport industry, especially for entry-level positions (King, 2012; Weight et al., 2021). Odio and Kerwin (2017) even found that entry-level sport workers leave their profession sooner than workers in other sectors, especially those considering familial goals; as collegiate athletics as an industry is not always conducive with adaptive family support and practices (Taylor et al., 2017).

Burnout can play a substantial role in these career decisions. Taylor et al. (2019) surveyed 4,453 intercollegiate athletic employees from all three NCAA divisions and found the relationship between workaholism and burnout was positive, indicating that as an employee's level of workaholism increases, so does their level of burnout regardless of levels of work-family and family-work conflict. This burnout can negatively impact the S-A experience specifically as it relates to athlete turnover, career foreclosure, and academic success (Johnson et al., 2010; Saxe et al., 2017; Smith & Hardin, 2018). An important predictor of athletic department employee burnout and turnover is a disconnect between employee values and organizational objectives (Leiter & Maslach, 2017; Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018). Additional areas where a disconnect may lead to employee dissatisfaction include departmental diversity and inclusion (Fink et al.,

2003), having a focus singular on athletic success (Jones, 2013), and the financial decision making of upper administration (Cooper & Weight, 2011).

Modern athletic departments are made up of several sub-departments, each with a specific focus. It is not uncommon to find an athletic department with traditional business functions such as marketing, communications, public relations, sales, finance, and operations. In addition, athletic departments look very different at each level, a quick look at a Power Five athletic department organizational structure will also highlight several sport specific functional areas including compliance, sport nutrition, sport medicine, sport performance, development and giving, equipment, facility services, fan engagement, event management, academic support, and more. Whereas other NCAA division I, II and III athletic departments many times have a single individual or small groups of staff that wear “multiple hats” by engaging in multiple areas of the athletic department business functions at once. Despite NCAA division and level, the success of these complex organizations requires the coordinated effort of many different departments and sub-departments within the organization.

Goal alignment speaks to the ability of a complex organization to have a shared set of values, attitudes, and overall outcomes toward which they are striving (O’Reilly & Chatman, 1996). Naturally various functional areas of an organization have specific tasks and purposes, yet an organization characterized by goal alignment finds a way to coordinate these efforts into a seamless forward momentum in which the various sub-departments work together cohesively. Organizations which are able to achieve goal alignment benefit from departmental and cross-functional cooperation and overall organizational effectiveness.

However, goal misalignment can also occur, especially in complex organizations. Goal misalignment is characterized by differences in the strategic goals, interests, values, or priorities by the various departments and sub-departments within an organization (Krause et al., 2001). Rather than the coordination and common purpose found in an organization characterized by goal alignment, organizations where these goals are misaligned often results in organizational politics (i.e., the contentious struggle for organizational resources, see Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988) and general inter-departmental competition. This political strife, inter-departmental competition, and general lack of coordination has been associated with reduced organizational performance and effectiveness (Mentzer et al., 2008). Common in organizational research, person-organizational fit theory has been used when exploring employees and stakeholders in organizations. For this study, Goal alignment theory provides a different viewpoint from which to analyze these research questions and these two populations than from person-organization fit theory. Whereas person-organization fit theory examines how and if an individual’s values and goals fit with that of the organization (French et al., 1974; Cable & Judge, 1996,1997), goal alignment asks if the values and goals of the departments within an organization are aligned, regardless of the values of the individual person. Goal alignment theory examines if the organization is aligned in what they say they want to accomplish, and what they are actually working toward accomplishing.

Crucially, the literature points to organizational culture as an effective regulatory mechanism to achieve organizational goal alignment (Pieper et al., 2008). Organizational culture helps employees to know what is most important to their organization. It gives them a guide for how they should feel and behave (O’Reilly & Chapman, 1996). In this way, organizational culture can act as a social control mechanism which can foster goal alignment, with its associated positive outcomes like cooperation and organizational performance. When successful,

organizational culture can also help complex organizations avoid the attempt to force goal alignment through formal top-down policies, rules, and additional bureaucratic levels.

As suggested from the current insights from collegiate athletic departments at all levels, these departments may suffer from goal misalignment. However, less is understood about the ways in which the employees working in collegiate athletic departments view the culture and alignment of goals within their department. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine how various employees working in collegiate athletics view the beliefs, commitments, and effectiveness of their organizations. From a leadership perspective, much is at stake, for the culture created and maintained within an organization can help continually attract and retain talented employees (Taylor et al., 2015). Among strategies to support an inclusive and supportive culture include clear communication with all staff members, well-defined task responsibilities, and transformational leadership styles (Levi, 2014). In addition, congruence between an employee's belief and an organization's commitment and effectiveness related to important organizational outcomes is essential for developing and fostering job satisfaction and a positive work culture (Chen et al., 2016). Thus, administration in the form of athletic directors (ADs) and their team of associate ADs could learn from the results of this study. In addition, the findings could benefit individual's seeking a career in collegiate athletics.

Review of Literature

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be defined as the basic behavioral and cognitive norms, values, beliefs, and basic assumptions that make-up and guide employee behavior (Schein, 1990), and tell employees the "right way" to act in the organization (Schein, 2004, 2010). Furthermore, Balthazard, and colleagues (2006) suggested norms within an organization are reflective of the organization's culture, values, and assumptions, and can influence overall performance. Schein (1990) discussed one aspect of organizational culture is focused on the process of how employees are taught to perceive, think, and feel in response to both external adaptation and internal integration into an organization. For example, a newly hired employee who enters an organization with his or her own personal set of values, assumptions, and beliefs must learn to assimilate to a new organizational environment that has its own set of values, assumptions, and beliefs. Schein (1990) described that once shared assumptions among a group of employees are concrete enough, they are then taught to new onboarding members of an organization. Additionally, organizations that not only onboard but also effectively communicate with employees have higher levels of short and long-term productivity (Balthazard et al., 2006; Smerek & Dennison, 2007). For these reasons, organizational culture has been attributed by scholars as one of the most important cornerstones of a successful organization and thrives under the direction of its leaders (Schein, 1990, 2004).

In the authors' systematic review, Maitland and colleagues (2015) alluded to a small, but growing body of research on organizational culture in sport. Private fitness clubs (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005, 2007), university recreation centers (Costa & Daprano, 2001), Olympic Committees (Parent & MacIntosh, 2013), and collegiate athletic departments (Cunningham, 2015) are among sport organizations that have been studied in relation to organizational culture. Maitland et al. (2015) found through their collection of 33 articles pertaining to sport organizational culture at large that although sport organizational culture is conceptualized in a

variety of ways, there is “little consensus in how organizational culture is defined and operationalized in sport” (p. 508). However, the systematic review did expound some commonalities exist in sport organizational literature, where sport culture is shared among its members, centered on performance and efficiency, and deeply embedded with rituals, traditions, symbols, and ceremonies (Choi & Scott, 2008, 2009; Maitland et al., 2015; Smith, 2009). In sport organizations, culture has been regarded as an important phenomenon that has implications on both employee and organizational level outcomes such as job satisfaction, employee turnover, and overall organizational functioning (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2007). The current study focused on examining the organizational culture within collegiate athletics from the perspectives of coaches and athletic academic support professionals.

Organizational Culture within Collegiate Athletics

Examining the culture of collegiate athletic departments can be complex. One reason being the mission of collegiate sport has been a long-debated topic among scholars who do collegiate athletics research (Fort, 2015). Since collegiate athletic departments are designed to support and facilitate S-A development both on and off the field of play (Buer, 2009), a long-standing history of examining the conflicting priorities between the commercialism and amateurism of collegiate sport has been evaluated (Theilin, 2015).

Additionally, there are a multitude environmental factors that impact the operations of individual athletic departments, such as fans and university presidents, and there are several subcultures within a department given the numerous subunits. There are challenges in establishing strong athletic department culture because of these subcultures. Differentiation among organizational subcultures can arise from stakeholders both internal and external to the sport organization (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005, 2007). Welty-Peachey and Bruening (2011) found evidence of stakeholder influence from alumni, donors, fans, and parents on managerial decision making. In another example, Colyer (2000) found hierarchical differences arise based on employment and status levels within one single organizational structure. Similarly, MacIntosh and Doherty (2005) found evidence of differences in which the authors refer to as a “culture gap.” The authors suggested different employee positions internal to the organization can hold divergent perceptions of organizational culture.

Athletic department mission statements often emphasize the goals for collegiate athletic departments in order to shape department culture (Ward & Hux, 2013). Ward and Hux (2013) found that while mission statements may vary from institution to institution, there is also theoretical reasoning for similarity across mission statements. To better understand collegiate athletic culture, Trail and Chelladurai (2000) developed measures to examine athletic department values specifically assessing the following: student-athlete academic achievement, student-athlete health/fitness, student-athlete social/moral citizenship, organizational culture of diversity, student-athlete careers, university visibility and prestige, financial security, winning, entertainment, and national sport development. In their study it was concluded departments strive for both S-A development goals (i.e., culture of diversity and academic achievement) and performance-based metrics (i.e., financial security and winning) simultaneously. However, scholars have further established findings related to culture gaps and value differentiation among different groups of stakeholders, such as between faculty and S-As (Trail & Chelladurai, 2000, 2002) along with ADs and lower-level administrators (Cooper & Weight, 2012) which can lead

to goal misalignment and cultural change ambivalence or resistance if left unaddressed (Welty-Peachey, 2009).

Specifically, the current study sought to expand of the work of Welty-Peachy and Bruening (2011) and looked to assess and understand two internal groups of stakeholders: coaches and athletic academic support professionals. These two populations were specifically chosen because of their frequent direct impact and oversight of S-As. Because these two groups have such consistent and direct contact with S-As, especially in the areas of academic and athletic performance, ensuring the alignment of their goals and objectives of that contact in S-A development is important. Therefore, not only did the current study examine goal alignment of individuals' attitudes towards collegiate athletics perspectives on constructs of personal goal importance, along with the organizational commitment, and effectiveness, but additionally compared goal alignment among different groups of internal stakeholders. By better understanding the perspectives of these two major stakeholders within the athletic department, athletic administration leadership teams can develop strategies for different stakeholder groups to work together to create a culture with strong goal alignment (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996). Therefore, the first and third research questions stated:

RQ 1: To what extent are there differences within coach and athletic academic support professional viewpoints of athletic department objectives?

RQ 3: To what extent are there differences between coaches and athletic academic support professional viewpoints regarding athletic department objectives?

As a result of the challenges outlined above, the purpose of the current study was to assess the potential misalignment between the personal beliefs, organizational commitment, and organizational effectiveness among athletic academic support professionals and coaches as it relates to important aspects of athletic department culture. More specifically, the study examined the ways in which coaches and athletic academic support professionals viewed six potential athletic department objectives (objectives discussed below). As discussed previously, these two populations were chosen because of their high level of direct interaction with S-As. Both academic support professionals and coaches interact with S-As weekly, if not daily. In addition, these two groups also have a high level of involvement with the athletic department in general and are directly impacted by the decisions of athletic department administration.

The six objectives were departmental diversity and inclusion, S-A career maturity, S-A identity foreclosure, on field success, academic success, and fiscal responsibility. These six objectives were first identified by examining previous work related to S-A success (see Navarro, 2014; Navarro & Malvaso, 2015; Navarro et al., 2016; Rubin & Lewis, 2020) and organizational culture in collegiate athletics (Trail & Chelladurai, 2000, 2002; Welty-Peachey & Bruening, 2011). In addition, the researchers examined athletic department mission statements and core value statements and developed a general list of objectives mentioned in these statements. The most commonly mentioned objectives which coincided with the literature on S-A success were then added to the final list of six objectives. Additional details about this process are provided in the methods section of this study.

Athletic Departmental Objectives

Previous research has found that these six departmental objectives (i.e., diversity and inclusion, S-A career maturity, S-A identity foreclosure, on field success, academic success, and fiscal responsibility) are highly impactful and influential in the collegiate athletic domain. In recent years, a larger emphasis has been placed on diversity, equity and inclusion within higher education and collegiate athletics (Keaton, 2021; Wright-Mair et al., 2021). As of the 2019-2020 NCAA Demographics report, diversity is increasing within the S-A population (i.e., White athletes-56%, Black athletes-21%, Hispanic/Latino athletes-5%; two or more races-5%, international S-A's-7%, and Asian athletes-2%; NCAA, 2021). Thus, we have seen a spike in the number of hires of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) officers (Keaton, 2021). However, given the deeply rooted gender and racial inequities in collegiate athletics (Cooper et al., 2020), it is imperative that these positions are charged with abilities for decision-making and change actions (Keaton, 2021) to “diversify hiring and retention practices, create holistic and engaging support, curate cultural and responsive programming, and be a part of altering infrastructure that leads to institutional transformation” (Wright-Mair et al., 2021, p. 610). Given the centrality of DEI in collegiate athletics today, this study sought to understand the perception of DEI initiatives from participants deeply embedded in their collegiate athletic departments.

Additionally, research has found that SA career maturity, identity foreclosure and academic success are important elements of the S-A experience (i.e., Beamon, 2012; Beamon & Bell, 2011; Cummins & O’Boyle, 2015; Kidd et al., 2018; Leonard & Schimmel, 2016; Navarro, 2014; Navarro & Malvaso, 2015; Navarro et al., 2016; Rubin & Lewis, 2020; Smith & Hardin, 2018, 2020) and are of particular concern to the groups that directly interact with them (i.e., coaches and academic athletic personnel). Research has found that the many athletes, especially at the Division I level, deal with issues related to creating new identities outside of sport, selecting and understanding majors and coursework that is best for their long-term career goals, and struggle with transitioning away and out of sport into professional domains (i.e., Beamon, 2012; Beamon & Bell, 2011; Kidd et al., 2018, Smith & Hardin, 2018, 2020).

Smith and Hardin (2020) found in their study population of both Division I and Division III S-As that despite division and level, all the athletes discussed high levels of athletic identity and commitment to their sport. Thus, previous research has been advocating for further time and resources to be allocated to assist these S-As with their transitional skills that will aid them in leaving sport behind and provide them with crucial job-related skills and trainings (Cummins & O’Boyle, 2015; Leonard & Schimmel, 2016; Navarro, 2014; Navarro & Malvaso, 2015; Navarro et al., 2016; Rubin & Lewis, 2020). Therefore, for this study it was imperative to assess not only the personal importance of these objectives with coaches and academic athletic personnel, but also to discover the organizational importance and effectiveness taking place in these athletic departments related to these S-A experience factors.

Lastly, on field success (winning) and fiscal responsibility are highly influential factors in the decision-making that occurs within collegiate athletics. On field success, winning and prestige can be used to elevate or position an institution among competitors and peers (Andrew et al., 2006) and pressures to win from internal and external stakeholders can increase the hiring of coaches and athletic staff with extremely lucrative salaries. Furthermore, specific to the Division I-FBS level, there is an emphasis on achieving success through win-loss statistics, revenue generation, and conference and national prestige (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Weight et al., 2014), all in an effort to further attract donors, ticket sales and media deals. However,

collegiate athletic departments are also under scrutiny for their fiscal responsibility and spending as the phenomenon of severance payments of fired or resigned coaches and cutting of entire athletic sport programs continue to be salient issues (Lavigne & Schlabach, 2021; Swanson & Smith, 2020). Thus, it was imperative to this study to assess the factors of on field success and fiscal responsibility from the members of the athletic department directly impacted by these spending decisions.

Coach and athletic academic support professional viewpoints were examined in three ways. First, they were examined from the perspective of personal importance. Personal importance is meant to indicate how important the objective is to the person and their role within the athletic department. The second way they were examined was from the perspective of perceived organizational commitment. Perceived organizational commitment was defined as the person's perception of the athletic department's effort and focus to accomplish the specific objective in question. Finally, the third way the views of these employees was measured was through perceived organizational effectiveness. This was meant to capture one's perception of the athletic department's ability to actually accomplish the objective they were evaluating. With this information about the six potential athletic department objectives and the ways employee viewpoints were measured in mind, the second research question stated:

RQ 2: To what extent are there differences between athletic department objectives as it relates to coach and athletic academic support professional viewpoints?

Given the nature of this topic and the populations involved, further exploration into the thoughts and perceptions of the participants surrounding the six departmental objectives, their personal importance, and organizational importance and effectiveness was needed. Thus, the last two research questions were constructed qualitatively to understand the perceived value of these six departmental objectives from the participants directly:

RQ 4: How do NCAA coaches and athletic academic support professionals perceive the value of athletic department objectives?

RQ 5: How do NCAA coaches and athletic academic support professionals feel their organization values and implements athletic department objectives?

Method

A sequential mixed-methods design was utilized, which entailed "collecting and analyzing quantitative and then qualitative data in two consecutive phases within one study" (Ivankova et al., 2006, p. 3). By combining both quantitative and qualitative data this enabled us to answer the research questions by taking advantage of the mixed-method complementary strengths of discovering the significance within and among groups, as well as capture the complexity and meaning for these stakeholders (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Specifically, this method was chosen for this study as previous research has highlighted the importance of discovering organizational culture and goal (mis) alignment through the lens of the employees (Krause et al., 2001; Schein, 1990; O'Reilly & Chapman, 1996). It is important to learn how employees are brought into an organization, what they are taught to think and feel, and how organizational assumptions guide employee actions and behaviors (Schein, 1990). In

this study, it was important to uncover the personal importance and perceived organizational importance and effectiveness through the lens of coaches and athletic academic support professionals: two populations that have direct impact and oversight of S-As daily. Previous research has completed similar studies exploring the organizational culture of athletic departments (Cooper & Weight, 2012; Trail & Chelladurai, 2000). Trail and Chelladurai (2000) examined department values towards S-A development and performance-based metrics and found a gap between stakeholder groups. Similarly, Cooper and Weight (2012) found a value difference between their population of ADs and lower-level administrators on organizational values. In comparison, this study sought not only to examine the differences between the stakeholder groups, but also to understand why these discrepancies occur and capture the meaning these discrepancies hold through a mixed method design.

Quantitative Participants and Procedure

The sample populations for this study included collegiate coaches and athletic academic support professionals. S-As interact with a number of university personnel on a daily, weekly, or semester basis, but no two groups of individuals have more influence over the S-A experience than coaches and athletic academic support professionals. These groups directly impact the two most important aspects of the S-A experience, academics, and sport performance. As a result, these groups were targeted to explore the congruency of athletic department objectives from personal importance to organizational commitment and effectiveness, as a disconnect within or between these groups will directly impact the S-A experience. In general, we felt these two groups provided the best insight into the culture, goals, and progress toward goals in a collegiate athletic department.

To assess a generalizable sample of both groups, two sampling procedures were utilized. First, coaches were solicited via email. Independent researchers searched athletic department websites and compiled a list of coaches from universities with accessible email addresses. This process took over four weeks. A total of 7,323 unique email addresses were collected from approximately 250 schools in NCAA Division I, II, and III. All three divisions of NCAA competition were important to sample to gain a broad-based reflection of the viewpoints of coaches and athletic academic support professionals on organizational objectives. From this list, a random sample of 4,000 were selected and utilized for this study. According to Petrovčič and colleagues (2016), a completion rate of 4-6% is commonplace for email solicitation of a closed group. Thus, to reach a sample size of 100-200, a sampling frame of 4,000 was chosen. Three emails with a link to a Qualtrics survey were sent to this group. A random drawing of five \$100 Amazon gift cards were offered as an incentive. For the athletic academic support professionals, the National Association for Academic and Student-Athlete Development Professionals (N4A) listserv was utilized. N4A is an organization affiliated with the NCAA's National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) and consists of approximately 1,955 members (Horning, 2018). Individuals often hold roles associated with academic advising, learning specialists, tutor coordinators, and life-skills/leadership development. Two solicitation messages were approved by the N4A research committee and sent directly to members. Once again, a random drawing of five \$100 Amazon gift cards were offered as an incentive.

Quantitative Measures. The online questionnaire included 34 items. In addition to demographic questions, participants were asked about their current position, division designation

of current school, and former athletic experience. To answer the research questions, 19 athletic department objectives were assessed from three perspectives: (1) the participant's personal importance perspective, (2) the participant's perception of organizational commitment, and (3) the participant's perspective of organizational effectiveness (see appendix). The potential list of organizational objectives was large. Thus, an iterative process for selecting objectives was conducted. First, given the focus of the study, four items were taken from Crites and Savickas (1996) revised Career Maturity Inventory and three identity foreclosure items were taken from Fernandez et al.'s (2006) larger Athletes Retirement Decision Inventory.

Based on a thorough review of athletic department mission statements and/or core values, three items were created for each of the following objectives: athletic success, academic success, diversity and inclusion, and financial responsibility. Once items were created, a two-step process was conducted to test face and content validity. First, a panel of athletic department employees and sport leadership faculty at a mid-Atlantic Division I university examined the questions and gave feedback. Second, a pilot study of nine doctoral students from the same university was then conducted with follow-up interviews. Small wording changes were made based on feedback from these groups. Once again, it is important to note that this study could not assess all athletic department objectives; thus, the research team selected a combination of generally accepted (e.g., academic and athletic success) objectives and objectives unique to the purpose of this study. Given the litany of potential objectives, there is an opportunity for future research in this area.

Quantitative Analyses

Prior to running any of the advanced analyses to test the research questions, descriptive statistics were interpreted to ensure assumptions of linearity, dimensionality, multivariate normality, and independence. In addition, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run on the athletic department objectives to test factor validity and composite reliability was conducted to test internal consistency. The research questions were formulated to test differences within and between the three perspectives toward athletic department objectives: personal importance, perceived organizational commitment, and perceived organizational effectiveness. Thus, to answer the research questions, a three-way mixed design (split-plot) ANOVA was conducted. This type of ANOVA was performed because the responses related to the three perspectives provided by participants were not independent. The within-subjects variable for the mixed design ANOVA model was the athletic department objectives, the first between-subjects variable was the three perspectives (personal importance, organizational commitment, and organizational effectiveness), the second between-subjects variable was role (coach or athletic academic support professional) and the dependent variable was the respondents' self-reported level of importance, perceived commitment, or perceived effectiveness.

To answer RQ1, individual factor differences within the first between-subjects variable (perspectives) were assessed. The main effect score for the differences, however, only provides insight into statistically significant differences. It does not indicate which factors are different; thus, a multiple comparison post hoc test was conducted. If statistically significant differences were found, a paired *t* test analysis with a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level (.008) was then conducted to determine which objectives differed from each other based on the means of the three viewpoint perspectives measures (i.e., personal importance, perceived commitment, or perceived effectiveness) (Klockars & Sax, 1986).

The test of the interaction effect of the first between factor (perspectives) and within factor scores of the athletic department objectives was assessed to answer RQ2. The between subjects' investigation tested the congruency of the athletic department objectives from personal importance through perceived organizational commitment to perceived organizational effectiveness. To answer RQ3, the test of the interaction effect of both between factors (position and perspective) and within factor scores of the athletic department objectives was interpreted. This test explored the congruency between and within perspectives for both coaches and athletic academic support professionals. These interaction effect tests only provide an omnibus difference within the sample. Thus, Bonferroni adjusted tests of simple effects were conducted if an interaction effect difference was found.

Qualitative Participants and Procedure

The final question of our survey asked participants if they were interested in partaking in a follow-up phone interview and if so, to provide their email. From this final question, 78 names and emails were collected and emailed to schedule a time for a follow-up phone interview. Out of the (78), 15 individuals completed an interview; nine athletic academic support professionals and six coaches. The coaches interviewed ranged from head coach to director of operations and the sports coached included men's basketball, field hockey, men's gymnastics, baseball, volleyball and men's and women's swimming and diving. Similar to the quantitative sample, the NCAA level ranged from Division I - FBS to Division III. The majority were Caucasian, male, former S-As, with an average age of 37. The athletic academic support professionals interviewed also ranged in job description from coordinator to director, and most worked at the Division I - FBS level. The average age of this group was 30 and half of them were former S-As. Demographically, this group was primarily female, highly-educated, and Caucasian.

In order to gain more insight and understanding of the quantitative responses from the participants, an exploratory semi-structured interview guide (see Table 1) was developed (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The interview protocol consisted of three parts: (a) history of the career experience, (b) understanding and perception of their current athletic department/organizational culture, and (c) specific clarity on why they felt there was variance in personal importance, organizational commitment, and organizational effectiveness in the following areas: departmental diversity and inclusion, S-A career maturity, S-A identity foreclosure, on field success, academic success, and fiscal responsibility.

The participants consented verbally during the audio recording of the interview prior to the start of the interview. All of the interviews were completed via phone as participants were dispersed throughout the United States and in-person interviews were not possible. Participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and of their ability to withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews were transcribed via a third party and compared to the audio file to confirm accuracy. Identifying information such as names, employers, conferences, or colleagues were omitted from the transcriptions to protect anonymity. The interviews ranged in length from 41 to 75 minutes and averaged 57 minutes.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed via an inductive coding strategy. In this process themes and quotes are extracted to focus on the differences between the

Table 1
Interview Guide

Introductory Questions:

1. Why did you begin working in athletics?
 2. How did you begin working in athletics?
 3. Were you a student athlete?
- (proceed through 4-10) (If not, proceed to 11)
4. Please describe your experience as a collegiate student-athlete. What sport did you play? What position? How long? What were some of your triumphs? What were some of your challenges?
 5. What was your major in college? Did you participate in any clubs, organizations, or internships? If so, can you describe those.
 6. Reflect back on your collegiate experience. What was your intended career goals upon leaving college?
 7. When did you end your playing career? How did it end? (Graduation, injury, eligibility expired, quit)
 - a. What thoughts, feelings, or behaviors did you experience upon leaving collegiate sport?
 8. Can you describe the process of going from being a student athlete to a non-student athlete?
 - a. How did this shape or affect your personal identity?
 - b. How did this shape or affect your social identity?
 9. During your collegiate playing experience did you receive any information about transition/life after sport?
 - a. If yes, from where? Who? If not, why do you think it was not available or talked about?
 - b. If not, why not?
 10. Were academics or career planning emphasized?
 - c. If yes from where? Who?
 - d. If not, why did you think it was not available or talked about?
 11. If no to SA, did you work in athletics as a student or intern?
 - a. What area or sport?
 - b. What were your responsibilities?
 - c. What were some lessons learned from this or these experiences?

Current Role Questions:

1. What is your current role/job?
2. What are your main responsibilities within this role/job?
3. How many coaches or staff do you oversee or teams are you responsible for?
4. How many student-athletes do you oversee or are responsible for?
5. What are the most challenging parts of your role?
6. What are the most rewarding parts of your role?

Factor Questions:

1. What are the main personal goals in your job?
 - a. For your team?
 - b. For your staff?
 2. What are the areas of concern in your job?
 - a. Why are you concerned about these areas?
 - b. Describe the level of support you have in your current position.
 - c. Describe the resources you have in your current position.
 3. What is the organizational culture like at your institution?
 - a. In your athletic department?
 4. What are the main goals of the athletic department/AD?
 5. In what areas do you feel your athletic department does well in achieving their goals?
 - a. Why is this?
 - b. Can you give an example?
 6. In what areas do you feel they need improvement?
 - a. Why is this?
 - b. Can you give an example?
 7. (Show them the results)-Ask follow up questions for each factor.
 - a. (If applicable) Why do you feel commitment and effectiveness are lower at your institution?
-

-
- b. (If applicable) How or why are your personal and organizational goals aligned? How does this affect effectiveness?
 - 8. How can your department improve these areas?
 - 9. What steps have been taken to improve these areas already?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - 10. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your beliefs, your athletic departments, or their commitment that we have not already covered?
-

personal importance of the participants, their perceived organization's importance, and organizational effectiveness in the following categories: departmental diversity and inclusion, S-A career maturity, S-A identity foreclosure, on field success, academic success, and fiscal responsibility. Each transcript was read multiple times to become immersed in the words of the participants, as this allows researchers to embed the narratives of the participants in the final research outcome (Charmaz, 2006). The data were coded using the initial coding methods of in-vivo coding and followed by values and versus coding (Saldaña, 2013).

In-vivo coding creates codes from direct words, phrases or quotations by the participants in relation to the creation of meaning (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). In-vivo coding was used to keep the analysis in the participants' voices as much as possible (Saldaña, 2013). In values coding, codes are created to reflect the participants' attitudes, beliefs, and values, in this case, values codes were given to participants discussion of their organization's goals, culture, and effectiveness (Saldaña, 2013). Finally, versus codes were used as polar tensions or opposites were found in the transcripts between the participants (coaches and athletic academic support professionals) and their leadership within their collegiate athletic departments (senior leadership staff or AD; Saldaña, 2013). Codes were then grouped together into categories that were most applicable to the research questions in order to generate themes.

Results

Quantitative Results

A total of 156 coaches began the online survey hosted by Qualtrics with 123 completing the questionnaire. Several emails (960) bounced back from our original list of 4,000 email addresses, leaving the click through rate at 5.1% and response rate at 4.1%. While not ideal, these rates match email solicitation rates of other forms of non-profit work (M+R, 2017). Among athletic academic support professionals, 117 participants completed the survey with 140 initially starting the questionnaire. From a coaching perspective, the sample was primarily former S-A (85%), male head coaches (57%) with a Master's degree (65%). A fairly even distribution of Division I FBS (24%), I FCS (21%), II (17%), and III (37%) coaches responded. The athletic academic support professionals, however, were mostly female (63%), younger ($M = 33$), and held lower-level positions (80% < Assistant AD level). Also, these respondents generally came from Division I programs (86%), yet over half were former S-As (55%).

Prior to running the analyses to answer the research questions, a CFA was conducted on the personal importance items with a maximum likelihood estimation and the Satorra-Bentler correction. These corrections were used because the data was slightly nonnormal when assumptions were assessed per Brown (2015). One of the 19 items, S-A experience, failed to load with the other objectives; thus, it was removed from the model. The remaining 18-item, six-factor model was confirmed as structurally sound (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The χ^2 value (180.03)

was statistically significant at $p < .001$ ($df = 120$). The component fit scores indicated a good fit to the data (RMSEA=.055, CFI=.961, TLI=.953). The factor loadings for each item within a dimension were greater than .50, and the composite reliability (CR) coefficients were adequate for the factors ranging from .76-.90 according to the threshold criteria established by Hair et al. (2009). Average variance extracted (AVE) scores were conducted to assess convergent validity. These scores were also adequate with scores ranging from .50-.64 according to the cutoffs suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). See Table 2 for CR coefficients, AVE scores, and correlation coefficients.

Table 2
Correlations, Composite Reliability Coefficients, and Average Variance Extracted

Factor	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1 PI Acad Suc	.80	.51	--																	
2 PI Car. Mat	.87	.59	.29	--																
3 PI OF Suc	.86	.57	.16	.08	--															
4 PI Div/Incl	.79	.51	.20	.39	-.05	--														
5 PI Fin Suc	.82	.52	.30	.26	.30	.22	--													
6 PI ID Frel	.79	.53	.19	.41*	-.06	.46*	.12	--												
7 OC Acad Suc	.88	.61	.31	.23	.25	.14	.15	.07	--											
8 OC Car Mat	.81	.50	.22	.33	.29	.10	.21	.02	.59*	--										
9 OC OF Suc	.84	.55	.13	.25	-.02	.21	.11	.24	.28	.30	--									
10 OC Div/Incl	.76	.50	.26	.21	.30	.05	.30	.01	.55*	.64*	.30	--								
11 OC Fin Suc	.78	.53	.13	.19	.00	.20	.15	.20	.32	.31	.57*	.35*	--							
12 OC ID Frel	.90	.64	.24	.14	.35	.11	.24	.15	.46*	.67*	.12	.62*	.16	--						
13 OE Acad Suc	.88	.61	.24	.12	.23	.03	.21	-.02	.64*	.61*	.16	.51*	.19	.48*	--					
14 OE Car Mat	.80	.53	.22	.21	.30	.07	.18	.01	.46*	.87*	.19	.56*	.17	.69*	.67*	--				
15 OE OF Suc	.82	.55	.04	.09	.13	.01	.07	.10	.26	.39*	.56*	.31	.34	.27	.32*	.39*	--			
16 OE Div/Incl	.88	.58	.23	.14	.26	.02	.24	-.02	.46*	.64*	.28	.82*	.30	.63*	.54*	.65*	.38*	--		
17 OE Fin Suc	.77	.50	.09	.09	.19	.05	.15	.10	.33	.43*	.41	.42*	.57*	.38*	.34*	.42*	.55*	.47*	--	
18 OE ID Frel	.79	.52	.22	.11	.38	.06	.22	.08	.38	.66*	.10	.57*	.11	.89*	.53*	.75*	.33	.62*	.39	--

* $p < .05$

The results of the three-way mixed design ANOVA for the research questions indicated a significant main effect for the athletic department objectives, $F(5, 704) = 188.23, p < .001, \eta^2 = .572$. The paired t -test results for the overall objectives and objectives by perspective (personal importance, perceived organizational commitment, and perceived organizational effectiveness) are shown in Table 3. The results indicated differences among the objectives for each perspective and the overall combined scores. Academic success was rated highest for each perspective, and was statistically significantly higher than the other objectives. Within personal importance, career maturity ranked second, diversity/inclusion and identity foreclosure loaded similarly at third, on-field success was fourth, and financial success ranked last among the objectives. Organizational commitment saw on-field success second, financial success third, career maturity

and diversity/inclusion next, and identity foreclosure last. For organizational effectiveness, all of the means were lower and each factor besides academic success was statistically similar.

Table 3
Overall and individual factor differences within perspective groups

	Overall	Personal Importance		Organizational Commitment		Organizational Effectiveness	
Academic success	4.422 ^a	Academic success	4.773 ^a	Academic success	4.401 ^a	Academic success	4.091 ^a
Career maturity	3.922 ^b	Career maturity	4.629 ^b	On-field success	4.228 ^b	On-field success	3.407 ^b
On-field success	3.904 ^b	Diversity/Inclusion	4.436 ^c	Financial success	4.112 ^c	Career maturity	3.346 ^b
Diversity/Inclusion	3.783 ^c	Identity foreclosure	4.424 ^c	Career maturity	3.789 ^d	Financial success	3.282 ^b
Financial success	3.705 ^d	On-field success	4.084 ^d	Diversity/Inclusion	3.719 ^d	Diversity/Inclusion	3.203 ^b
Identity foreclosure	3.630 ^d	Financial success	3.723 ^c	Identity foreclosure	3.384 ^c	Identity foreclosure	3.129 ^b

Means that do not share the same letters differ at $p < .05^*$ in the Paired t -test procedure

For research question two, the mixed design ANOVA interaction effect between the six objectives and the three perspectives was statistically significant, $F(10, 1410) = 29.34, p < .001, \eta^2 = .187$. The follow-up test of simple effects indicated differences between each perspective for each objective where the overall trend suggested personal importance was rated the highest and effectiveness was rated lowest (see Table 4). Commitment ranged most often between those two; however, on-field and financial success at the commitment level were rated the highest by both coaches and athletic academic support professionals.

Table 4
Between (perspective) and within factor differences

	Personal Importance	Organizational Commitment	Organizational Effectiveness
Academic success	4.773 ^{bc}	4.401 ^{ac}	4.091 ^{ab}
Career maturity	4.629 ^{bc}	3.789 ^{ac}	3.346 ^{ab}
On-field success	4.084 ^{bc}	4.228 ^{ac}	3.407 ^{ab}
Diversity/Inclusion	4.436 ^{bc}	3.719 ^{ac}	3.203 ^{ab}
Financial success	3.723 ^{bc}	4.112 ^{ac}	3.282 ^{ab}
Identity foreclosure	4.424 ^{bc}	3.384 ^{ac}	3.129 ^{ab}

Test of simple effects procedure: ^a different ($p < .05$) from Personal Importance perspective mean; ^b different ($p < .05$) from Organizational Commitment perspective mean, and ^c different ($p < .05$) from Organizational Effectiveness perspective mean.

The mixed design ANOVA interaction effect between the six objectives, three perspectives, and two roles (coach or athletic academic support professional) was also statistically significant, $f(10, 1410) = 13.58, p < .001, \eta^2 = .171$. Once again, the test of simple effects results for each objective indicated statistically significant differences between roles, between perspectives, and within objectives. Figure 1 provides the results of the on-field success objective. Perceived organizational effectiveness was rated similarly, but statistically significant

differences were found at the personal importance and perceived commitment levels. The ratings were swapped between coaches and athletic academic support professionals.

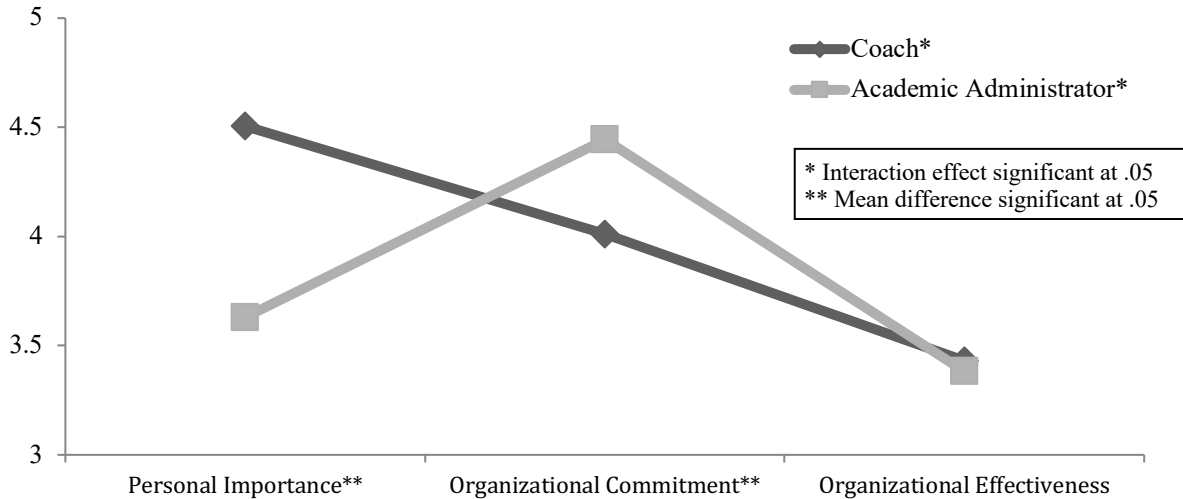


Figure 1. Interaction effect of position and perspective results for On-field Success

Financial Success (Figure 4) was somewhat similar to On-field success where it peaked at perceived organizational commitment and then decreased significantly at perceived effectiveness. In addition, at the commitment level coaches and athletic academic support professionals differed. For Diversity/Inclusion (Figure 2), Identity Foreclosure (Figure 3), Career Maturity (Figure 5), and Academic Success (Figure 6) differences were similar as the ratings decreased steadily from personal importance to perceived organizational effectiveness. In addition, differences were found between roles at various perspectives, but the general trend suggests athletic academic support professionals rated each objective highest at the personal importance level and perceived organizational effectiveness was rated lower than coaches.

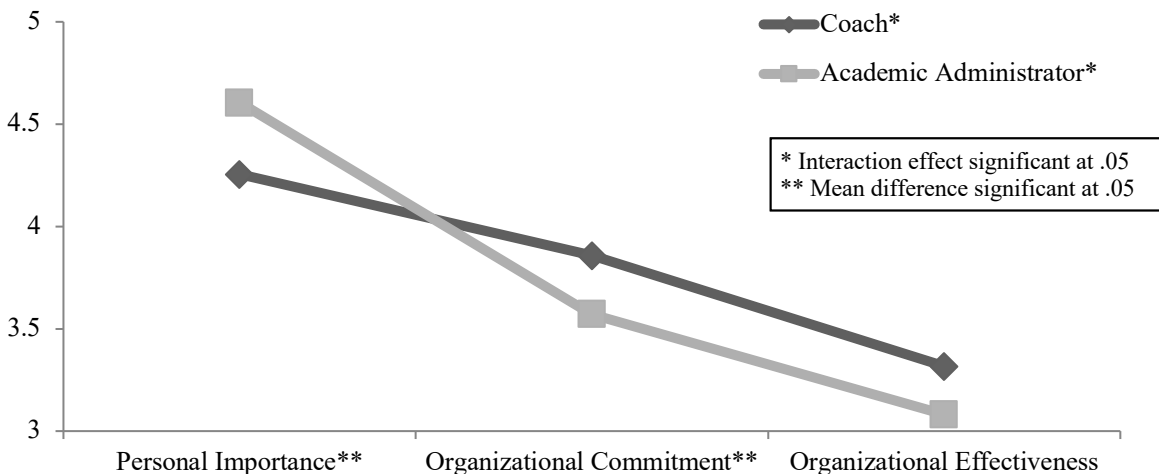


Figure 2. Interaction effect of position and perspective results for Diversity and Inclusion

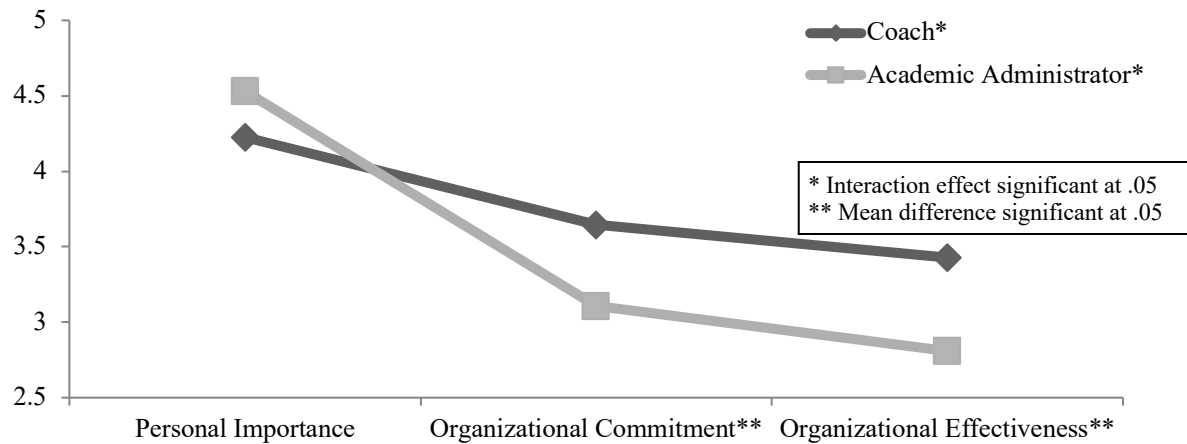


Figure 3. Interaction effect of position and perspective results for Identity Foreclosure

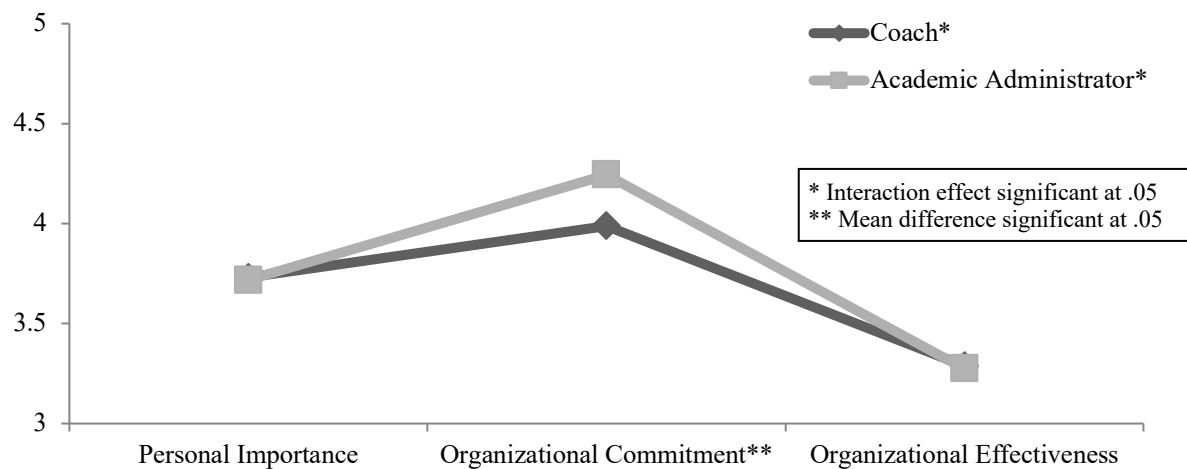


Figure 4. Interaction effect of position and perspective results Financial Success

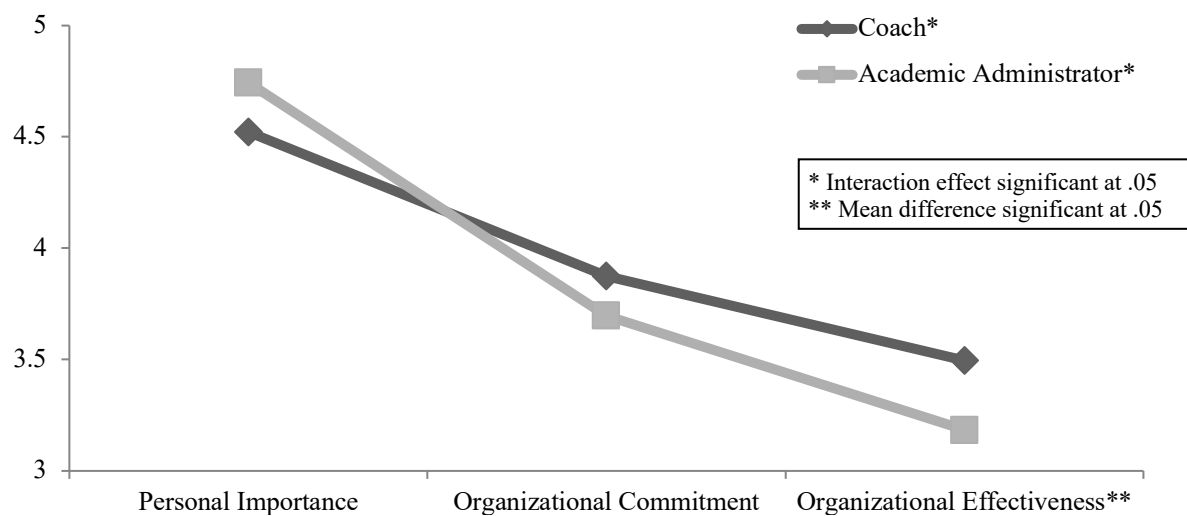


Figure 5. Interaction effect of position and perspective results for Career Maturity

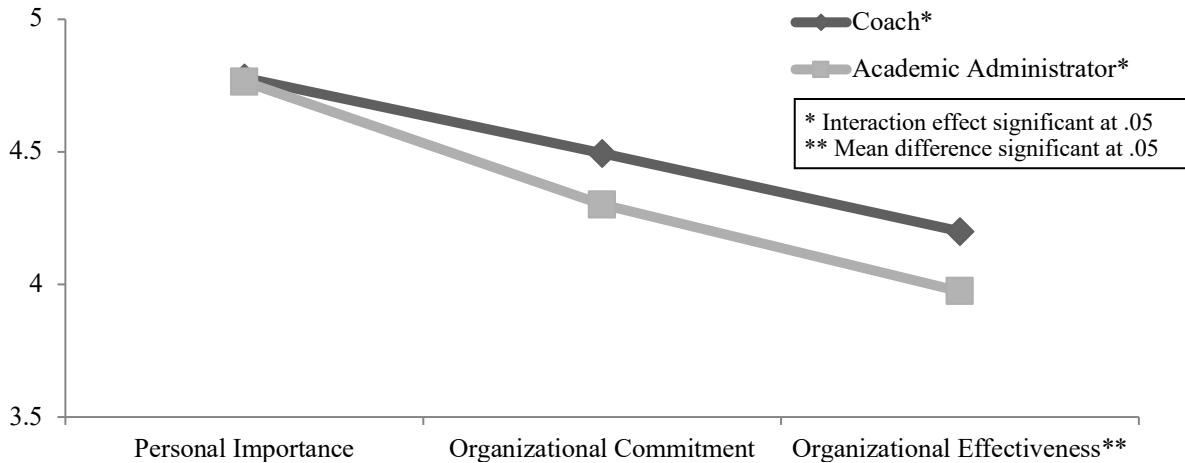


Figure 6.

Interaction effect of position and perspective results for Academic Success

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings produced three themes: (1) revolving door of leadership with a subtheme of lack of transparency and consistency, (2) criticism over athletic departments' funding and allocations, and (3) further leadership emphasis needed for developing S-A culture. The following sections will highlight each theme and subtheme. In addition, direct quotes and comments from the interview participants are included to support the themes.

Revolving Door of Leadership. In explaining some of the discrepancies between participant's levels of importance versus their organization's commitment or effectiveness, all of the participants discussed the revolving door or turnover that occurs regularly in athletics which creates problems establishing and maintaining a consistent athletic culture. For example, Participant seven explained this issue simply stating, "It's really hard for us to work together and be successful when we have so much turnover." They further gave an example of this turnover culture in their athletic department from the first meeting of the year, "We probably have over 100 employees in the athletic department, maybe 30 or 40 were returners and everyone else was new." Similarly, Participant five explained the recent turnover they had experienced within their athletic departments. Participant five stated,

We are all coming from different places and we do not have many people, if any, in our athletic department that have been here for a long time which is good in some ways, but in other ways it takes a while for things to get working the way they need to.

Participant 10 explained that within their field of academic advising the amount of turnover creates tension and issues with communication between coaches and advisors in terms of roles and expectations. Participant 10 said,

There's a lot of turnover and that creates challenges, obviously. Because if you have people coming in every year, then it creates issues with the communication because then

it's like we have to start all over with who are you and what are you about. How can we make this work and who do we go to now because this person's gone?

Participant 10 further explained that this turnover creates an inability to accomplish tasks and goals saying, "It [turnover] completely takes a toll on what the department's able to do because you have a new person come in every year or every couple of years, and it's like you almost have to start from scratch again."

Beyond turnover within the athletic department as a whole, 10 out of the 15 participants were under new leadership or currently searching for a new AD. Participants expressed frustration with this specific turnover in the AD position and the turmoil and disorganization it created for their specific departments. Participant four simply stated in regard to their athletic department, "To be honest it is kind of a mess right now. We don't have an AD." Participant two detailed that they had seen four different ADs in the past five years including a new chancellor at their university. Participant two expressed concern about the direction of the athletic department's future stating, "The lack of tone at the top, the lack of consistent leadership at the top has really put a stranglehold on [us] and it's so hard now. Imagine being the sixth person to come into that role."

Subtheme: Lack of Transparency and Consistency. Beyond the problem of turnover in the AD position, participants also pointed to the inconsistent messages and lack of transparency as issues that directly affect the organizational effectiveness score in the survey. Participant 11 discussed bluntly the lack of transparency that takes place in their department stating, "I don't think that I could say I know specifically what my AD's goals are. I don't think that's communicated very well." In another example participant seven discussed that transparency was needed in two folds to improve the problems within their athletic department: from the top down and from the bottom up. They said,

I think it could be really helpful if our administration could just sit down with us and ask us these kinds of questions and put it in a space where we could safely answer them and then they would have some of that data to go off of. The only way that they ever get feedback from us is when someone leaves and they have to do an exit interview. It's like, it shouldn't take someone leaving for you to find out information about this program, because by that point, it's too late.

Beyond transparency, participants indicated that AD turnover also created problems with consistency. Particularly, Participant three explained that even the programming to S-As had seen various changes from one AD to the next making it difficult to create trust with coaches and S-As. They said, "They're [S-A and coaches] not sure if things are new or if they're sustainable. So just making sure whatever we implement can be maintained over a long period of time and it's effective." Participants two and four particularly pointed to the inconsistent actions and rhetoric of their ADs which created distrust and even disdain among employees and coaches in their departments. Participant four said, "I hope we really find someone who is willing to do the hard job of cleaning house where it needs to be cleaned, holding folks accountable, setting reasonable goals for the department." Similarly, Participant two explained,

That amount of leadership change ...I think it's something that probably as a department we don't talk about as much as we should, but it's really hard when every leader wants buy-in, but we've seen this before and so it's really hard for them [ADs] then to set their priorities and do those things. That, fiscally, has probably been our biggest detriment that we just can't find the consistent step to the next one [AD]. So, the coaches now are all doing their own thing again because they are like, what does it matter? There's going to be a new person in two years.

Criticism Over Athletic Departments' Funding and Allocation. All of the participants despite their position felt that more assets were needed not only for on field success, but also to create and facilitate further S-A experience programming; essentially the participants felt their athletic departments needed to resituate their priorities and the way resources and funds were allocated. Many expressed frustrations with their organization for not prioritizing and allocating funds towards their specific teams, coaching professional development, and in the case of athletic academic support professionals the lack of funds to provide essential resources to enhance the S-A experience. Participant one detailed a specific example where a high-profile donor gave to the university for the building of a new stadium. Participant one felt this stadium was unnecessary and funds should have been allocated to remodel the previous stadium or S-A scholarships. Specifically, they said,

I think that in terms of that organization effectiveness and fiscal responsibility, I feel like there were decisions that were made poorly in terms of not just where money is spent, but how much money is spent on those things. We spent 10 million dollars on a new stadium and there is no fund to maintain it. It's something in my mind as an albatross.

Participant four also described that despite the athletic department advertising that they focused their donor initiatives on raising money for scholarships, facilities was their main concern. Participant four said, "They give good lip service that they raise money for scholarships. That is actually not the case. They say we want to raise money for scholarships, but every time you talk to a donor, facilities need to be updated." Participant two similarly detailed that their AD's main agenda was facilities and external funding and this was problematic as further S-A programming was needed. Participant six also disagreed with the financial allocation of their athletic department. When describing the senior staff's financial focus, Participant six said, "Right now it's winning and getting butts in the seats." Elaborating on this Participant six stated, "We talk a lot about [development] athletically, socially, academically, but I see the emphasis from our athletic department right now being athletically instead of as a whole or academic." Participant 13 detailed the positive and empty "chatter" accompanied with a lack of action from the athletic department as, "I think sometimes they say that they are really invested, and that they want the students to be good people, but they don't often give those resources."

Further Leadership Emphasis Needed for Developing S-A Culture. Half of the participants discussed that their athletic department and by large university was creating a culture where academic success and development outside of the classroom was taking place. Participant one detailed that their entire athletic department was centered not just in winning and competition, but also on the holistic development of their S-As. Participant one said, "There are 3 c's - competition, classroom, and community. If we are developing strong athletes and strong

people, you need to have all three of those as your goals and things you are working toward.” Participant nine pointed to the presence of the AD and her involvement with the S-As at their institution saying, “She really wants us to excel and she's very supportive. I think our AD is supportive.” Similarly, Participant 12 said, “I think he [AD] is very invested in developing students. And just making sure when they leave here, they are good people and that they are involved with the community and care about what they are doing.” Participant five emphasized that the S-A centered culture was started and maintained by the AD and the senior staff. Participant five said when discussing their leadership team,

Winning is important, but doing things the right way is important and giving our S-A's and overall good experience. Being able to provide them with resources to be successful while they are here and when they leave here. It is important to him [AD] and to our senior staff. It is not a “win at all cost” administration.

The other half of the participants discussed that their athletic department did not emphasize the S-A experience and prioritize their academic success and development outside of sport. For example, Participant six described their athletic department's approach as “If it ain't [sic] broke, don't fix it” and expressed that due to this mentality changes were not being made, “I think that challenges exist, but I don't think we're necessarily addressing it.” Participant 11 also discussed that their athletic departments did not seem to be truly providing S-As with the resources they needed when leaving their sport. Participant 11 detailed,

This is going to sound not great, but it's almost like checking a box if you will. Like we have certain things in place that on paper sound great and when we're recruiting sound great. But I think when you evaluate those S-As that are coming through their junior and senior year, they're not asking for these opportunities number one because they don't know they exists, but number two because they don't think what we have is the most effective option.

Participant 13 vividly described that the culture within their athletic department was focused on winning even at the detriment of S-A development. Participant 13 stated,

I think that there's a culture that promotes cutting corners, but obviously still trying not to get caught, but to win games at all costs, whether that might be at the risk of the mental health or physical health or educational health of a S-A. Does that always happen? No. But I think that's the type of culture that promotes that kind of behavior.

Discussion

The findings presented above give insight into the experiences and perceptions of collegiate athletic department coaches and academic support professionals. These findings provide several theoretical and practical implications. In this discussion section several practical implications of the findings are examined. Interwoven with these practical suggestions and examples are also ways in which the findings also extend our understanding of the relationship between goal alignment theory and organizational culture. Although goal alignment theory and organizational culture have been examined in general business settings, they have rarely been

applied to sport organization settings. In addition, the combination of the two theories brings additional insight to the body of literature on ways collegiate athletic departments can improve in achieving their aspirational goals.

Realistic Expectations for Aspirational Objectives

The quantitative and qualitative results indicate that athletic department employees see evidence of goal misalignment between what their organization aims to do and what they actually accomplish. Whether it is S-A focused goals like academic success or identity foreclosure, or organizational objectives like financial stability and on-field success, participants clearly indicated a perceived lack of organizational effectiveness compared to the organization's commitment to the objective. This goal misalignment was also accompanied by a culture of defensiveness, frustration, and confusion. From an organizational objective perspective, this can be related to a number of factors, some of which are outside an administrator's control. For instance, in general on-field success is dependent upon exogenous variables including injuries, player retention, and opponent performance. However, financial success and diversity and inclusion are components more controllable and are factors for which administration should be able to match their effectiveness with their commitment. Similarly, the S-A focused factors are within the purview of administrative control, and the execution of organizational objectives related to academic success, career maturity, and identity foreclosure should match an organization's commitment if the proper resources and effort are allocated to the objective.

Administrators need to understand the importance of setting realistic expectations for aspirational objectives and effectively communicating these expectations regularly. Every college athletic department wants to win, stay financially solvent, increase diversity and inclusion, and provide the best S-A experience possible. This is also true of general sport organizations, even outside the collegiate level. Developing a winning culture is a common goal among general sport organizations. However, the challenge of achieving all of these objectives is clearly substantial and setting unrealistic expectations for accomplishing objectives results in mistrust, frustration, increased political posturing, and in this context job burnout among key employees (Levi, 2014). Thus, much like CEOs and CFOs of for-profit companies set incremental benchmarks for key quarterly financial numbers, athletic administrators should set more conservative benchmarks for growth in certain areas over which they can have more direct impact, such as diversity and inclusion, identity foreclosure, and financial success. This is especially true for setting realistic goals in areas employees and athletic administration staff can have more direct influence over, such as achieving financial stability, increasing diversity and inclusion, and support S-A success. Day (2013) suggests organizational progress is possible with a combination of strategic discipline and an organization's commitment to intentional and incremental growth. Combining realistic goal setting, which focuses on incremental growth, with effective communication would help to correct some of this goal misalignment. Consequently, departments would be able to coordinate their efforts more effectively, and eventually achieve progress toward aspirational goals.

Although effective communication is certainly not a new strategy for building trust and a positive work culture among employees, the qualitative findings in this study clearly highlight its importance. The findings suggest a clear breakdown between what these athletic departments say they want to accomplish, and what they actually put their effort and resources toward. Trust is not only built upon what has happened in the past, but an understanding of others' motives, a

belief in others, and the consistency in what they are being told (Uzzi, 1997). Thus, a simple solution to one piece of the trust puzzle is clear communication from upper administration, and if one combines the clear communication with realistic expectations, it can provide a much stronger foundation for employees to understand what is coming and what is required. Previous research has found that the implementation of transparent and clear communication can assist in the change process of employees and help mitigate resistance to new ideas and leadership (Welty-Peachey, 2009). Bass and Avolio (1993) found organizational culture can be greatly improved by leaders that create an attractive vision, communicate this vision in a precise and consistent manner, and establish realistic expectations for stakeholders to execute the plan. This study extends our understanding of the culture within athletic departments, especially as it relates to how top-down communication must align with organizational action around realistic expectations and goals. This study highlights how goal misalignment is not as simple as different departments having different goals and priorities. It shows when there is a mismatch between what athletic administration says is important and what they actually support with action, resources, and funding, a culture of goal misalignment can result.

The current study's results also suggest athletic department employees find most of the core attributes of their organization attractive, that is they agree with the core values and related aspirational goals of the department. In addition, they find the organization is in general committed to these core values. However, the pace of achieving these aspirational goals is frustratingly slow, and sometimes administration actions and resource allocation do not match stated priorities. Consequently, various athletic department sub-department employees can at times feel disconnected, unappreciated, and defensive of current resources, all of which point to an organization characterized by goal misalignment.

Organizational Repercussions of Employee Turnover and Allocation of Resources

Participants in the current study expressed concerns about the impact employee turnover has on their athletic department's ability to effectively meet organizational objectives. For this reason, ADs would serve to investigate the causes of employee turnover within their athletic departments. Although the purpose of this study was not to examine turnover directly, we can look to the results of the qualitative responses which focused on work culture and draw potential conclusions on what some of the potential contributing factors leading to employee turnover may be.

Participants highlighted unmanageable workloads in their efforts to be effective. They discussed an expectation and organizational culture of having to work, or be available to work, at all times and on any day. In addition, some reported a "win at all costs" competitive mentality bleeding over into their work culture, in which employees are expected to sacrifice and show their commitment to the organization via personal sacrifice combined with long work hours, which has also been reported from other studies focusing on collegiate athletics (McCarthy, 2015). Combined with the results indicating high levels of goal misalignment, the 24/7 work culture can compound employee experiences of feeling underappreciated and unsupported. Unrealistic expectations in workload have been found to contribute to job burnout among both coaches (Schaffran et al., 2016) and athletic academic support professionals (Gellock, 2019; Rubin & Moreno-Pardo, 2018) who work in collegiate athletics. When employees experience job burnout as a result of increased workloads, they can become emotionally exhausted from their work, become cynical in their job duties, or develop a lack of self-confidence in their daily tasks

(Leiter & Maslach, 2017). More than just becoming less engaged in their work, job burnout ultimately, can result in employee turnover.

One solution to reducing job burnout and subsequent turnover is combatting workloads with additional resources. Study participants highlighted how organizational politics play a role in the dispersion of financial resources within the athletic department, which are often used to bolster and build new athletic facilities to meet on-field success objectives at the expense of equally supporting all departmental objectives. ADs should consider the intra-departmental implications of how financial resources are allocated, and how this allocation of funds can lead to poor organizational culture and increased goal misalignment. For example, in an effort to meet departmental objectives related to off-field success of S-A's, resources must also be administered to help employee workload management in these areas. Financial resources could be used to support the hiring of additional human resources or allocated to the retention of retaining top employees. Contrary to popular belief, resources do not necessarily have to be tangible financial support, they can also be intangible. For example, participants in the current study mentioned feeling disrespected and not listened to by athletic administration. Resources such as a positive work community and social recognition of hard work can sometimes be just as crucial in reducing job burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2017). In addition, athletic administrators must work to ensure the efforts of all employees within the athletic department are recognized as contributing to the overall goals and objectives of the department. As indicated by goal alignment theory, if employees feel their actions are not helping the organization to achieve its goals, their efforts to coordinate and work with other sub-departments as well as their overall engagement with the department will suffer. Ultimately, by aiming to reduce job burnout athletic departments will gain more engaged employees, increase overall employee health and well-being, develop a positive work culture, increase job satisfaction, and support overall employee retention.

Prioritizing S-A Centered Culture

Participants in the quantitative survey pointed to the personal importance of academic success of their S-As as the highest-ranking component. However, recently in collegiate athletics there has been numerous scandals and issues with academic fraud issues and clustering students into majors that fit their athletic schedules (Lederman, 2019). Furthermore, coaches rated the importance of foreclosure and maturity for S-As high as well. However, the organizational effectiveness scores and overall scores from athletic academic support professionals indicate this area of emphasis is lacking support of funding from administration. Previous research has found with Division I level and revenue-generating S-As identity foreclosure, identity development outside of athletics, and transitioning away from the athletic role can be met with substantial difficulty and mental health challenges (i.e., Beamon, 2012; Beamon & Bell, 2011; Kidd et al., 2018). Thus, further time, resources, and support should be provided by athletic administration and coaches to athletic academic support professionals who are working to assist S-As in adapting new identities, developing transitional skills that will aid in leaving sport, and providing programming (service learning, job shadowing, mentor pairings, internships, and career planning; Cummins & O'Boyle, 2015; Leonard & Schimmel, 2016; Navarro, 2014).

Despite the quantitative numbers, the qualitative interviews did reveal that half of the qualitative participants felt their athletic departments prioritized and focused on a S-A driven culture. Recently, athletic departments are beginning to take a strong interest and support in the leadership/skill/career development programming of S-As. When this programming includes S-

As choosing their major based on their academic skillset, familial influence, and personal passions in comparison to majors centered on athletic eligibility, coaches and teammates, and team schedules S-As are more prepared for their chosen career field (Navarro, 2014). Thus, continued funding and resources for positions and programs specific to areas within leadership academies and career development are beginning to be added for S-As to be successful once they transition or graduate.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study provides noteworthy contributions to the sport management field, it also poses certain limitations. This study sought out coaches and athletic academic support professionals as the population due to their interaction both with administration and S-As, however, the study was not completed with the decision-makers (ADs) within collegiate athletics. It is widely known that the experiences and demands of decision-makers (ADs) and other employees within the athletic department are vastly different as this study alludes to. Future research should consider examining the experiences, goals, and decision-making surrounding those goals of ADs to gain a further understanding into the complex workings of athletic departments and their cultures.

In addition, although the response rate is consistent with similar studies, the response rate still provides caution about the result's generalizability to the general population. Furthermore, the sample with coaches represented diverse groups, but there was a homogenous athletic academic support population. Future studies should continue to recruit representative samples which can provide diverse insights into their organizations.

Finally, this study could have been even stronger with the perspectives of S-As as well. They are the recipients and focus of much of the efforts of collegiate athletic departments, and hearing their thoughts and experiences would have provided even more rich detail about the culture and goal alignment or misalignment of these departments. Unfortunately, recruiting S-A participants was outside the scope of this study. Future studies should consider examining the experiences and perspectives of S-As, especially as it relates to organizational culture and goal alignment. Potential research questions might include, "What is the culture within the athletic department like for a student athlete?" or "How does the organizational culture and climate of the department influence your experience as a student athlete?" and others along these lines. In general, these types of research questions would help those within the athletic department to see how the culture they build can have effects even among S-As.

There are a number of future recommendations for future research. With an abundance of inconsistency and turnover, it seems athletic department employees may be leaving to find a more stable work environment. Additional reasons outside of job burnout such as hitting a career plateau or job hopping should be explored for their impacts on organization culture. Job turnover obviously is having a large impact on organizational culture and the success of meeting organizational goals and objectives in an effective manner. Thus, future research should continue to explore job turnover and burnout within collegiate athletics. Future research in this area could identify these issues and create policies and procedures to combat these problems and create healthier work environments. We also need to continue to explore the athletic departments goals and resources allocated to the S-A experience. Research continues to demonstrate that S-As, especially at the Division I level deal with negative consequences when leaving their collegiate sport environment. As the landscape of collegiate athletics continues to change the study of

athletic department organizational goals, employees, and resources will remain vital to managing sport and be a pertinent continued area of research.

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