

# Chapter 19

## NAIA to NCAA D-II Sports Transition: A Three-Year University Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

*The intent of this chapter is to provide results of a self-study of the transition process of a medium-sized, independent university from affiliation with National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics to National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II. This transitional movement by a four-year, liberal arts University represented real-world application of critical thinking to decision making, which created an impact on all stakeholders. The study purpose was to provide documentation of the transition with analysis of potential barriers and challenges, an examination of procedures placed, and quantitative verification of potential academic impact on both athletes and non-athletes. Data informed the original decision. This project continued analysis with before-to-after comparisons of measureable characteristics, such as athlete and non-athlete GPA, extent to which NCAA involvement influenced both athlete and non-athlete student choice to attend University, and before-to-after perceptions of University's reputation and stature within the academic community.*

### INTRODUCTION

Slack and Parent (2006) described intercollegiate athletics as organization in a state of constant change. Athletic employee, coaching, and team roster turnover, internal reorganization, introduction of new programming, and voluntary choice to reclassify competitive status can all contribute to

a state of flux. Smith, Soebbing, and Washington (2010) referred to reclassification of a university's athletic competitive status as a representation of radical organizational change that also affects organizational culture.

Athletic associations must follow requirements established by Title IX, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2011a), and

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Equity in Athletics disclosure Act, concerning gender equity, scholarship aid, and participation (Yiamouyiannis, 2009, p. 43). Since the initial establishment of Title IX, the field of intercollegiate sports experienced constant and continual reform. The relationship between intercollegiate sports competition and student academics has been scrutinized, creating a category of reform separate from equity participation concerns (Petr & Paskus, 2009, p. 77). The ease of data collection in the age of available computer technology has allowed data-driven decision making (Hoffman, Antony, & Alfaro, 2009). Data collection influenced a number of intercollegiate sports participation issues such as the hiring of athletics coaches and staff (Harrison, Lapchick, & Janson, 2009, p. 93).

At the time of this writing, there was little research conducted on NCAA Division II competition in any category, such as student achievement, institutional finance, or equitable participation (Emerson, Brooks, & McKenzie, 2009, p. 66). There was also very little research focused upon the process a university experiences as it moves from one collegiate competitive category to another, sometimes created out of necessity as increasing enrollments transform the characteristics of the campus environment (Smith, Soebbing, & Washington, 2010). This study will add to the body of literature available for those studying the motivation to change, the critical nature of the change process, and the consequences of change between intercollegiate sports competition classifications.

The intent of this project was to provide a self-study of the transition process of a medium-sized, independent university (University) from National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) to National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II (NCAA D-II) sports involvement. The research included before-to-after comparisons of measurable characteristics, such as athlete and non-athlete Grade Point Averages (GPAs), extent to which NCAA involvement influenced both athlete and non-athlete student choice to attend University, and

perceptions of University's reputation and stature within the academic community. A comparison of University's perception of benefits expected prior to transition to perception of benefits received following transition was included. The purpose was to provide documentation of the transition process with an analysis of potential barriers and challenges, an examination of procedures placed, and quantitative verification of potential academic impact on both athletes and non-athletes.

## **Critical Thinking**

### **Vision, Transformation, and Communication**

System-wide organizational change requires critical thinking processes from the executives in charge. The decision-makers need to view the organization from a global perspective. Making a change for the better in one department can affect the operations in another, sometimes reducing efficiency and effectiveness. Decisions should be aligned with organizational goals and informed through gathering of appropriate information. Organizational mission and vision should guide decisions concerning major change.

Organizational vision is the perception the stakeholders have about the future of the organization, "and it is crucial to the success of the enterprise" (*10 Critical Questions*, 2014, p. 3). Stakeholders include individuals from all levels of organization: executives, leaders, managers, workers, and consumers. In the case of University transition from NAIA to NCAA sports participation, executives are board members, presidents, and vice presidents; leaders are deans and assistant deans; managers are department chairmen; workers are faculty and staff; and consumers are students and community members. Decision-makers must "anticipate the corporation's future and its place in the global arena (p. 1).

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