

**Where to Play: An Edge in Recruiting NCAA
D1 Football Student Athletes**

By

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Where to Play: An Edge in Recruiting NCAA D1 Football Student Athletes

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Abstract

College athletics is a big business industry. Universities and colleges are benefiting from increased revenue, television licensing deals, and apparel sponsorship, for revenue generating sports. Football alone, nearly generates the same amount of revenue as the other collegiate sports combined. This primary purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to ascertain the influential factors of college choice, for NCAA FBS D1 football student athletes, attending a Pac12 university. The research questions investigated in this encompassed: What compels a football NCAA D1 SA to sign an athletic scholarship with one university over another and why do college coaches lose a PSA's enrollment commitment? This study used football players currently active on roster that was provided by the Study School Site athletic staff. Adopting a qualitative research methodology alongside a phenomenological semi-structured interview focus group research design for theme analysis, produced four themes as to why football student athletes chose this specific university to play at, amongst the other scholarship offers they were entertaining. These themes were categorized in order beginning with the top, most influential factor for choosing this Pac 12 University: atmosphere, communication, athletics, and academics. These results can inform future PSAs and their families on viewpoints to consider when selecting a school. Furthermore, they can inform university administration and college coaching staff on practices to make their recruiting of PSAs more efficient. These results also have substantial impacts on individual conferences within the NCAA and can further fill the desire to develop a profile of the school's typical, most desired, recruit.

Keywords: college choice, Division 1, football, NCAA, Pac12, qualitative, recruitment, student athletes

Dedication

Praises be to God who orchestrated my path to the road it is today. The times I doubted if becoming a doctor was achievable; you introduced someone across my path who encouraged me that it is. It is you, the author and finisher of my life. For the many blessings bestowed upon me, I am humble.

I dedicate this dissertation to the city that birthed me: 702 – Las Vegas, NV. I will always appreciate the lessons you taught me, the times you knocked me down, and the opportunities you did not afford me growing up. All those built a callus inside equipping me with fortitude, will-power, & acumen to achieve the unachievable. For that, I will always be in-debited and vow to make a better community, for the future.

I also dedicate this dissertation to the United States Department of Defense. Had it not been for deployment, I may not have completed this feat nor in the timeframe, I did. Sometimes, blessings are disguised through chaos. “From the concrete who knew a flower would grow”.
– Drake ft. Alicia Keys “Fireworks”

To my boys Ky’Ron and Jaxson James, may this completion be a witness to the power of persistence, sacrifice, dedication, and faith. There is no dream, un-dreamt.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The college selection process is one of the most life-changing and multifarious activities high school seniors and graduates will encounter (Heitin, 2016; Hill-Eley, 2019; Ives, 2017). The first step in this process is deciding whether college is the best next step for the individual (King, 2013; Nersisyan, 2017; Sarian, 2012). Discussions on the college choice process often neglect to consider the other choices high school seniors and graduates balance when considering whether to pursue a college education (Anderson, 2021; Bigsby et al., 2017; Copridge, 2016). Choices may include entering the workforce, serving in the United States Armed Forces, or opting for an alternative path, such as entrepreneurship, a gap year, or religious excursions (Houlihan, 2021; Panneton, 2021). Nevertheless, high school students and graduates who choose to pursue a college education face a combination of interconnected planning and factors to consider. Such factors may include tuition costs, location, academic offerings, athletic ambitions, and even school colors, as well as alternative approaches, like earning credits at a community college initially and then transferring to a four-year university afterwards (Ellis, 2011; Hill-Eley, 2019).

Prospective Student Athlete (PSA)

Prospective student athletes (PSAs) who have decided to pursue a postsecondary education are challenged with additional factors beyond their academic ambitions, such as playing time, coach compatibility, teammate chemistry, and the pathway from amateur to professional, that they must consider before choosing a college (Bordon & Fu, 2015; Niland, 2022; Tai-Ming et al., 2021). Indeed, PSAs must determine the best fit not just for their academic endeavors but also for their athletic talents and interests (Hill-Eley, 2019; Huntrods, 2019; Ives, 2017). Understanding what PSAs must consider in their college selection process is vital to a college's success in recruiting these potential students (Hill-Eley, 2019; Huffman & Cooper,

2012; Posteher, 2019). However, while research has investigated the college selection process followed by traditional students, few studies have examined the process as it applies to student athletes, or SAs (Dahnweih, 2021; Hornor, 2022; Mohr, 2019). The National Collegiate Athletic Association, or NCAA (2022), explained that PSAs transition into SAs after they have enrolled in college and competed in their first athletic season. Scholars who have investigated SAs have emphasized the need for further studies in the context of college: football, multiple athletic disciplines, and the highest amateur competition level, Division 1 (D1) (Day, 2011; Hill-Eley, 2019; Huffman, 2011; Huffman et al., 2016; Huntrods, 2019; Posteher, 2019). Since traditional students are studied, certainly this research regarding SAs is justified. Furthermore, the athletic recruiting challenges college coaches face reinforce the demand for academia to investigate and provide solutions.

Success on the Field

Coaches recruit top-tier athletic talent to enhance team performance (Day, 2011; Huntrods, 2019); indeed, the coach's ability to recruit top talent is correlated to success on the playing field (Anderson, 2021). Such success can potentially increase revenue through an upsurge in ticket sales, spawning increased university exposure (Copridge, 2016). Increased university exposure enhances marketing campaigns by attracting additional enrollment applicants (Huntrods, 2019). Although a university team's on-field success is the identity of the athletic program, that success also reflects positively on the university (Mohr, 2019). This success can also positively impact outcomes of the university's marketing and recruitment of traditional students (Mohr, 2019). Therefore, higher education administration must understand the factors influencing SAs' college selection process (Hill-Eley, 2019; Huffman & Cooper, 2012; Posteher, 2019). Moreover, understanding the factors that influence SAs' college choices

can help to strengthen a college or university's athletic program, including its recruitment of top-tier SAs and its teams' odds of winning (Huffman, 2011).

Background of the Study

To understand the competitive business of securing PSAs, the following elements of college athletics must examine: the history of college football, how games are won, limited options, recruitment practices, and the criteria for determining which factors are influential. Each element of college athletics is associated with a cost, whether it be annotated in time, money, or other resources (Anderson, 2021). Overall, the recruitment of PSAs is arguably pricey, as the NCAA appraised the cost of recruitment for all NCAA member colleges and universities at nearly \$8B annually (Faulkner, 2005; Gaines & Nudelman, 2014; Kirshner, 2018). Of that \$8B, football alone accounts for nearly \$32M annually (Gaines & Nudelman, 2017, para. 3). Considering the costly revenue and expense business model for football and recruiting, additional research on these subjects can yield nuances and avenues that can lead to a sustained growth in returns (Faulkner, 2005; Gaines & Nudelman, 2014; Kirshner, 2018).

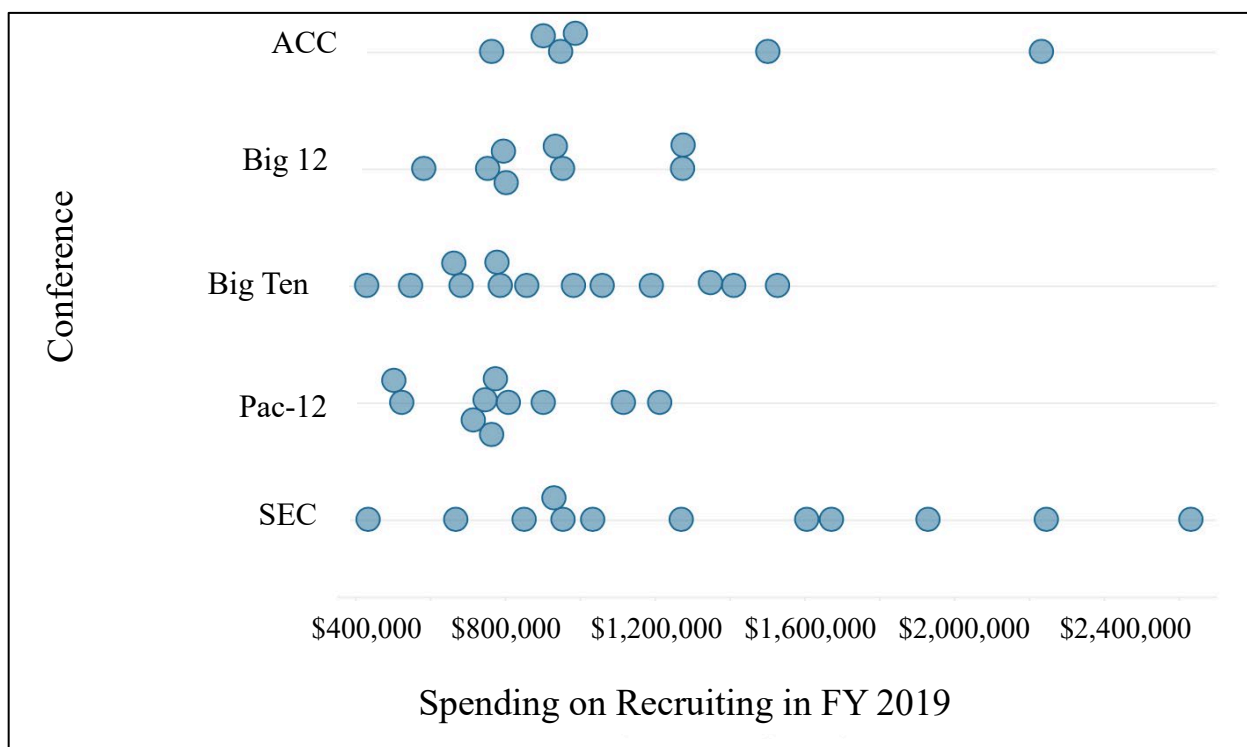
Recruiting Costs

The cost of recruiting is, at times, controversial, albeit understandable due to the pressure coaches are under to produce winning athletic teams and the challenges that can hinder their achievement of that goal (Day, 2011; Huntrods, 2019; Posther, 2019). To be competitive in the context of college football, coaches must have top-tier talent, which adds to these pressures and challenges far beyond the scope of developing football schemes and formations (Gaines & Nudelman, 2017; Laird, 2008; Rapport, 1993). In hopes of securing top-tier athletes, college coaches trek the country, seeking the best high school football PSAs, sometimes at a high cost. For example, University of Texas reported spending nearly \$250,000 on recruiting expenses to

entice the number one ranked quarterback in the country to enroll in the university and join its team (Conway, 2022; Glasspiegel, 2022; Gonzalez, 2022). The University of Texas is one of many schools opening their wallets to entice top-tier PSAs (Hill-Eley, 2019; Posteher, 2019; Wittry, 2019). As Figure 1 depicts, certain conferences spend more on recruiting than others.

Figure 1

Annual Recruiting Spending per NCAA D1 Conference



Notes: NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association; SEC = Southeastern Conference.

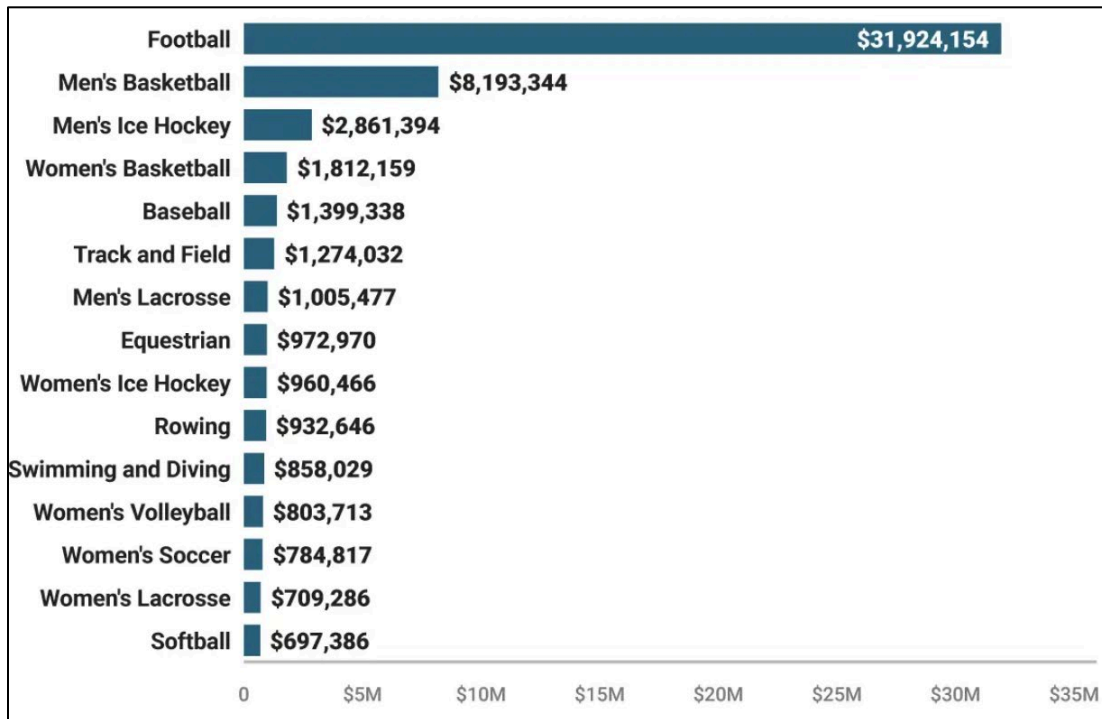
The NCAA SEC referred to its recruiting as just being different, which is evident in the amount spent on recruiting in that conference Wittry, A. (2020). An analysis of college football recruiting costs. Athleticdirectoru.com. <https://athleticdirectoru.com/articles/an-analysis-of-football-recruiting-costs/>

The Backbone of College Athletics

Acknowledging that recruiting constitutes the backbone of college athletics, coaches either recruit to win or forfeit their winning odds (Day, 2011; Mater, 2015; Posteher, 2019). This concept is supported by the dissection of revenue per NCAA athletic discipline for Division I (D1) programs shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Average Revenue Generated per NCAA Athletic Discipline



Notes: NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association.

The annual list in Figure 2 is not comprehensive as it does not reflect all NCAA sports Gaines, C. & Nudelman, M. (2017). The average college football team makes more money than the next 35 college sport combined. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/college-sports-football-revenue-2017-10>

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In 1929, a report published by the Carnegie Foundation cited college football as the sole revenue generator that carries all other college athletic programs (Kirshner, 2020; Savage et al., 1929). Indeed, “football carries the bulk of the monetary burden” (Savage et al., 1929, p. 83). Figure 3 illuminates the face of college football in the past. Although the sport is played and organized differently, what remains is the roaring crowd of spectators. Reflecting on evolution of college football, starting with a review of how the collegiate sport began, can provide indispensable information to increase our understanding of the sport and the recruitment of PSAs.

Figure 3

Early 1900s Football



Notes: Picture of 1932 football championship game played on a hockey rink taken from “Odd & Original Football Rules That Are No Longer Used” [Source] Shuck, B. (2021). Odd & original football rules that are no longer used.

Dawgs by Nature. <https://www.dawgsbynature.com/2021/6/8/22460859/odd-original-football-rules-that-are-no-longer-used>

History of College Football

The first college football game was played in the late 1800s (see Figure 3) when students from two of these Ivy League schools, Rutgers University and Princeton University, then called College of New Jersey, organized the first intercollegiate game (Bernstein, 2001; Johnson, 2018; Parlier, 2020). Teams of 25 men competed against one another, adopting rugby-like rules from the 1863 London Football Association (Harris, n.d.; Harvey, 2010). Although the rules of the game and the way it was played were drastically different from college football today, excited crowds were drawn to the game (Boyle, 1962; Crutchfield, 2020). It was that excitement from the crowd that sparked college football's first rivalry when College of New Jersey fans sought revenge for the previously lost game against Rutgers (Harris, n.d.; Schnexnayder, 2013). This early version of the sport created fandemonium that has continued for centuries.

As the popularity of the sport grew, so did the appetite of these two original rivals to win. The Rutgers football team craved winning but was smaller in stature than Princeton and suffered multiple losses when the two competed (Bernstein, 2001; Johnson, 2018; Parlier, 2020). After experiencing these multiple losses, Rutgers began searching for the best athletes to join their team in the hopes of winning on the football field (Dumond et al., 2007).

How to Win

National Football League (NFL) Coach Bill Walsh stated, "to win a football game you must beat your opposition to the punch every time. This is achieved by being quicker as a team" (Rapport, 1993, para. 4). Quicker is not reserved to the team's running speed alone but also to being an overall better team than the opponent. One approach identified for developing a better team was to improve the quality of the players (Gaines & Nudelman, 2017; Stinson & Howard,

2008). Another method was equipping the team with athletes who are superior to those on the opposing team (Laird, 2008). This is known as athletic recruiting, which is the search for athletes to join an athletic team (Fountain & Finley, 2017, 2018). Recruiting athletes to gain an edge over an opponent can help position a team and increase its odds of winning (Gaines & Nudelman, 2017; Laird, 2008; Stinson & Howard, 2008). In the current college football environment, this feat is accomplished by identifying high school football PSAs who fit into the athletic program's identity.

Limited Options

Considering the number of PSAs playing high school football, understandably, only some ultimately transition to the NCAA, let alone play at the most competitive level, Division 1 (D1) Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS; NCAA, 2018, 2020a; O'Shaughnessy, 2011). While the number of PSAs playing football may be high, not all exhibit superior talent or possess the skills necessary to play at the NCAA FBS D1 level (Day, 2011; NCAA, 2018; O'Shaughnessy, 2011; Ritzen, 2008). Figure 4 depicts high school athletes' chances of continuing athletic play at the postsecondary level. The NCAA (2018) reported only 2% of all high school football athletes received athletic scholarships to continue their education and athletic play. While this percentage is low, football is still one of the biggest collegiate sports.

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Figure 4

2019 High School Athletes' Estimated Probability of Competing in College Athletics by NCAA Division

	High School Participants	NCAA Participants	Overall % HS to NCAA	% HS to NCAA Division I	% HS to NCAA Division II	% HS to NCAA Division III
Men						
Baseball	487,097	35,460	7.3%	2.2%	2.2%	2.9%
Basketball	551,373	18,816	3.4%	1.0%	1.0%	1.4%
Cross Country	270,095	14,270	5.3%	1.8%	1.4%	2.1%
Football	1,036,842	73,557	7.1%	2.8%	1.8%	2.5%
Golf	144,024	8,609	6.0%	2.0%	1.6%	2.3%
Ice Hockey	35,060	4,229	12.1%	4.8%	0.6%	6.6%
Lacrosse	113,313	14,310	12.6%	3.0%	2.4%	7.2%
Soccer	456,362	25,072	5.5%	1.3%	1.5%	2.7%
Swimming	138,935	9,697	7.0%	2.7%	1.1%	3.2%
Tennis	158,151	7,838	5.0%	1.6%	1.0%	2.3%
Track & Field	600,097	28,698	4.8%	1.9%	1.2%	1.7%
Volleyball	60,976	2,163	3.5%	0.7%	0.6%	2.2%
Water Polo	22,501	1,047	4.7%	2.7%	0.8%	1.2%
Wrestling	245,564	7,239	2.9%	1.0%	0.8%	1.2%

Notes: HS = high school, NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association.

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2020a). Estimated probability of competing in college athletics. NCAA Research. <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-college-athletics>.

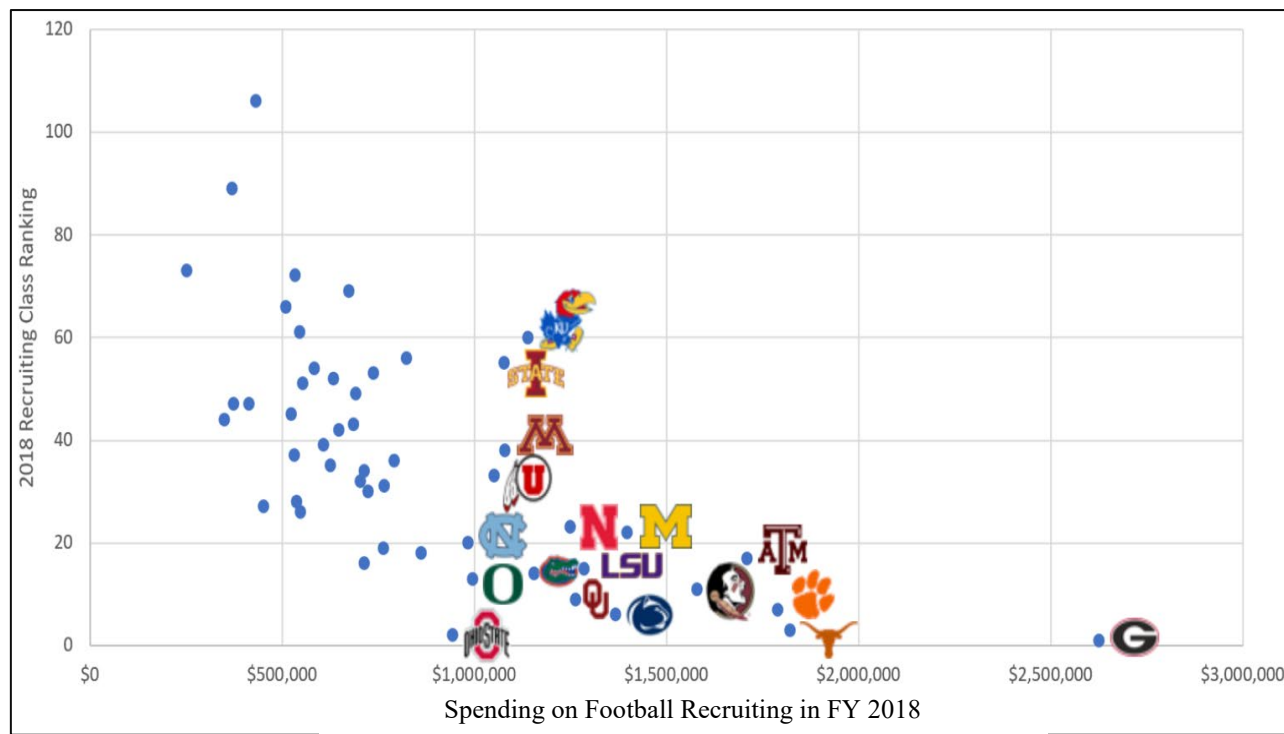
NCAA football team rosters are larger than the rosters of other sports, and among NCAA sports teams, these teams support the most players. Nevertheless, only 7.3% of high school footballers play in the NCAA ranks in any of the three divisions (NCAA, 2018, 2020a; O’Shaughnessy, 2011). The population of PSAs dwindles as recruiting hones on elite talent. The rivals.com (2020) website, which publishes a notable and recognizable ranking report within the college athletics community, reports the top 250 high school football players in the country. With nearly 350 NCAA D1 FBS schools competing to attract SAs from among the only 250 football players deemed top tier, a recruiting bloodbath atmosphere is created for college coaches

(NCAA, 2018, 2020a; O'Shaughnessy, 2011), as each strives to successfully meet the challenge of recruiting and signing elite football players to the team.

Recruiting

Football coaches employ a variety of methods to recruit SAs. Often, coaches blast PSAs with mailers, posters, social media posts, and university apparel to persuade them to select their college (Day, 2011; Faulkner, 2005; Ritzen, 2008). The costs of these marketing materials add up and are deducted from the athletic department's annual budget (Anderson, 2020; Ridpath et al., 2012; Weiszer, 2020). Moreover, coaches recruit multiple athletes without knowing which SA, if any, will select their school. Indeed, not every PSA a school attempts to recruit agrees to attend the school. Figure 5 shows the relationship between money spent on recruiting and the recruiting class ranking.

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Figure 5*Correlation Between Football Recruiting and Recruiting Class Ranking*

Notes. NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association; FBS = Football Bowl Subdivision.

This list of NCAA FBS football schools that spent at least \$1 million on recruiting in 2018 and their recruiting class ranking is not comprehensive [Source]: Wittry, A. (2019). This is how much it costs to land one of college football's top recruiting classes. *Watch Stadium*. <https://watchstadium.com/this-is-how-much-it-costs-to-land-one-of-college-football-top-recruiting-classes-07-24-2019/>

One method to maximize coaches' likelihood of securing commitments from their PSA recruits is understanding what factors may influence these recruits' decision-making in the context of selecting a college (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posteher, 2019; Sampson, 2015). Previous research has investigated these influential factors but only within certain conferences, athletic disciplines, and NCAA competition levels (Day, 2011; Huffman & Cooper, 2012; Huntrods, 2019; Johnson, 2004; Kankey & Quarterman, 2007; Posteher, 2019). Klenosky et al. (2001) stated, "future investigations should collect data from football recruits at different schools

and across NCAA divisions” (p. 105). Collecting data across multiple schools and NCAA divisions is necessary because the factors that impact a recruit’s choice of college may differ depending on region, SA demographic, and conference competition (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posteher, 2019). This study adds to the existing body of literature on the factors that influence the college choices of football SAs attending an NCAA FBS D1 university in the Pacific 12 (Pac-12) conference.

What Is Considered an Influential Factor?

For this study, factors deemed influential to the college selection process are defined as factors most common with football SAs, at Study School Site. During the recruitment period, PSAs consider a multitude of factors when contemplating potential colleges to attend. While all these factors play a role in the decision-making process, some are more pivotal and crucial than others, and PSAs may be willing to compromise on one factor, assuming their needs pertinent to another factor of a higher priority are fulfilled. This ranking assessment is performed consciously by each PSA. Although PSAs consider many factors, only a few minor considerations may truly impact or sway their decision-making.

Problem Statement

While college coaches face pressure to win on the athletic field, they face even more pressure to compete and win from within the university (Emmert, 2010; Frey, 2007; Wojciechowski, 1992). Athletic teams drive potential increases in revenue, exposure, and enrollment, particularly when they win (Ming, 2010; Wojciechowski, 1992, 1995). This dynamic necessitates a dualism of competencies. From a financial vantage point, one can expect the large sums of money spent on recruiting to manifest into wins, followed by college football playoff invitations and NCAA FBS national college championship trophies, but this is not the case

(Emmert, 2010; Frey, 2007; Wojciechowski, 1992). The purpose of recruiting is to identify elite talent that represent the right fit for the team to promote the highest probability of winning (Huffman, 2011; Ming, 2010; NCAA, 2018). However, if college football coaches do not understand the factors that influence PSAs' college choices, their chances of successfully recruiting elite talent with the right fit and, thus, of winning decrease, as do the returns on the money invested in recruiting.

General Problem

The general problem is that college coaches exhaust annual recruiting budgets without the guarantee of producing a winning athletic team (Posteher, 2013; Ridpath et al., 2012; Sampson, 2015). Winning athletic teams provide marketing content and positive images for the institution, which may help persuade students to enroll (Brunswick & Zinser, 2019; Mohr, 2019; Suggs, 2003). The job of a college football coach is to win and enhance the reputation of the academic institution (Brunswick & Zinser, 2019; Mohr, 2019; Pennington, 2017).

Specific Problem

The specific problem is that college coaches are unaware of the factors that influence the college selection process of football SAs (Crowley, 2004; Massey, 2013; Posteher, 2019). While all college football coaches recruit players, they do so using a variety of recruitment methodologies and techniques, some of which do not achieve the intended outcomes, as no specific formula or blueprint to success exists (Smith, 2018). Investigating the factors that impact football SAs' college choices can provide insight to coaches about the best methodologies to adopt to sign their target elite talent.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify factors that influenced the college choice for football SAs attending one NCAA DI FBS Pac-12 conference academic institution to help college coaches capitalize on their student athlete recruitment.

College coaches deploy multiple techniques and strategies to position their athletic team for success (Pennington, 2017). One essential area to address is recruiting. “Recruiting is the lifeblood for all collegiate athletic programs and if coaches fail to sign competitive athletes, they not only put their program at a disadvantage, but also run the risk of losing their job” (Ritzen, 2018, p. 1). “Recruiting is like shaving ... if you [don’t] do it every day, you look like a bum” (Laird, 2008, p. 4). Considering college coaches should recruit every day, understanding what factors shape commitment decisions for PSAs is imperative.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it identifies a recruiting profile of D1 SAs, addressing the gap in the literature on SA recruitment investigations at D1 universities. Figures 6–9 show the significant impact that recruiting elite SAs can have not only on increasing a team’s winning percentages but also on producing lucrative financial benefits to the college. These figures pertain to previous college SAs who matriculated to the NFL, their top-tier elite status in college, and the estimated benefit of their athletic ability for their sponsoring university.

Figure 6

Average Spent on Recruiting for Public Schools Only in Each NCAA DI Conference

The chart displays the average member spending for five NCAA DI conferences from 2018-2019. The SEC has the highest spending at over \$1.5 million, followed by the ACC at over \$1.1 million. The Big Ten, Big 12, and Pac-12 follow in descending order of spending.

Conference Logo	Conference Name	Average Member Spending
	SEC	\$1,532,323.54
	ACC	\$1,155,688.29
	Big Ten	\$944,795.77
	Big 12	\$922,738.75
	Pac-12	\$807,820.10

Notes: NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association.

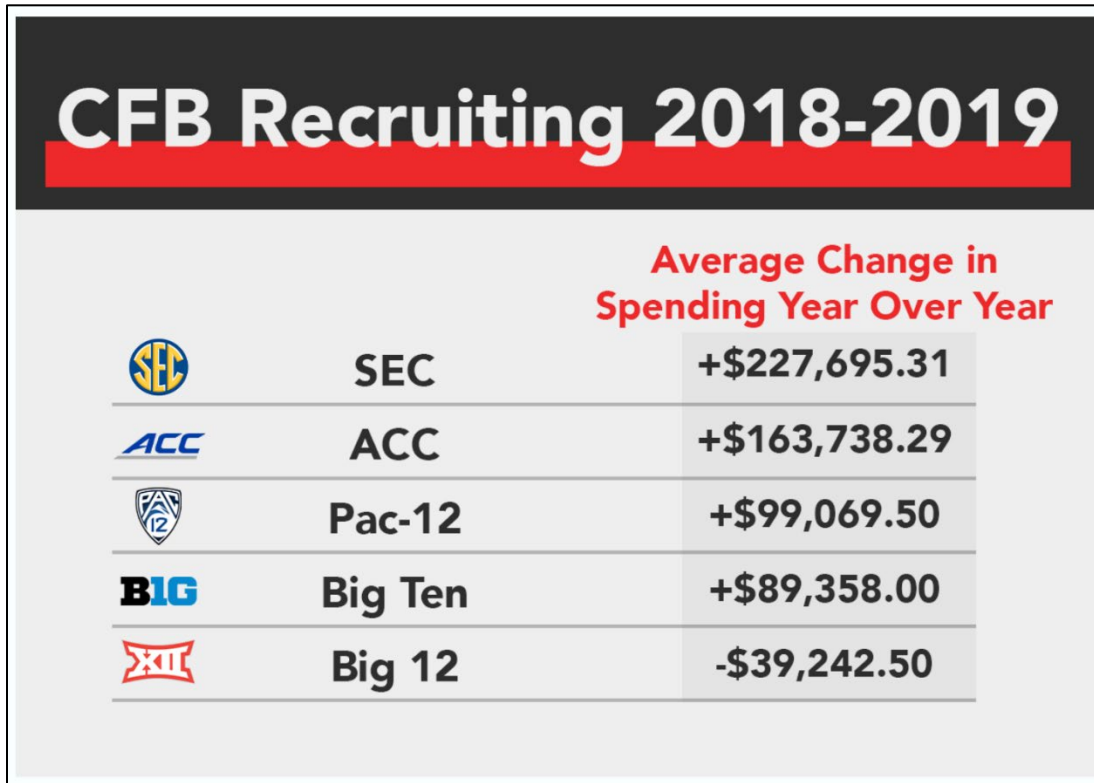
Not every school within an NCAA conference is public. Schools such as Stanford University and University of Southern California are private tuition schools, which set their own guidelines and tuition rates and are privately funded [Source]: Witty, A. (2020). An analysis of college football recruiting costs.

Athleticdirector.com. <https://athleticdirector.com/articles/an-analysis-of-football-recruiting-costs/>.

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Figure 7

Increased Spending on Recruiting per NCAA D1 conference



Notes: NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association; SEC = Southeastern Conference; D1 = Division 1.

Not only are schools in the NCAA D1 SEC spending more on recruiting than schools in other conferences, they are also increasing their recruiting budgets year over year [Source]: Witty, A. (2020). An analysis of college football recruiting costs. *Athleticdirector.com*. <https://athleticdirector.com/articles/an-analysis-of-football-recruiting-costs/>.

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Figure 8

Average Rankings of Quality of Student Athlete Recruits from 1 (Low) to 5 (High) Stars per NCAA Division I Conference

Average Recruit Quality by Conference								
	Whole Sample	Big 10	Big 12	ACC	Pac 10	SEC	Big East	Non-BCS
Five Star	0.2984	0.3415	0.448	0.5191	0.5964	0.963	0.1463	0.3061
Four Star	2.7684	3.9837	4.736	4.5649	4.921	7.1555	2.159	0.4064
Three Star	8.1108	10.5935	12.472	10.7862	11.4561	11.4741	10.4756	4.318
Two Star	11.1777	6.8455	5.968	6.0458	5.4649	4.9926	10.3292	16.9455
One Star	0.0484	0.0162	0.024	0	0.701	0.0962	0.0609	0.0544
Average Star	2.6116	2.89	2.9759	2.9521	3.0142	3.156	2.633	2.199

Notes: [Source]: Bergman, S. A. & Logan, T. D. (2021). Revenue per quality of college football recruit.

Athleticdirector.com. <https://athleticdirector.com/articles/revenue-per-quality-of-college-football-recruit/>

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Figure 9

Top-Rated College Football Prospective Student Athletes



Notes: NFL = National Football League; App State = Appalachian State University; D1 = Division 1; FBS = Football Bowl Subdivision; ACC = Atlantic Coast Conference; Big12 = Big12 Conference; Pac12 = Pacific 12 Conference; SEC = Southeastern Conference; Power Five = ACC, Big12, Pac12, Big-Ten, & SEC.

^a Noted for each top-rated prospective student athlete is the projected revenue brought in to the college program, based on their athletic star quality during recruitment. Rankings for athletic players are based on a 1–5 star scale. All players in this image transitioned to the NFL after their collegiate careers.

^b Zac Thomas’s recruiting amount could be in red because the school he attended, App State, is outside of the major NCAA D1 FBS Power Five. [Source]: Bergman, S. A. & Logan, T. D. (2021). Revenue per quality of college football recruit. *Athleticdirector.com*. <https://athleticdirector.com/articles/revenue-per-quality-of-college-football-recruit/>

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Studies such as those by Crowley (2005), Hill-Eley (2019), and Posteher (2019) have investigated SAs' college choices quantitatively. Among them, only research conducted by Hill-Eley (2019) focused solely on NCAA D1 FBS football SAs, but that study centered on SAs at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). This study addresses the gap of qualitative methodology investigations as well as research of additional NCAA D1 FBS football SAs. This study was intended to identify the factors that influenced SAs' college selections during the recruitment process through the observation of various tactics of SA recruitment.

Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of this study is the development of a recruiting profile to provide D1 college coaches at a Pac-12 university with a better understanding of the SAs they recruit. Interview results will be used to help create a football SA college choice profile that identifies factors that influenced college choice decisions at the NCAA D1 level. While these factors apply to SAs, they may also translate to other students making similar decisions about which college to attend (Crowley, 2004; Day, 2011; Faulkner, 2005; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). This understanding can lead to capitalizing on marketing materials and student recruitment activities and, hence, to increasing enrollment (Hill-Eley, 2019; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Posteher, 2019). College administrators should understand the college selection process followed by SAs, as they should the process followed by traditional students (Crowley, 2004; Day, 2011; Faulkner, 2005; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Practical Significance

The practical significance of this study will be the establishment of recruiting strategies, which can be mimicked by other schools to secure a football SA's commitment, that assisted college coaches at this NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 university. The results of this study will benefit

multiple individuals involved in the college athletic arena but are most relevant to college coaches, university administrators, and SAs and their families (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Huffman, 2011; Posteher, 2019). If college coaches can identify the factors that influence a SA's college choice, they may be able to better engage and increase the odds of their recruitment efforts being successful, which can foster a more cohesive team, elite players, and post-season success (Hill-Eley, 2019; Huffman, 2011; Ritzen, 2008).

For College Coaches and University Administrators

Comprehending the influential factors affecting SAs' college choices is critical during recruitment (Ritzen, 2018). Understanding these factors can position college coaches to adopt recruitment practices or policies that secure elite SAs for the athletic team. Considering the high risk of job loss associated with a losing season, the stress placed on recruitment (Gall, 2012), and the threat of decreased athletic budgets, understanding these influential factors is also critical to maintaining an athletic edge over the competition.

For Student Athletes

The results of this research offer beneficial information to assist PSAs in narrowing their short list of colleges still being considered. One way a PSA can shorten their list is by determining an interested school does not offer what is important to them, thereby eliminating that school from the list of colleges still being considered rather than continuing to engage in that institution's recruitment activities. Likewise, this research can assist in informing what information to probe during official and unofficial college visits. The NCAA (2017) reported that often SAs' athletic and college reality does not mirror the expectations they had when they originally chose the college. Many official visits were tailored towards a coach-controlled rather

player-controlled environment thus dictating the content and information disbursed by coaches, rather the PSAs (Jackson, 2019; Sallee, 2015).

For Prospective Student Athlete Families

Considering the responsibility placed upon an eighteen-year-old in choosing where to continue their academic and athletic career, guidance and support are needed. The findings from this study can increase awareness of potential considerations relative to first-generation college PSAs and at the same time may provide questions to ask continuing generation PSAs that can help determine the values and factors they deemed influential during their college selection process. Overall, findings from this study illuminate what PSAs consider and the approaches they take to choose which institution of higher education to attend.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative research method with a phenomenological design was employed in this study to investigate the factors that influenced the choice of college for football SAs at an NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 university. These factors were investigated by gathering data on the outcomes and perspectives of the population under study obtained through focus group interviews with the SAs. Applying the problem statements identified as a guide to understanding why the SAs selected the institution they chose to attend, the researcher pinpointed traits of Study School Site that appealed to football SAs. This supported the researcher's aspiration to develop a recruiting profile for Study School Site. Furthermore, other NCAA FBS D1 football teams will be able to reproduce the interviews conducted for this research to discover characteristics about their own athletic program.

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study because the intent was to gain firsthand insight about recruiting (Neubauer et al., 2019). This approach is designed to define experiences and explain how they occur (Simon & Goes, 2018; Smith, 2018). While a narrative design study may have been applicable, it was not the best strategy for this research. Narrative design methods focus on individuals and their life experiences (Patsiopoulou & Buchanan, 2011). For this study, recruiting is the phenomena of interest, which many individuals in athletics experience. Quantitative methodologies are designed to calculate or quantify a measurement for a research question (Dewitt Wallace Library, 2019). However, the number of SAs who identified each influential factor, which more aligns to a quantitative method, was not the intent of this research. Also, executing a qualitative method provides the opportunity to draw out themes from analysis or results. Themes categorize major ideas, which is an ideal fundamental element of qualitative methodology (Creswell, 2014).

Research Design

A phenomenological approach was best for this study. Understanding the experiences of SAs and certain decisions they made during the recruitment process was the research goal. As the SA recruiting process often can be misunderstood, gathering participants in a focus group setting helped to elicit data to help understand their experiences. Exploring conversations with a person in the environment in which they exist is enlightening (Groenewald, 2004). Focus groups can encourage and foster honest dialogue, while decreasing the researcher's opinion and bias (Salkind, 2018).

Research Questions

This study may assist college coaches with understanding factors that influenced the college choice for football SAs. While any collegiate coach can offer a PSA an athletic scholarship, the PSA has the option to accept or decline. At times, a PSA can have multiple scholarship offers to choose from. Understanding how to maximize the percentage of PSA acceptance is the key focus area. Information learned can also contribute to the development of an NCAA FBS D1 football player recruiting profile for SAs attending a school in the Pac-12 conference. Accordingly, this study was guided by the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What compels a football NCAA D1 SA to accept an athletic scholarship from one university over another?

RQ2: What factors contribute to a college coach's failure to obtain a PSAs enrollment commitment?

Key Terms

All acronyms and abbreviations used in the definitions are defined in the list. The following key terms and their definitions are provided for reference throughout this manuscript.

Associated Press Poll (AP Poll) – weekly Top 25 poll ranking of NCAA teams.

Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) – an NCAA conference comprised of 15 universities, on the United States Eastern Coast.

Big Ten (Big10) – an NCAA conference comprised of 14 universities, located across the Midwest.

Big 12 (Big12) – an NCAA conference comprised of 15 universities, located across Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and West Virginia.

Bowl Game – an NCAA FBS postseason game.

Coach – someone who guides and develops athletes on the football field.

College Football Playoffs (CFPs) – a four-game, single-elimination postseason play format followed to determine the NCAA champion.

Division I (D1) – the highest level of NCAA competition; D1 schools have extensive facilities, can offer the most athletic scholarships, and have the largest budgets.

Division II (D2) – the middle level of NCAA competition; D2 schools offer athletic scholarships but not as many as D1 schools offer.

Division III (D3) – the lowest level of NCAA competition; D2 schools do not offer athletic scholarships.

Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) – the most competitive half of NCAA D1, consisting of the largest schools in the nation; bowl games are the postseason game play format.

Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) – one half of NCAA D1 competition, these schools are smaller than NCAA FBS D1 institutions; single-elimination playoffs are the postseason game play format.

National College Athletic Association (NCAA) – the organization governing college student athletes and conferences.

Offer Letter – a school's invitation to a prospective student-athlete to attend and play athletically at the institution, in scholarship form.

Official Visit – a prospective student-athlete visit to a school with reasonable expenses paid by the school.

Pacific-12 (Pac12) – an NCAA conference comprised of 12 universities, located across the United States Pacific Coast.

Power Five – the five biggest conferences in NCAA FBS D1 football: ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12, and SEC.

Prospective Student-Athlete (PSA) – a high school athlete whom colleges are interested in as potential future students.

Recruiting – a college or university’s communication of interest in securing a PSA’s commitment to enroll and play at the institution.

Southeastern Conference (SEC) – an NCAA conference comprised of 14 universities, located across the United States South Eastern region.

Student-Athlete (SA) – an athlete who competes in NCAA-sanctioned athletic competitions for the school at which they are academically enrolled.

Unofficial Visit – a PSA’s visit to a school with all expenses paid by the PSA.

Assumptions of the Study

The following three assumptions were made in the conduct of this research.

1. All participants would respond truthfully and to the best of their knowledge.
2. All participants would understand the questions being asked.
3. University staff would not coerce or force any SAs into participating in the study, and no retaliation would be taken for a SA’s failure to contribute.

If issues related to validity of these assumptions had arisen during the investigation, adjustments could have been made, but such issues would not have been catastrophic to the study. Previous scholars and research examining this subject have made similar assumptions.

Scope, Limitations, and Delimitation

Scope

The scope of this study involved football SAs at an NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 university. Outlining an appropriate study scope is critical as it permits the reader to comprehend the importance of the problem (Creswell, 1994; Reid, 2021; Salkind, 2009). Through this qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher allowed the participants to control the interview and captured their expressed viewpoints without alteration. To accomplish this, the researcher developed guiding questions based on data from previous studies (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posther, 2019). While guiding questions taken directly from the literature may be asked, the researcher adapted the questions used in the interview in this study according to the participants' responses and promoted a fluid environment to facilitate spontaneous questioning. The results of this study illustrate why football SAs chose to attend and compete athletically at Study School Site.

Limitations

Study limitations are acknowledged by the investigator as potential flaws within the investigation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Reid, 2021; Salkind, 2009). For qualitative methodologies, often the delimitations are controls established within the study, such as population size limits, participant selection criteria, study length, and so on (Simon & Goes, 2013; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The following three limitations of this study are notable:

1. Study sample included one football team at an NCAA D1 FBS school in the Pac-12 conference. Results may not be generalizable to other schools or conferences (e.g., schools in different NCAA divisions or conferences).

2. The athletic department of the NCAA D1 Pac-12 university under study approved only limited access to football SAs.
3. SAs may not have remembered all the details of their recruitment.

Existing in any university environment are business customs and practices that must be documented and may not have been possible to replicate within this investigation. This study centered on identifying factors that influenced the college choice of football SAs from their own perspective. As such, themes denoted as influential were derived from participants' viewpoints and declarations rather than from the researcher's interpretation of survey data. This will provide collegiate athletic teams with the information needed to tailor recruiting efforts toward the PSA, which will, in turn, increase their chances of securing the SA's attendance commitment.

Delimitations

As Pajaras (2007) explained, delimitations are the study boundaries that clarify why the researcher did not track certain paths within the study. In this case, numerous athletic teams, sports, and competition levels would be viable candidates for an investigation. Additionally, various academic classifications of SAs (e.g., first-year students after their first season, transfer SAs, redshirt (RS) freshmen, and seniors) could serve as feasible populations as well. However, this study focused on football SAs at an NCAA D1 FBS Pac-12 university; therefore, no other populations, competition levels, universities, conferences, or athletic disciplines were considered. An example of a delimitation in this study was the exclusion of the PSAs' perception before choosing their college of what factors were influential in their decision-making process. Another delimitation was the decision not to compare football universities from various conferences (e.g., Pac-12 vs. SEC).

Chapter Summary

College coaches apply substantial budgets and resources to recruitment activities, knowing that not every PSA they pursue will commit to playing for their team and university (Faulkner, 2004; Pennington, 2017; Ritzen, 2018). While they accept this as an unavoidable aspect of recruiting, understanding what factors may be most influential to SAs' decision-making process while pursuing them may minimize the resources and money used (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posteher, 2019). Understanding these influences also can help better align recruiting strategies, which can improve the recruiting institution's chances of securing an SA's attendance commitment (Huffman, 2011; Massey, 2013). To accomplish this, obtaining the SAs' perspective was vital as it helped to understand the factors that were influential during the college selection process.

The researcher interviewed football SAs to identify the factors that influenced their choice to attend an NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 university. Concentrating on the study problem statement, the investigator highlighted themes that may potentially help college coaches understand recruiting strategies that can increase their chances of securing a SA commitment. The researcher executed this analysis by focusing on what was influential during the college choice process to football SAs at a single university.

Chapter II: Literature Review

A narrative approach is taken in this literature review on the topic of factors that influence college choice for NCAA D1 football SAs utilizes (Byrne, 2016; Ferrari, 2015; Green et al., 2006). A narrative approach includes a summary and critique of existing literature about a specific topic from which to develop a synopsis of the issues and potential knowledge gaps (Guillet, 2017; Mallett & Clarke, 2002; Nusrat et al., 2016). The goal of a literature review is to

recap and express findings on a certain subject (Rowley & Slack, 2004; “The literature review,” 2016; Whittfield, 2016). Literature reviews primarily present an aggregate of information on a topic and yield gaps in research after a thorough recap of information available (Fink, 2005; “The literature review,” 2016). Additionally, literature reviews illuminate the research community’s position regarding a particular topic.

Narrative Literature Review Methodology

A narrative literature review focuses attention on an established analysis of published literature (Dixon-Woods & Fitzpatrick, 2001; Rother, 2007; Stevens, 2017). Narrative reviews, which are common in qualitative studies, afford the reader an opportunity to ascertain information on a specific subject quickly (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Kennedy, 2007; Whittfield, 2016). This review is mostly concerned with congregating relevant material that provides background and substantive content related to the research topic (Marshall, 2010; Noordzij et al., 2011; Xiao & Watson, 2017). While this type of review closely resembles themes of a systematic review, it differs in its desired outcome.

Guiding Research Questions

The following guided research questions (GRQs) steered the literature review and research encompassed in investigating football SAs. These GRQs helped form and articulate the RQs for this study:

GRQ1: What caused you to choose this college’s offer letter over the other offers you had?

GRQ2: What did you dislike about the recruiting process?

Considering football SAs are often recruited by multiple schools that offer them an opportunity to play, they need a filtering process to narrow down their list of viable candidate schools

(Jensen, 2019; Stadler, 2012; Wilkins, 2019). This research was intended to provide PSAs with information to inform their own filtering processes. Thus, this literature review discusses existing knowledge gleaned through investigations involving SAs and their college choice processes (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posteher, 2019).

Due to the scarcity of studies that examine factors which influence college choice in the context of NCAA D1 Pac-12 football, this literature review draws from prior studies in other athletic disciplines and different competition levels (Huffman, 2011; Massey, 2013; Suggs, 2003). Their findings reveal decision-making processes for other SA recruits, provide relevant background information for the current study. These revelations and germane knowledge helped to identify the gap in the literature regarding the factors influencing the college selection process of football SAs (Kankey & Quarterman, 2007; Suggs, 2003; Swaim, 1983). Prior research shows developments in and influences on recruiting materials, although they may not be currently in practice (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Patsopoulos & Ioannidis, 2009; Snyder, 2019).

Literature Search Chronology

The information gathered for the narrative literature review was organized into chronological order. A chronological literature review discusses relevant work in order, beginning with the earliest available publication date (Cronin et al., 2008; Kordas, 2013; Machi & McEvoy, 2016). Additionally, a chronological literature review is appropriate for subjects that have changed over periods of time (Cronin et al., 2008; Kordas, 2013; Machi & McEvoy, 2016). This is appropriately displayed in a timeline that indicates subjects covered and the date of the research and reveals gaps in the knowledge. The timeline encompasses investigations that may be considered academically out-of-date but relevant to the research topic.

Given the dearth of literature concerning football SAs' college choice process, the researcher encompassed literature that may be outdated for lineage display. Non-football college athletic disciplines were utilized to show the necessity for this investigation. If other athletic disciplines were researched, there was an absolute need for college football to be investigated as well, as it is the highest grossing collegiate athletic sport (Gaines & Nudelman, 2017; Kenyon, 2018; Malone, 2022). Considering the high revenue generated, college coaching recruitment violations, and the high school football participants opposed to college roster availability addressed in Chapter I (Figure 2), this investigation is vital to the body of college athletics and higher academia.

This extensive search for relevant literature across databases, journals, interviews with field subject matter experts, and books revealed a large gap in the literature with little or no discussion on what factors are influential to SAs' college selections. Furthermore, research on the population and institutional context in focus in this study was scant. Therefore, this study extends prior research (Crowley, 2005; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posther, 2019) by expanding upon and documenting the nuance surrounding factors that influence college choice decisions for NCAA D1 football SAs. The study was conducted with the intention to assist college coaches in achieving more positive outcomes in their recruitment of elite caliber PSAs.

Three-Phase College Choice Theory Application in Previous Studies

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase college choice theory was applied in this qualitative study as a theoretical framework for investigating influential factors related to college choice decisions among football SAs. Hossler and Gallagher's theory was leveraged to explore what elements of recruitment SAs considered important and what factors they considered when deciding which college to attend. College athletic recruiting involves a series of communications

spanning many years while exploiting multi-directional persuasive techniques (O'Brien, 2016; Perrewe et al., 2012; Treadway et al., 2011). Although coaches are bidding to allure PSAs, PSAs are simultaneously operating to garner the attention of college coaches.

The current study was adapted from prior studies that took a quantitative approach to discovering influential factors in the college choice process followed by SAs. Crowley (2004) and Hill-Eley (2019) were instrumental in building a foundational understanding of a football SA. Based on an examination of D1 track and field SAs to discover what factors influenced their college choices, Crowley (2004) reported that degree offerings, academic support, travel, coaches, athletic traditions, playing opportunity, athletic facilities, and campus social life influenced SAs' choice to attend a Florida D1 university.

Several scholars have applied Hossler and Gallagher's college choice theory to aid their investigation. Using a telephonic survey, Smith and Matthews (1991) polled close to 600 traditional students (i.e., non-SAs) of multiple ethnicities, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds, who were asked to select the most important factors that influenced their choice of college. Survey results showed these factors differed according to the students' identified ethnicity. For Black and Hispanic students, financial assistance was the primary factor of influence (Smith & Matthews, 1991). Those racial/ethnic differences indicated a need for continuous model refinement as populations, demographics, and communities evolve.

Pope (2003) researched students and their perceptions about which college was right for them and how their responses varied across ethnicities and socioeconomic status groups. An analysis revealed field trips and other types of college visits were highly ranked for white students (Pope, 2003). Black students noted tuition costs were influential in their decision to select a college. As well, Black students listed university administration briefings about attending

college significantly higher than white students (Pope, 2003). One could assume field trips for white students equipped them with knowledge about higher education, while Black students missed the information due to lack of attendance. As reflected in Lake (2021), black students attending predominantly white schools had a higher chance of receiving information regarding post-secondary opportunities, financial aid counseling, and internships, than their peers attending predominantly black high schools. Information from this study was helpful for universities who struggled to address diversity concerns and to recruit students of diverse ethnic backgrounds (Pope, 2003).

Freeman (1991) focused on African American students and their reflections on college types: HBCUs or predominantly White institutions (PWIs). These students attended differently funded high schools (public/private) located in diverse geographic locations and lived under varying family circumstances. This research uncovered that the type of high school attended coupled with cultural resemblance, i.e., staff members who resemble the high school student population, influenced students' considerations in choosing to attend an HBCU or PWI.

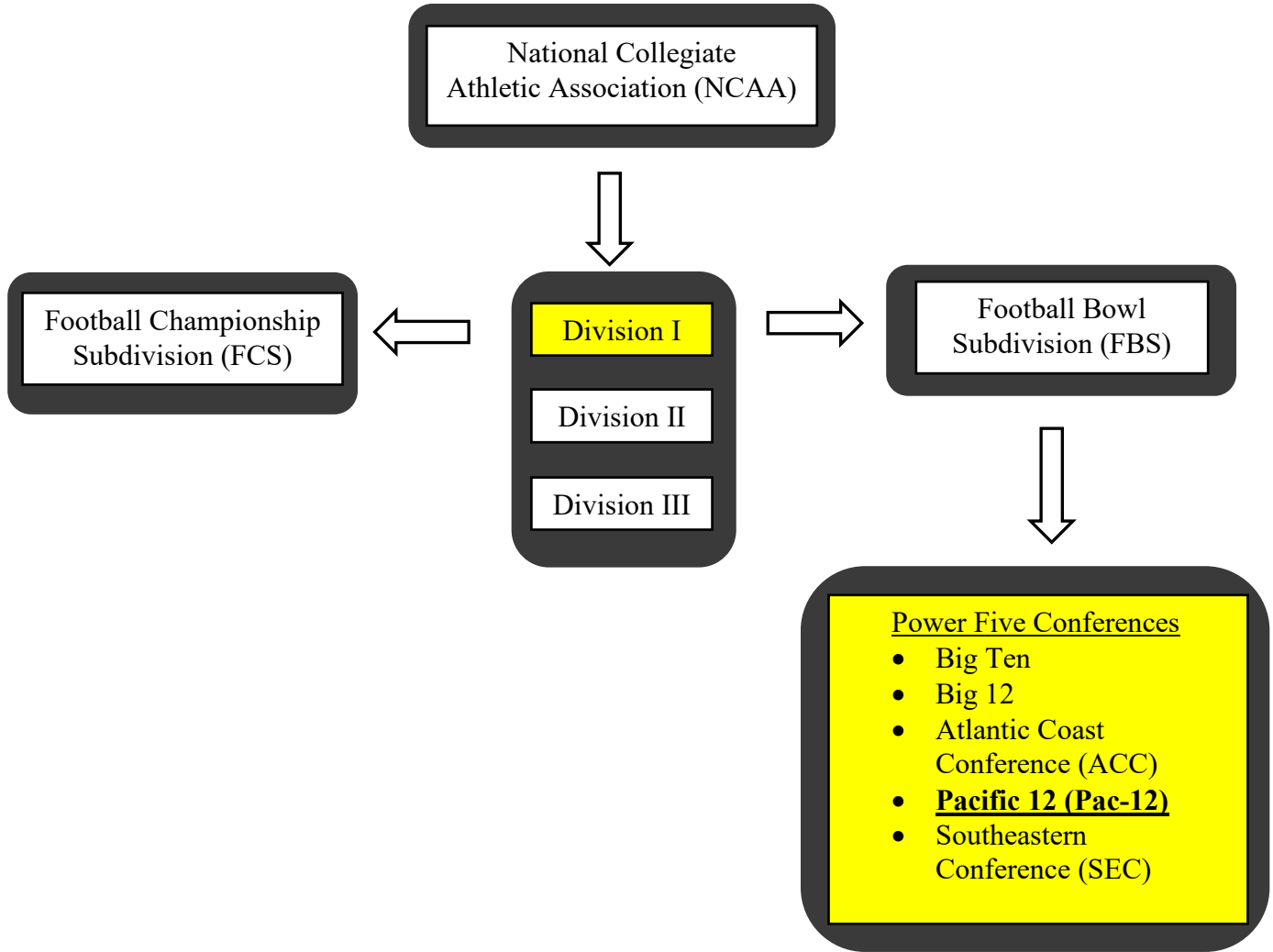
Huffman and colleagues conducted a series of investigations from 2011–2016 on factors considered when choosing a college and provided collective insights on best recruiting strategies (Huffman, 2011; Huffman & Cooper, 2012; Huffman et al., 2016). All studies surveyed football SAs at a Southeastern University using different research methodologies. Additionally, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase college choice model was adopted to identify the phases that SAs navigate before selecting a college. Nearly 230 participants gave opinions on what influenced them during their college selection process. Moreover, Huffman (2011) investigated what recruiting strategy yielded the best results in garnering elite football SA talent. That research led to the recommendation that administration and coaches should align recruiting

efforts toward themes surrounding athletics. Huffman and Cooper (2012) expanded on this research subject and explored correlations between median household income and college choice. They found that the scholarship amount offered was a primary influence on the football SAs' decision to choose the Southeastern University. In the last investigation of the series, Huffman et al. (2016) examined influential college choice factors for athletic scholarship football SAs only. The opportunity for life after football was most influential for this sample in choosing to attend the Southeastern University. Based on their study results, Huffman and colleagues constructed a new theoretical framework—Lifetime Human Capital—which posits that SAs, after a consideration of pros and cons, choose a university based on its potential for amplifying their net worth after graduation (Huffman, 2011; Huffman & Cooper, 2012; Huffman et al., 2016). For further context and clarity, Figures 10–11 break down various NCAA competition levels, divisions, and conferences, as well as a few notable universities that compete in each conference.

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Figure 10

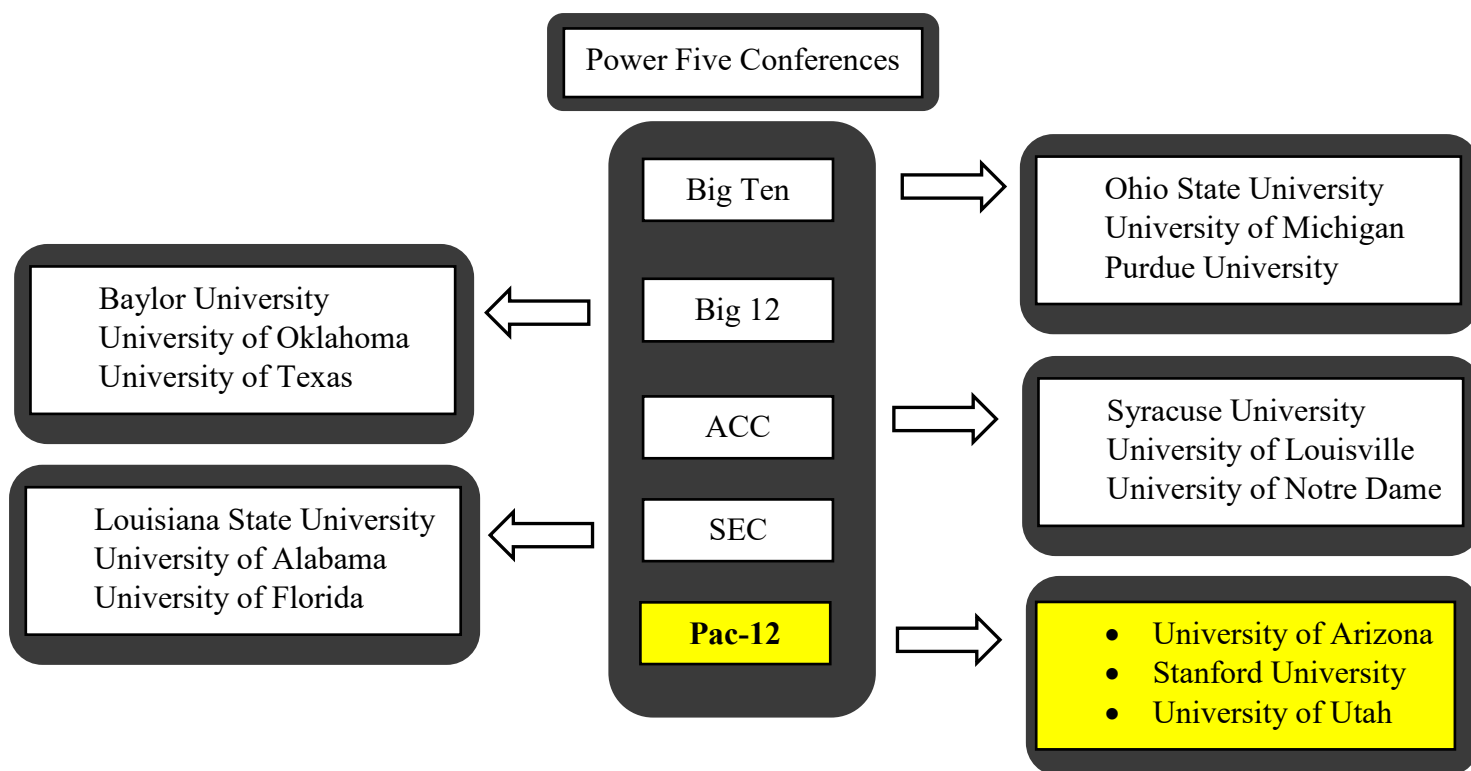
NCAA Competition Levels, Divisions, and Conferences



Notes. Only Division I FBS is further detailed because it contains the study school, a Pac-12 university. [Source]: National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2020a). Estimated probability of competing in college athletics. *NCAA Research*. <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-college-athletics>

Figure 11

NCAA Power Five Conferences and Notable Schools



Notes. These are the five most athletic and revenue-generating conferences, with a few examples of universities from each college that may be household names; this is not a comprehensive list of schools or NCAA conferences.

(Source: NCAA, 2021)

History of the NCAA

The NCAA has evolved since its inception. Researchers (Lodge, 2016; Madden, 1998; Sherman, 2008) have identified several milestones that shaped its transformation, including 1) the creation of the International Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS), 2) an overhaul of the guardianship mentality, 3) the NCAA’s increasingly prominent role in college athletics, 4) Walter Byers’s reign, and 5) the application of Darwin’s survival of the fittest in NCAA sports (Berger, 1995; Branch, 2011; Hart, 2004).

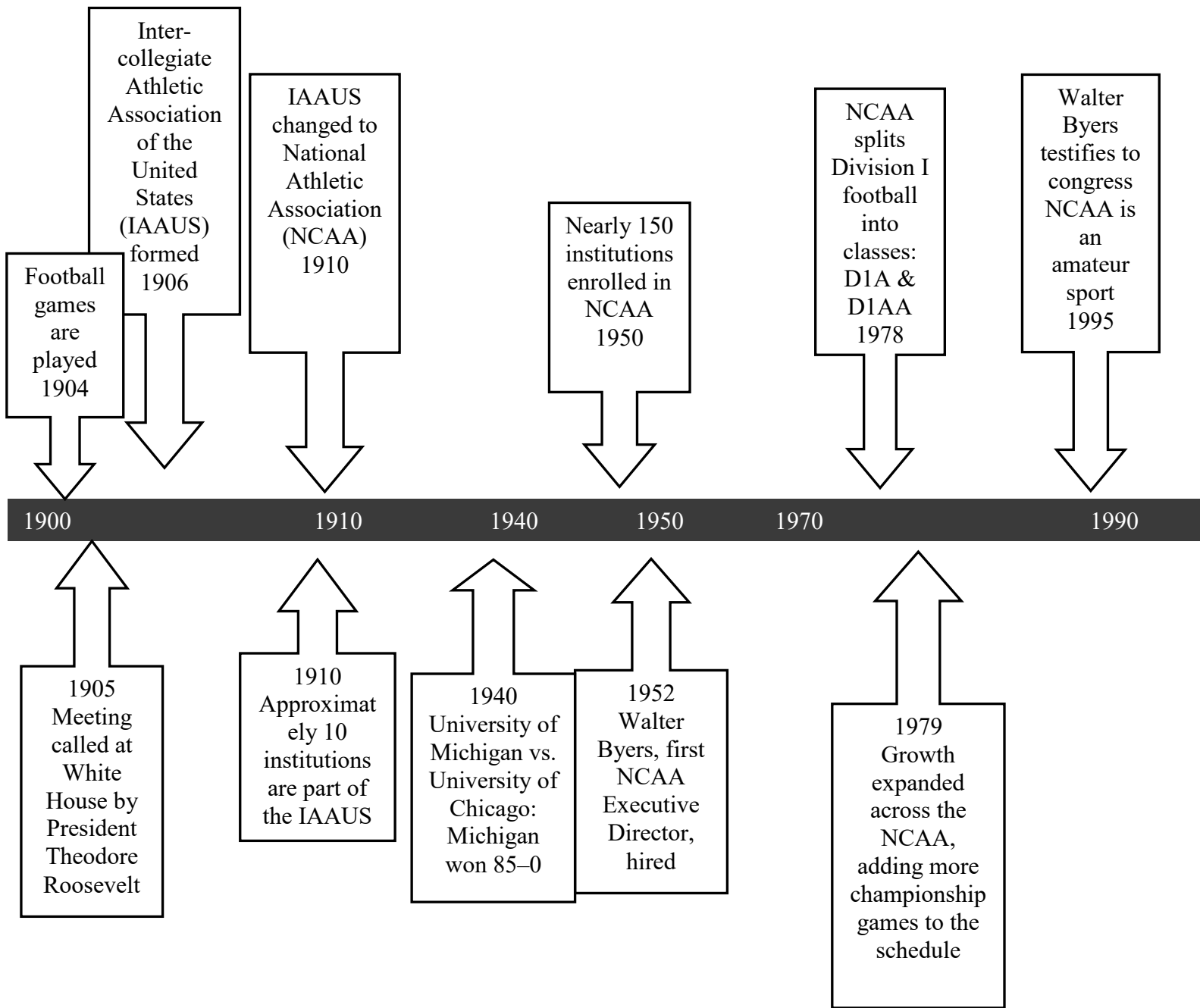
Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) Creation

During the early 1900s, 13 universities were summoned to reform college football. College football was considered a violent nature due to the lack of protective equipment. In the early years, athletes did not wear helmets, face masks, or mouthpieces (Henry et al., 2011). Although players wore pads, those pads were basic and only minimally protected the body against contact (Daniels, 2013; Hart, 2004). As a result of the limited body protection, SAs occasionally experienced crippling injuries or even death (Bernstein, 2001; Daniels, 2013; Hart, 2004).

Concerns about the safety of college football compelled President Theodore Roosevelt to convene a group of university representatives to discuss changes to the sport, under the threat of outlawing the sport by Executive Order (Klein, 2019; Oriard, 2011). University representatives agreed the game needed reform, but no official athletic organization had the power to govern over this reform. From this meeting, the IAAUS was formed to regulate and supervise college athletics throughout the United States ... so that the athletic activities may be maintained on an ethical plane in keeping with the dignity and high purpose of education” (Waicukauski, 1982, p. 81). The IAAUS held its first annual conference in 1906 (Central Washington University Athletics, 2014; Swanson, 2011). Moreover, representatives organized a constitution and association bylaws (Paskus, n.d.). When IAAUS members enrolled in the association, the consensus was that each academic institution would govern itself, which was known as the home rule (“How College Sports Lost,” 2016). Therefore, although a governing body existed, the actual control of collegiate athletics fell upon individual academic institutions. Figure 12 depicts various milestones the NCAA has accomplished since it was formed in the early 1900s.

Figure 12

1900–1990s NCAA Milestones Since Inception



An Overhaul of the Guardianship Mentality

In its first 10 years, nearly 70 institutions joined the IAAUS (“National Collegiate,” 2018). In 1910, the name of the association was changed to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), signifying its role as the custodian of collegiate athletics (Waicukauski, 1982). Within two decades, participation grew to over 150 institutions. Along with its membership growth, the NCAA’s popularity, amateurism (i.e., non-professional competitive athlete vs. university employee debates), and most important to this study, recruitment practices expanded (Lazaroff, 2007, Smith, 2000).

While the NCAA outlined policies regarding the recruitment and sponsorship of SAs, enforcement was ultimately left to the individual institutions (Daniels, 2015). As recruiting infractions increased, so, too, did the need for a full-time governing body. Although the NCAA was given authority in 1906 by President Roosevelt, its representatives did not initially act as policy enforcers (Byers, 1995; Funk, 2008). However, due to negative perceptions of the sport caused by violent football injuries, the NCAA altered its mission:

Our mission, or core purpose, is to regulate intercollegiate athletics in a manner that enhances the role of US higher education as a critical national enterprise in a competitive global environment; ensuring that competition is fair, safe, sportsmanlike, and an enrichment of the academic experience for student-athletes and campus communities (“NCAA Mission,” n.d., para. 1).

The Increasingly Prominent Role of the NCAA in College Athletics

The conversation revolving around college SAs and pay for play has sparked many debates. The pay for play discussion was prompted by national recruiting practices (Hart, 2004; Paul-Koba, 2008; Thornley, 2005). Before World War II, colleges only recruited students in their

geographic region (Hart, 2004; Henry et al., 2011; Welper, 2020). When recruiting expanded to a national approach, collegiate athletic programs began to indulge in the pool of SAs that had not yet been tapped into (Connelly, 2016a; Welper, 2020). As a result, the NCAA became multifaceted with reach in every region (Byers, 1995).

Walter Byers's Reign

Walter Byers was named executive director of the NCAA in 1952 and by many accounts has had a long-lasting impact on the organization (Byers, 1995; Ngyuen, 2021; Weber, 2015). The effects of Byers's reign can still be seen within the NCAA today. During the early stages of the NCAA's formation, Byers was tasked with overseeing the association and increasing its revenue streams (Eckstein, 2018). Wheeler (2004) argued Byers curated the NCAA's dominance around marketing collegiate sporting contests and normalized the competition.

Byers became the first and only full-time executive director of the NCAA (O'Connell, 2015). In an interview discussing Walter Byers's legacy, Keith Jackson stated that "no other executive in the history of professional, college, or amateur sports has had such an impact in his area. Walter Byers has done more to shape intercollegiate athletics than any single person in history" (Byers, 1995, para. 5). During a Congressional hearing, Byers (1995) stated, "I had joined college leaders in fighting to prevent college sports from paying the taxes levied against [the] entertainment business – ticket taxes, sales taxes, and corporate income taxes. College sports was essentially amateur, oriented to education, and not profit" (p. 45). Byers was the first to negotiate sports media contracts to televise college sports, which generated additional revenue for the NCAA (Daniels, 2015; Garthwaite, 2020; Inabinett, 2019).

Byers can be credited for a swarm of sports television contracts amassing multi-millions in revenue (Telander, 2015). This increased income for the NCAA was allocated to assist

universities and institutions (Black, 2021; Pruitt, 2022; Sheetz, 2016). For example, funding from television deals yielded more athletic support services and additional championships (i.e., bowl games) and added sport disciplines to the NCAA body, such as water polo, golf, tennis, to name a few (Sobocinski, 1996; Storm, 2020). Due to this financial ecosystem drafted by the NCAA, the original intent of the NCAA with respect to its relationship with SAs was replaced with an approach that appeared to value revenue growth more than the well-being of SAs (Bursuc, 2013; Simpson & Chaingpradit, 2019; Skarka, 2015).

Recruiting Scandals

Given the monetary value they generate, collegiate athletics have primarily focused on profitability, while not nearly as much attention has been given to the academic well-being of SAs (Suggs, 2003). As a result of the quest for revenue gain, the NCAA has been plagued with scandal after scandal involving money and SA recruitment (Ching, 2013; Posteher, 2019). For example, Rocky Mountain University was found guilty of NCAA recruiting violations (Lail, 2020). Infractions included forging classwork for SAs, buying classes for SAs to remain eligible, and paying for off-campus tutoring sessions for ineligible SAs (Will, 2012). Scandals in most cases were executed by college coaches to get an edge in recruiting elite talent. Securing elite talent to compete athletically arms universities for their negotiations of television contract deals, which ultimately disburse money to the university and athletic program—a byproduct of Byer's reign and influence.

The Application of Darwin's Survival of the Fittest to NCAA Sports

Byers (1995) explained that Darwin's application signified the transformation of collegiate supremacy from the Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Midwestern regions. Schools in regions with low student enrollment suffered from smaller budgets and little visibility (Dwyer,

2018). Charles Darwin proposed individuals would have a greater likelihood of surviving if they were fit (Byers, 1995). Universities like University of Miami, Southern California, Nebraska, and Notre Dame adopted traits of this theory and began to emerge as powerhouses with large student enrollment and million-dollar budgets (FitzGerald & Simmons, 2018; Kirshner, 2020). These large schools began receiving national attention and garnering student enrollments from across the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Smaller schools did not experience the same attention and gains (FitzGerald & Simmons, 2018; Kirshner, 2020).

Applying Darwin's survival of the fittest theory to college athletics would mean only the most equipped and fit athletic departments could compete in today's NCAA. College athletic teams with expansive budgets and resources and a pipeline of talented elite SAs will endure (Fountain & Finley, 2018). This creates additional pressure for head coaches and their staffs to assemble not only a winning team but also one that generates revenue for the athletic program, university, and themselves (Finley & Fountain, 2010, 2011). If teams lack the financial resources and extensive recruiting capabilities to achieve this, they will not be able to compete with their opponents and will risk becoming extinct in the college football landscape (Fountain & Finley, 2009; Fountain & Finley, 2017).

Darwinism Application in Practice

Around 1940, the universities of Chicago and Michigan competed against one another in a football game (Kinney, 2007). University of Michigan won with a lopsided score of 85-0 (Kinney, 2007). This disproportionate and embarrassing score caused University of Chicago President Maynard Hutchins to lobby his board of trustees to eradicate football as an athletic sport (Byers, 1995). He was successful, and the University of Chicago was excommunicated from the NCAA Big Nine Conference, presently known as the NCAA Big Ten Conference

(Williams, 2011). The loss, which may have resulted from a lack of talent or less successful recruiting and coaching (along with the university president's pride), led to the dissolution of the team.

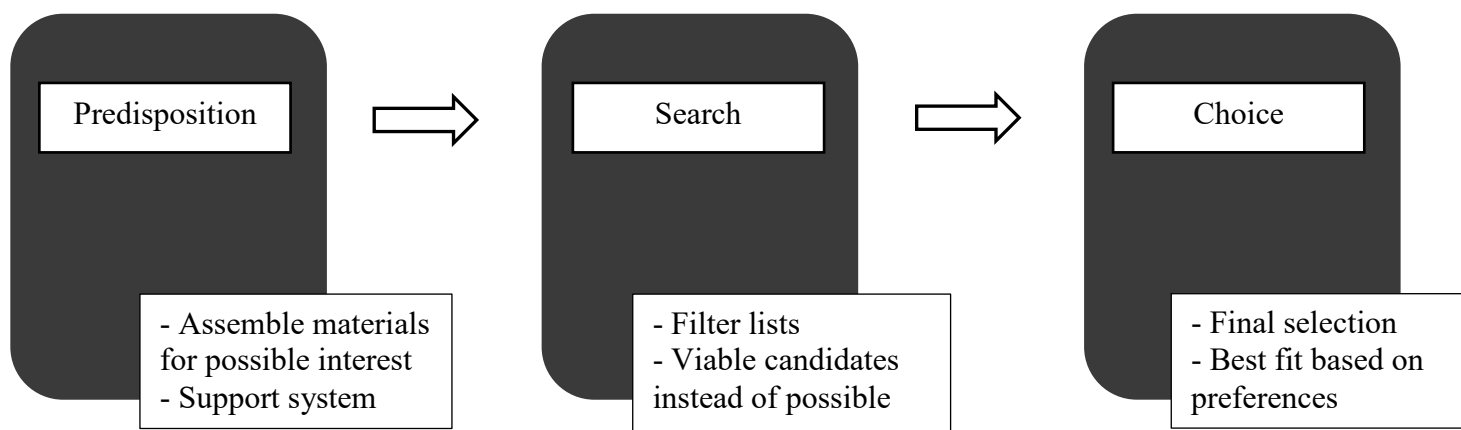
Theoretical Framework

Motivated by a desire to enhance student enrollment, increase market share profits, and garner students' tuition dollars, universities in the 1970s were interested in why and how students chose which college to attend (Goble, 2010; Schnell & Doetkott, 2003; Vecellio, 2001). Entering the 21st century, students' mobility and finances were more constrained, which made for a more selective process in determining college choice due to increased tuition costs, which led to colleges competing for enrollment (Eisenbeck Henson, 2013; Graff, 2011; Stephan, 2010). Thus, theories of college choice emerged, and researchers began to formulate related concepts, such as identifying the print media material that attracted students to the college or determining whether print material was even needed (Corwin et al., 2006; Tierney, 2005). From these topics, researchers examined individual student college preferences, along with social norms and practices (Hossler et al., 1989; Salisbury et al., 2009).

Ranero (1999) said the college choice process encompassed multiple factors that affected how students selected a college to attend. Many researchers have theorized and investigated various models and stages of the selection process (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982; Paulsen, 1990), though commonalities also exist in the college choice processes. Relating to this investigation, Hossler and Gallagher (1987; see Figure 13) proposed college-seeking students advance through three main stages during their selection processes. These three stages—predisposition, search, and choice—are presented in Figure 13, along with examples of activities students execute while filtering their options.

Figure 13

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) Three-Phase College Choice Model as Theoretical Framework



Phase 1: Predisposition

During Phase 1, “Predisposition,” high school football SAs and PSAs formulate thoughts like those formulated by traditional college-bound students (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). This consideration of whether to pursue a college education can be prompted by friends, family, advertising, high school counselors, and other factors. It is in this initial stage (Phase 1) when PSAs consider attending college. Of the many positively correlated background traits examined, students’ socioeconomic status (SES) and athletic ability are two of the most important factors PSAs consider in choosing which college to attend (Copridge, 2016; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Peters, 1977). Evidence has shown that students with a high SES are more than three times likely to attend college than those with a low SES (Callaghan, 2017; Copridge, 2016; Fetters, 1977). Concurrently, as students’ academic abilities improve, so do the odds of their attending college (Dillion & Smith, 2016; Litten, 1982; Rumberger, 1982).

Phase 2: Search

In Phase 2, “Search,” football PSAs begin seeking information about colleges they may want to attend (Furukawa, 2011; Hill-Eley, 2019; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). However,

communication and alignment of interest between the PSA and recruiting staff may present challenges in the college search process. More specifically, while PSAs are searching for colleges of interest, colleges are searching for PSAs of interest (Hill-Eley, 2019; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Yu, 2016), and although both parties are searching, their interests may not coincide to bring them together.

Phase 3: Choice

“Choice” is the third and final phase. In Phase 3, PSAs begin weighing the pros and cons of their top selections, eventually narrowing their options to arrive at their final choice of which college to attend (Braxton et al., 1995; Freeman, 2005; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Variables deemed valuable by the SA during Phases 1 and 2 have been met, leaving only the SA’s top college choice (Noel-Levitz, 2012; Pitre, 2004; Stage & Hossler, 1989). After the PSA has selected a college, the university must make a final decision on whether to offer admittance to the PSA (Ives, 2017; Nurnberg et al., 2012; Paulsen, 1990). Throughout the three phases, both the PSA and university continually evaluate their choices and important factors, thus yielding a selection on both sides.

Influential Factors in Choosing a College

Although SAs and traditional students are influenced by similar factors when choosing a college, SAs must also contemplate and assess athletic likelihoods (Croft, 2008; Ferguson & Moosbrugger, 2019; Nixon, 2020), which can encompass, among other considerations, playing time, scholarship aid, class and practice schedules, post-collegiate athletic opportunities, and teammate comfortability (Cristancho et al., 2019; Pauline et al., 2004). Smith and Matthews (1990), Hunter (2015), and Magnusen et al. (2014) highlighted four factors that influenced

college choice for both SAs and traditional students: securing a job post-graduation, graduate school opportunities, academic pedigree, and tuition.

One approach to college selection proposes that SAs matriculate through a process of elimination that leads to their final selection, depending on the factors that are most influential to their decision-making (Resnick, 1987; Tversky, 1972). Another approach relies on the SA's abilities to correlate financial responsibility and rising tuition costs and to determine best college fit (Bulley, 2014; Kotler & Fox, 1985; Sevier, 1966). Lastly, another focus suggests the SA contemplates school reputation and the status of having earned a degree from that institution as part of the assessment of each viable college option (Syverud & Williams, 2016).

Generally, factors that influence SAs' college choice processes can be categorized into athletics, social stimulation, and academics (Hill-Eley, 2019; Pauline, 2010; Pauline et al., 2008; Posteher, 2019; Swaim, 1983). For example, Boyer (2016) discovered the most influential factor for nearly 70 football and basketball SAs was a chance to win a conference championship. SAs participating in that study attended an NCAA D1 HBCU in the SEC. However, those results conflicted with findings reported by Letawsky et al. (2003), whose study of first-year NCAA D1 SAs across multiple athletic disciplines revealed that SAs most heavily considered head coach, academic services, community support, and team traditions when making their college choices.

Bukowski (1995) surveyed close to 300 SAs seeking to uncover the factors that were influential during their college choice process, delving into differences between minority and majority race SAs. Factors were categorized according to the related themes of college, no relation to college, and athletics. The only statistical differences found were related to factors with no relation to college (i.e., proximity to home, climate, and friends). No sports were

included in the study, which limited the analysis and findings regarding differences in college choice factored by sport.

Pauline (2010) similarly examined influential factors in choosing a college for lacrosse SAs at multiple NCAA D1, D2, and D3 universities. The coach's personality, post-graduation career opportunities, and scholarship availability were the top influencing factors, although differences occurred across NCAA competition levels. D2 and D3 SAs emphasized academics in their decision-making process more than D1 SAs did (Pauline, 2010).

One year later, Day (2011) conducted a survey of incoming first year SAs attending NCAA universities within a 100-mile radius of Spokane, Washington, on the extent to which various factors were important in their college choice process (Day, 2011). Participants indicated academic offerings were the most important consideration (Day, 2011). The findings were not presented according to athletic sport but by gender, race, age, and university attended.

One of the few qualitative studies on SAs' college choice process examined this phenomenon by relying upon data, researcher reflections, and insights from previous investigations (Faulkner, 2005). The survey sample included SAs at an NCAA D3 Christian liberal arts school. Faulkner (2005) concluded factors that influenced college choice consisted of the head coach, other SAs being recruited, future teammates, and connections made with various staff members. The SAs being recruited and potential future teammates were differentiated according to the SA's perception of who was competing for the same position versus recruits seeking other positions on the team (Faulkner, 2005).

After examining factors that contributed to students' college choice, Faulkner (2005) then examined which factor was most critical to their decision. SAs mentioned that academics were important to their decision to attend a Christian liberal arts school, and they ultimately felt

academic degree offerings were more important than athletic status (Faulkner, 2005). Moreover, although communication during recruiting was important, the findings revealed that the following also factored heavily into students' decisions: (in order of importance) phone calls, unofficial campus visits, other SA contacts, and school letters (Faulkner, 2005).

Yet another study took a more distinctive approach by examining the college choice decisions of SAs at a military academy. While not all military academies fall under the jurisdiction of NCAA D1, the West Point, Navy, and Air Force academies do (Reed, 2020). Despite differences in students' race/ethnicity, athletic discipline, academic program, or age, participants reported a good quality teaching staff was the most important factor in their decision to attend a military academy (Fielitz & Coelho, 2001). Researchers made recommendations to military academy coaching staff based on 1,000 survey responses. Since nearly 64% of participating SAs responded "other" when asked what factors they considered during their college choice process, future investigation into "other" factors is warranted.

Student Athlete College Choice Profile Survey (SACCPS)

Most research today on SA college choice employs a quantitative methodological approach using the Student Athlete College Choice Profile Survey (SACCPS) created by Gabert and colleagues (1999). The SACCPS was administered to approximately 300 SAs spanning NCAA D1 and D2 divisions, and, unlike other studies, including National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) SAs. NAIA brands itself as the governing body for small college athletics (NAIA, 2022). Small college athletics include the athletic programs of any college that is not accredited under the NCAA governing body (e.g., Grand View College, Lindsey Wilson College, Concordia University, Benedict College), which are usually schools with smaller student enrollments and fewer athletic offerings compared to NCAA D1–D3

schools (Barnett, 2020; Dannelly, 2019; “Smart Athlete,” 2020). Survey questions were developed as an extension of previous research (Hamrick & Hossler, 1996; Kallio, 1995) that examined college choice. Gabert et al. (1999) extended the 1996 study because factors were not themed categorically, thus hindering athletic coaching staff’s ability to target an area of improvement. Galbert et al. (1999) enlisted athletic personnel to help classify and theme SA responses into digestible recommendations for university administration, athletic coaching personnel, and support services staff.

Although Henrion (2009) adapted the SACCPs for his research examining how college choice factors correlated to academic selection, his research lens varied from those of existing studies. He hypothesized certain academic majors selected by SAs revealed specific and tangible factors of influence in their decisions to attend the university (Henrion, 2009). For example, SAs interested in the medical field did not rank academic services highly as a college choice factor of influence (Henrion, 2009). One explanation could be that SAs with medical aspirations are already academically sound and, therefore, do not see supplemental academic support as an area of demand or concern (Henrion, 2009; Miller & Kerr, 2002). Henrion’s (2009) study included a robust and diverse sample of SA participants representative of 1) several athletic disciplines, 2) men and women, 3) scholarship and non-scholarship recipients, and 4) revenue-generating and non-revenue generating programs.

In another qualitative study conducted at East Tennessee State University, SAs mentioned college staff as the most important factor in their choice to enroll (Howat, 1999). Findings indicated a curious contrast wherein 50% of SAs stated their academic welfare was not best served by enrolling (Howat, 1999). Although these SAs ultimately decided to attend the university, they were aware the academic program did not meet their standards. Teammates were

considered less important in the college choice process, in contrast to results found by Huntrods (2019) and Howat (1999).

Huntrods (2019) examined NCAA D1 swimmers at seven universities and the factors that influenced their college choice. Similar to the approach taken in many previous studies, Huntrods used the SACCPS and manipulated it to reflect factors of influence for the current SA generation. Questions related to such topics as social media and Olympic aspirations were added (Huntrods, 2019). While many investigations sought to understand contributing factors in SAs' college choice to inform better recruiting practices, Huntrods's (2019) research was developed to promote survival over extinction. Due to the lack of demand for collegiate swimming, the budget for the sport was cut, making the recruitment of elite SAs to the university increasingly difficult. Huntrods (2019) observed that if coaches better understood what was of interest to PSAs, they could maximize the return on their resources through efforts that lead to a more successful recruitment. Ultimately, the study discovered teammates and atmosphere curated by the coach were most influential during the college choice process of NCAA D1 swimmers.

Additional SA College Choice Studies

Like previous studies, Johnson (2004) analyzed freshmen SAs attending eight NAIA universities in the TranSouth Conference. The survey sought to understand the most influential factors on college choice for incoming freshmen attending a private university (Johnson, 2004). The results revealed SAs regarded the opportunity to play and the head coach as the factors that most heavily influenced them to commit to one of the conference schools (Johnson, 2004). These findings were consistent with themes from research by Kankey and Quarterman (2007).

Examiners found that playing opportunity was influential for NCAA D1 softball SAs during their college selection process. From freshmen to seniors, SAs believed playing time,

after graduation career prospects, and academic availability most heavily influenced their college choice (Kankey & Quarterman, 2007). Unique to this study, analysis showed team social atmosphere was heavily considered, according to D1 softball SAs (Kankey & Quarterman, 2007). Perhaps unexpectedly, social media, sponsors, team websites, and friends did not play as impactful of a role as the researchers had originally postulated (Kankey & Quarterman, 2007).

As a recommendation to include additional universities, conferences, and competition levels in future studies, the Bukowski (1959) study was adapted, extended, and modified for application toward SAs attending Texas private and public universities (Lawrence, 2005). Understanding the influential factors that can affect college choice among these SAs was necessary due to immense recruiting pressures (Klenosky et al., 1993; Lawrence, 2005). Outcomes differed in both studies, although similar investigation techniques and methodologies were used. Lawrence (2005) learned SAs attending private and public Texas universities valued academics and athletics equally, rating both categories with high statistical means.

In one of the biggest participant research studies regarding factors influencing the college choice of SAs, Lim et al. (2017) received 320 responses from SAs. These athletes represented nearly 80 NCAA D2 track and field athletic programs. The researchers concluded that track and field SAs placed a high emphasis on athletic competition during their college choice process (Lim et al., 2017). Research at the NCAA D1 level was critical to universities differentiating themselves from competing institutions and harnessing the impact a lower-level division could make (Kotler & Fox, 1985; Lim et al., 2017). Researchers suggested qualitative studies needed to be a focal point for future research. As forecasted, the survey featuring 23 questions may have missed an important area in recruitment due to its structure (Lim et al., 2017).

Similar research was conducted to ascertain the influential factors of community college SAs (Meulemans et al., 2019). While community colleges operate differently under the National Junior College Athletic Conference (NJCAA), SAs ranked athletic activities or themes as their primary considerations when selecting a school to attend (Meulemans et al., 2019). NJCAA colleges are typically two-year rather than the four-year institutions common to bachelor's degree colleges (NJCAAa, 2005; NJCAA b, 2022; Rudolf, 2021). A variety of athletic disciplines were represented in the study (i.e., hockey, cross country, football, basketball, soccer, track and field, volleyball, and softball).

Using a mixed methods approach, O'Brien (2016), compelled by the need to evaluate recruiting strengths and weaknesses, examined why NCAA D2 baseball SAs chose to attend a Midwestern university. Results differed slightly from those of other studies in that themes of multiple relationships were the main factors in SAs' decision to attend the university (O'Brien, 2016). Respondents viewed coaching staff's knowledge and interaction with players as the top two factors in their college choice (O'Brien, 2016). To the researcher's surprise, scholarship money was in the bottom percentile of influential factors, whereas research on football SAs' college choice illustrated that scholarship aid was critically important (Massey, 2013; Miroceke, 2012; O'Brien, 2016).

Citing a need to investigate NCAA D2 Rocky Mountain Conference golf SAs, Ritzen (2018) administered a 44-question survey to golf SAs attending this NCAA D2 university (Ritzen, 2018). While SA golfers identified scholarship amount as their primary factor of influence, male and female golfers differed with respect to the academic degree offerings (Ritzen, 2018). Male golfers viewed athletic factors as an area of considerable influence, while female golfers emphasized academics during their recruitment (Ritzen, 2018).

Incoming freshmen SAs signaled the coaching staff and their philosophical approach per athletic discipline as being influential in their selection of their NCAA D1 SEC university to attend (Walker, 2002). The participants revealed a lack of care or concern for non-athletic related sale pitches during recruitment (Walker, 2002). SAs did not rate non-athletic factors favorably nor disclose that they were influential in their college choice process (Walker, 2002). While open-ended questions were asked, a qualitative study was suggested to complete existing literature gaps (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Kankey & Quarterman, 2007; Klenosky et al., 1993; Letawsky et al., 2003; Posteher, 2019; Ritzen, 2018; Sampson, 2015; Teeple, 2005; Walker, 2002; Watson, 2012).

Klenosky et al. (2001) also researched D1 football SAs to determine how attributes deemed best for selecting a college aligned with the SAs' personal values. The results revealed that participants had four levels of influence: athletic, academic, personal, and relationships. Of particular interest, relationships with coaching staff, support academic personnel, and teammates were also discovered (Klenosky et al., 2001).

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviews pertinent literature on SAs and the many factors they consider in their college choice process, with a particular focus on NCAA D1 football SAs (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Kankey & Quarterman, 2007; Lawrence, 2005; Posteher, 2019). Football PSAs who have the opportunity to compete at the highest collegiate athletic level, D1, are flooded with countless college choice factors to consider, including team traditions and success, scholarship amount, opportunity to play, and academic offerings. Previous research acknowledged factors of influence in the college choice process and set forth an underpinning framework for further research (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Kankey & Quarterman, 2007; Lawrence, 2005;

Posteher, 2019). Chapter III discusses the RQs, methods, population, sample size, and recruitment, as well as data collection procedures. Table 1 depicts the current literature on college choice studies, their methodology, and the year of publication.

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Table 1*Studies on Factors That Most Influenced Student-Athletes' College Choice*

Researcher(s)	Year	Methodology	Athletic Discipline(s)	Governing Body	NCAA Division
Klenosky et al.	2001	Qualitative	Football	NCAA	I
Miller & Kerr	2002	Qualitative	***	*	*
Faulkner	2005	Qualitative	***	NCAA	III
Huffman et al.	2016	Mixed	Football	NCAA	I
Gabert et al.	1999	Quantitative	**	NCAA/NAIA	I, II, III
Letawsky et al.	2003	Quantitative	***	NCAA	I
Crowley	2004	Quantitative	Track	NCAA	I
Johnson	2004	Quantitative	***	NAIA	**
Pauline et al.	2004	Quantitative	Baseball	NCAA	I, II, III
Lawrence	2005	Quantitative	Football, Basketball	NCAA	I
Kankey & Quarterman	2007	Quantitative	Softball	NCAA	I
Pauline et al.	2008	Quantitative	Softball	NCAA	I, II, III
Johnson et al.	2009	Quantitative	***	NAIA	**
Henrion	2009	Quantitative	***	NCAA	I
Pauline	2010	Quantitative	Lacrosse	NCAA	I, II, III
Day	2011	Quantitative	***	NCAA	I
Fielitz & Coelho	2011	Quantitative	***	NCAA	I
Huffman	2011	Quantitative	Football	NCAA	I
Huffman & Cooper	2012	Quantitative	Football	NCAA	I
Czekanski & Barnhill	2016	Quantitative	***	NCAA	I
Boyer	2016	Quantitative	Football	NCAA	I
Lim et al.	2017	Quantitative	Track	NCAA	II
Hill-Eley	2019	Quantitative	Football	NCAA	I
Posteher	2019	Quantitative	***	NCAA	I
Huntrods	2019	Quantitative	Swimming	NCAA	I

Notes: CCAA = Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association; NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association; I = Division 1; II = Division 2; III = Division 3; * = CCAA; ** = athletic discipline not specified; *** = 3+ athletic disciplines researched.

Chapter III: Methodology

This doctoral study was conducting using a qualitative phenomenological approach to understand what factors were influential during SAs' college choice process. Data were gathered

through focus groups with semi-structured interviewing. This chapter elucidates the research design, including details on the sample, data collection, and analysis.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify the factors influencing college choice for football SAs attending one NCAA D1 FBS Pac-12 university to develop insights that would help college coaches capitalize on their SA recruitment efforts. The results from this study highlighted themes and informed recommendations based on data gathered through semi-structured interviews with football SAs. The following RQs guided this examination:

RQ1: What compels a football NCAA D1 SA to accept an athletic scholarship from one university over another?

RQ2: What factors contribute to a college coach's failure to obtain a PSAs enrollment commitment?

Qualitative Methodology

The qualitative method can be used to articulate a thorough understanding of a central phenomenon after an assessment has been completed (Creswell, 2009; Given, 2008; Hammarberg et al., 2016; Salkind, 2010). Research conducted using a qualitative methodology investigates phenomena through the participant's point of view (Domin, 2022; Smith, 2006; Smith, 2018). This methodology is designed to explain how experiences occurred and how they are perceived in the eyes of the participant (Smith, 2018; Simon & Goes, 2018; Teherani et al., 2015). Familiar applications of qualitative methodologies include individual and focus group interviews, observations, and similar approaches (Busetto et al., 2020; Pathak et al., 2013).

For this study, a qualitative methodology was most suitable because the RQs and problem statements indicate a gap in the literature related to the lack of qualitative studies on the research subject (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posteher, 2019). Quantitative studies solicited football SAs' responses to survey questions but did not provide the opportunity for participants to voice their own opinion about they chose the school they did. Indeed, few qualitative studies exist in this body of literature, and quantitative designs have been adopted more often, with authors attributing the use of the quantitative design to the lack of access to SAs (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posteher, 2019). Moreover, this methodology is best for identifying factors that influence the choice of college for football SAs (Creswell, 2013). For these reasons, this study was conducted using a qualitative method with a phenomenological design.

Phenomenological Research Design

The qualitative phenomenological design is most effective because the researcher may gain insights and an in-depth comprehension of the central phenomenon through lived participant experiences (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Plano, 2007). Phenomenological research is designed to investigate a phenomenon through the viewpoint of those involved (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano, 2007; Given, 2008; Grossoehme, 2014; Hammarberg et al., 2016; Salkind, 2010). This design enabled the identification of influential factors related to college choice for SAs in their ecosystem (Creswell, 2013). Other qualitative research designs, such as grounded theory, narrative, case study, and ethnography, were not fitting for this investigation. Concisely stated, a phenomenological approach seeks to understand the human experience (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Plano, 2007; Salkind, 2010).

Semi-Structured Interviews. An adaptable semi-structured interview design is helpful when limited knowledge exists on the subject interest (Engen, 2008; Morgan, 1997; Posteher,

2019; Tohidian & Rahimian, 2018). This free-flowing approach cultivated an environment in which SAs' interests, likes, and concerns could be understood rather than being interpreted through the lens of the researcher's own interests. In these adaptable interview designs, interview questioning allows participants to converse on whatever topic sparks their curiosity. "If the goal is to learn something from the participants, then it is best to let them speak for themselves" (Morgan, 1997, p. 40).

Funnel Tactic. I began each focus group session by identifying the nuances and specialties of football recruiting (Appendix F). This perspective and statement functioned to jump start the conversation and elicited varying viewpoints about recruiting, which were based on differing perspectives" and then starting the following sentence with "Indeed," to enhance coherency. While all football SAs attended the same university, they were not all recruited in the same manner, nor had they had the same number of college scholarship options to consider when making their college choice. Immediately following the presentation of this introductory information, I applied the funnel tactic to introduce more specific interview questions (Bryman, 1988, 2006; Posteher, 2019; Roulston, 2010). Beginning with a broad concept or question and funneling to a narrower, more specific concept provided SAs with the opportunity to recount their recruiting journey. It also ensured SAs' opinions on the broader concepts were captured along with their opinions on the more specific recruiting topics discussed.

Interview Questions

Interview questions were compiled using visions gleaned from previous studies (Falkner, 2005; Gabert et al., 1999; Hill-Eley, 2019; Lawrence, 2005; Posteher, 2019). Moreover, the questions were reviewed and edited to ensure participant understanding based on guidance from Study School Site athletic staff and field research experts. Athletic staff included trainers,

academic support professionals, campus life liaisons, football athletic directors, and administrators. The interview protocol was informed by previous researchers' work (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posteher, 2019). The following interview questions (IQs) were asked during the focus group sessions:

ICEBREAKER: Describe a moment or event, good or bad, from your recruitment period that you will always remember.

ICEBREAKER: Talk about how recruiters communicated with you and which method you preferred.

IQ1: What factors did you consider when choosing a school?

IQ1a: Of those, which, if any, were non-negotiable?

IQ2: If you received more than one offer, what led you to choose Study School Site?

IQ3: How did Study School Site recruiters get your attention?

IQ4: What was a turnoff during the recruitment process?

IQ5: What did other recruiters whose schools you did not choose do that you liked?

Site Selection

Participants for this study were recruited from one NCAA D1 university competing in the Pac-12 Conference. The schools that competed in this conference were geographically located in Arizona, California, Colorado, Oregon, Utah, and Washington ("About the Pac12," 2020). The Pac-12 Conference was chosen for this study based on recommendations in the literature to investigate additional conferences. Study School Site was specifically chosen due to the connections and relationships built with the school's athletic staff throughout the researcher's career. This relationship history was conveyed to participants at the beginning of each focus group session.

Researcher disclosure

Due to the high degree of competitiveness within NCAA athletics, especially at the D1 level, athletic recruiting is sacred and well-guarded at each university. After all, universities are competing for the same elite caliber SA, especially universities within the same conference. Stories of mishandlings and inappropriate activity during recruiting has caused many NCAA athletic programs to forfeit post-season play, accrue heavy fines, and even lose future scholarships (Dodd, 2018; Durham, 2020; Forde, 2020; Miller, 2017; Neumeister, 2019). This is one of the few reasons why researchers do not obtain access to this special population easily (Crowley, 2004; Hill-Eley, 2019; Huffman, 2011; Posteher, 2019).

Trust and Respect

At the beginning of each focus group interview, I shared my experiences with SAs, particularly the experiences related to football. I disclosed my previous academic work with SAs, particularly at Study School Site, and my connections with current and former college NCAA coaches. I also mentioned my relationships with former collegiate NCAA D1 football players who had transitioned into the NFL. These disclosures were necessary to create trust and demonstrate respect for the participants. Doing so also showed reverence for college football and my commitment to keeping conversations, identities, and opinions from being disclosed. As an example, all identities and names of colleges mentioned were assigned variables or aliases for which only the researcher had the coded key. This was of critical importance to help elicit honest feedback and candid openness regarding NCAA D1 football recruiting. The overall intent was to create an environment that invited participants to share their experiences with someone who was adequately familiar with the athletic recruiting experience and process.

Key Relationships

To conduct this study successfully, I leveraged previous relationships with Study School Site's athletic department to gauge the department members' enthusiasm for involving their football SAs in a research study. Once interest was established and security procedures were put in place, I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix A) from Capitol Technology University (CTU) to conduct this study. Additionally, Study School Site's Provost Committee approved this research. Upon receiving CTU IRB approval, I capitalized on my relationships with athletic personnel to gain SA access.

My relationship with the football staff was the key factor in procuring access to participants. With the assistance of the associate athletic director, athletic trainer, director of player personnel, and data analyst, interview times were coordinated around SAs' schedules to increase the likelihood of their participation. This was not only efficient for time management but also informed my understanding of the SAs' hectic and demanding calendar. In addition, as this study was conducted during the COVID-19 global pandemic, staff requested that the activities involving the SAs be scheduled during the unprecedented downtime in the athletes' season that was created by the pandemic-related restrictions on occupancy capacities in athletic facilities. During this time, classes were held virtually, the football season schedule was shortened, and the spring football practice schedule was lightened. This period coincided with the spring 2022 semester

Spring Football Season

Spring is typically reserved for preparation for the upcoming fall football season. During this time, practice schedules are minimalized, and practices are less intense and do not require that SAs wear football pad equipment, which is in accordance with the strict guidelines dictated

by NCAA rules (Johnson, 2022; Kirshner, 2017). This lightened session allowed time outside of class for the SAs to meet for interviews. Coordination with athletic staff helped determine the most optimal time for the interviews, which were held during the January 2022 spring semester.

Study Sample

Given the high level of competitiveness at D1 football programs, the SAs at Study School Site represented the uppermost elite athletes of their recruiting class (NCAA, 2020a). Thus, SAs recruited for this study were assumed to have had multiple college choice options compared to SAs at NCAA D2 or D3 schools. A principal concern for this research was the selection of participants and football players due to the absence of literature focused on D1 football SAs. Additionally, no evident studies researched influential factors in the college choice process among football SAs at a Pac-12 university using a qualitative approach.

Eligibility

Participants for this study had to meet several criteria. First, participants were required to be existing NCAA D1 football SAs who were officially registered at Study School Site. Second, all study participants were officially identified on the university's 2021–22 athletic roster and verified by NCAA eligibility compliance officers. Third, participants needed to speak English as their primary language. All participants were 18–24 years old.

Recruitment

Player rosters obtained from university athletic staff indicated 100 active football SAs attended Study School Site. These SAs were emailed an invitation to participate in a research study. These SAs were emailed an invitation to participate in an interview as part of a research study for which they would receive a \$20 Amazon gift card. Potential participants ranged in academic grade classification from freshmen to redshirt (RS) seniors (RSSs). A RS SA (a term

not endorsed by the NCAA) refers to a SA who only competes against internal opponents or participates in intra-squad practices for the year (NCAA, 2020b). That year of competing against internal challengers is added to the SA's athletic eligibility while the athlete still receives financial aid. SAs are allowed four years of athletic eligibility except in special circumstances, such as being designated as a RS (NCAA, 2020b). This does not and should not be confused with a student's academic major. Generally, a student is enrolled in academic courses for four years to obtain a baccalaureate degree (NCAA, 2020a, 2020b). In this scenario, a RS SA could have fulfilled all requirements for a bachelor's degree but still be able to compete athletically for the university for another year.

Data Collection, Focus Groups, Field Notes, and Transcription

Data were collected through focus groups, which provide a convenient and resourceful means of amassing group interview data (Brandl et al., 2018; Nyumba et al., 2018; Rikard, 1992). Indeed, focus groups are effective for and beneficial to acquiring group responses (Franz, 2011; Leung & Savithiri, 2009; Public Health England, 2020). This approach stems from group therapeutic methods (Szybillo & Berger, 1979), with a foundational basis that individuals are more forthcoming with their experiences among those with whom they share commonalities. While group sharing among peers is beneficial, some assumptions must be made in its formation.

Lederman and O'Malley's (1990) study identified five assumptions about focus groups. First, individuals are precious sources of information. Second, people are proficient at disclosing their stances, moods, and actions. Third, the focus group can help individuals to reveal rich information through guided interviews. Fourth, the collective group setting facilitates the uncovering of valuable information. Lastly, interviewing members as a group is more efficient than interviewing them separately. Focus groups offer the chance to witness participants

engaging in interactions centered on beliefs and experiences that are of interest to the investigator (Barbour, 2007; Doria et al., 2018; Gibbs, 1997; Gundumogula, 2020; Morgan & Spanish, 1984). Furthermore, focus group research investigations are intended to spawn more sincere and loftier sacred information than that which can be elicited from singular interviews.

Focus Groups

The optimal size recommended for a focus group is five to eight individuals (Grudens-Schuck et al., 2004; Masadeh, 2012; Miller, 2004). Focus groups should not contain more than 10 participants because, with a group larger than that, viewpoints become stifled and the potential for the interviewer to lose control of the group increases (Adams & Cox, 2008; Austin & Sutton, 2014; Tausch & Menold, 2016). In this study, focus groups were limited to four football players and spanned multiple days, with different SAs participating in each group. The rationale behind spanning multiple days revolved around the theory that SA word-of-mouth advertising may encourage additional football SAs to participate, as some may have been unconvinced and hesitant to initially participate. Indeed, multiple days of smaller focus groups provided the opportunity to maintain a higher total sample size.

Zoom Conference Platform

Focus group sessions took place and were recorded via Zoom videoconferencing software. University athletic staff presented me as the researcher and disseminated the recruitment script (Appendix B) and flyer (Appendix C) to the football SAs. The Zoom interview format enabled the SAs to be comfortable in their own space during the focus group sessions and to participate at times convenient for them. Considering the difficulties scholars have reported in the past with obtaining access to D1 SAs (Henrion, 2009; Woodruff & Schallert, 2007), this format yielded a unique opportunity to observe the participants in their natural environment.

Interview Procedure

The focus group design was based on a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix F). This protocol provided both a foundation for dialoguing and the flexibility to adapt conversations based on participant input (Krueger, 2002; Prasad & Garcia, 2015; Watkins, 2012). Two crucial components of focus group interviews are researchers' vulnerability and their focused attention pertaining to the flow of the discussion (Breen, 2006; Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Posteher, 2019).

As part of the interview protocol in this study, I began each focus group session with the following:

- Introduction – I introduced the study and my connections with Study School Site athletic staff. I then asked participants if they had any questions prior to recording. In addition, I explained how confidentiality would be maintained, noting that I would be the only person with access to identities and statements. Moreover, I provided them with an overview of the study.
- Consent and Demographic Forms (Appendices D–E) – I distributed consent forms via email, asking SAs to sign if they wished to participate. I also asked if the potential participants had questions or required clarity on the guidelines regarding consent. After the forms were signed, the participant and I both received a copy.
- Closing – As the 45-minute point in each session approached, I starting to bring the focus group discussion to a close. Focus group sessions were kept to a maximum of 60 minutes based off recommendations from athletic staff and Crowley's (2004) pilot study. I also reminded participants about their anonymity. Any remaining questions from participants were answered, and the gift card distribution process was explained.

Field Notes

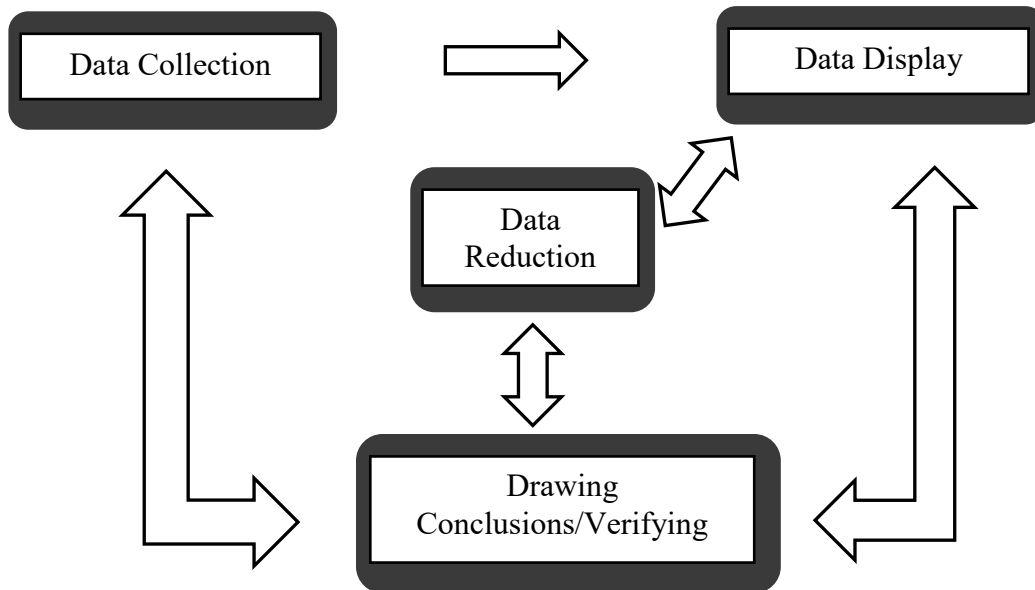
Field notes, described by Creswell (2017), are the researcher's account of what is said, heard, felt, thought, or experienced during interview sessions. Therefore, field notes supplemented the data in this study by providing breadth for the actual interviews. Field notes were utilized to provide additional insights about the interview. I noted follow-up questions, biases and weaknesses in my questioning, related thoughts, and anything else that would be helpful during data analysis. The idea of recording notes was to promote a more accurate analysis (Creswell, 2017; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith, 2006).

Transcription

Transcription is a direct verbatim written interpretation of what was said on tape (Bailey, 2008; Davidson, 2009; Gale et al., 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Oliver et al., 2005). Although exact words were transcribed, they may have a different context and meaning based on cultural upbringings, conversation context, or experiences with the topic of discussion (Regmi et al., 2010; Squires, 2008; Temple & Young, 2004). Focus group interviews were transcribed from Zoom recordings by a reputable organization specializing in qualitative interviews and focus groups. After receiving the transcripts, I read and compared them with my field notes from each session to validate the content. This is a vital step in audio tape transcription.

Data Analysis

Data were categorized and analyzed to uncover the answers to the RQs posed in Chapter I. The purpose of data analysis is to make logic of data collected by the researcher (Lester et al., 2020; Thorne, 2000; Wong, 2008). This step brings normalcy, organization, and comprehension to information gathered (Bengtsson, 2015; Busetto et al., 2020; Lacey & Luff, 2000). Figure 14 describes the steps followed to analyze data for this study.

Figure 14*Data Analysis Life Cycle*

Notes. [Source] Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. (2nd ed.).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing Inc.

Coding

Coding organizes transcribed data into sections before applying sense and rationale (Faulkner, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Silverman, 2000). This process for the current study involved grouping text, phrases, and sentences and then labeling the groups with a descriptive term (Bucholtz, 2000; Creswell, 2017; Smith, 2005). Both transcripts and field notes were coded to better illuminate relevant insights.

Matrix Approach

Data matrices serve as organizational tools for viewing data holistically instead of in fragmented form (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Nascimento & Steignbruch, 2019; Smith, 2005). The matrix of this study included transcripts and their coded categorical information. The rationale behind using matrices was to identify participant themes from the interview data. Two

or more participants may provide the same answer, but that situation may not be exposed until the matrix finds the connection (Creswell, 2017; Curtis, 2021; Higgins, 2021).

Conceptually Ordered Matrix

Many matrix types exist for data analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) mentioned conceptually ordered, narratively ordered, and chronologically ordered. A conceptually ordered matrix was used for this study. This matrix identified data in major groupings (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith, 2005). Themes that were not apparent during coding were identified with the assistance of the conceptually ordered matrix. I reviewed the transcribed data and rummaged for themes that were not apparent. More importantly, I located data not agreed upon or mentioned by other participants.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is established through the transparency applied in qualitative research (Connelly, 2016b; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Smith, 2005). This step is essential to the application of the results, as the transparency of the study gives readers a clearer indication of the overall trustworthiness of the study (Connelly, 2016b; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). While no one specific formula for determining trustworthiness exists, credibility, dependability, and confirmability are widely accepted as elements of such a trustworthiness formula (Nowell et al., 2018; Smith, 2005).

Credibility

Credibility requires the researcher to present information that represents the study participants and their utterances, accurately (Connelly, 2016a; Nowell et al., 2018; Smith, 2005). For example, field notes must accurately display participant characteristics, such as tone, mood, and energy (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Otherwise, data may demonstrate levels of subjectivity

throughout the process (Connelly, 2016b; Nowell et al., 2018; Smith, 2005). Maintaining a notebook allowed me to review transcribed words as they related to the participants and their body language to reduce subjectivity.

Dependability

Dependability ensures the research study can act alone in providing input for future research (Connelly, 2016a; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith, 2005). This theory assumes study data are accurate and representative, including the RQs. Additionally, data collection and analysis should be supported by one another to preserve dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability can be recognized as impartiality, according to Miles and Huberman (1994). The study confirmability depends on the participants and interview setting (Connelly, 2016a; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith, 2005) rather than researcher bias. I used field notes in my notebook to annotate my biases. This written record reflected my thoughts and helped provide objectivity. More importantly, it depicted how future studies may decrease similar biases.

Delimitations

This qualitative phenomenological research only included focus group interviews of male football SAs at an NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 university. Additionally, SAs with and without an athletic scholarship participated. This investigation did not explore additional collegiate athletic disciplines. PSAs and their college choice processes were not investigated. While PSAs and SAs both experience college choice processes, this study explored SAs after they had chosen their college. Moreover, Study School Site delimited participation to one Power Five NCAA conference.

Limitations

When considering implications for additional use or applying results in practice, several study limitations should be measured. First, the results cannot be generalized due to the small sample size. Moreover, the results cannot be generalized to all college conferences, NCAA competition levels, or athletic disciplines, as the research may not yield similar findings for football SAs in another conference, college, or competition level. However, the results added to the increasing research on SA college choice, specifically for NCAA FBS D1 football SAs. Lastly, participation was voluntary.

Chapter Summary

Chapter III provides an explanation of the research methodology and design used for this qualitative phenomenological focus group study with a semi-structured interview approach. More specifically, the chapter describes the procedures used to perform focus group interviews and to analyze the study data. Data analysis involved coding to identify themes and categories throughout transcription. The researcher also provided details on trustworthiness, delimitations, and limitations of the study.

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Chapter IV: Results

Chapter IV encapsulates the research results on factors that influence college choice for football SAs at one NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 university. Descriptive statistics on characteristics of football SAs and inferential statistics tested on the four interview questions are presented. Focus group interviews were conducted during the 2022 spring football off-season. Multiple emails were sent to enlist as many volunteer participants as possible. The researcher worked alongside football athletic staff to coordinate available times in the SAs' schedules. Additionally, these football team associates encouraged the SAs to participate in the study because the results may give them insights into their recruiting techniques and processes and may point to areas in need of improvement.

Participant Demographics

Thirteen football SAs agreed to participate in this investigation. Participants were determined based on their availability and willingness to contribute to the research. Of the 13 football SA participants, 12 were offered at least one college athletic scholarship. Of the 12 with a college scholarship offer, 7 identified having had 4 or more athletic scholarship offers from which to choose. This sample population included a mixture of races and demographics. Five (38.5%) of the SAs were African American, five (38.5%) were White or White/Other, and three (23.1%) were Other or Pacific Islander. While not every race was represented, this composition did hint at the football SA population makeup at this NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 university.

The sample size did not represent the average and is not generalizable to the total population of football SAs at this Pac12 University. Participant data within this study is considered a non-parametric set of data. Non-parametric data sets include smaller sample sizes, non-continuous data, and do not conform to the population assumptions (Anesthesiol, 2016; Giordano, Milito, &

Parella, 2022; Lachin, 2020). Furthermore, the study sample is aligned to a voluntary sample, rather than a convenience sample. A voluntary sample occurs when the population selects to opt in or out of the researcher's data request (Berg, 2010; Cheung et al., 2017; Lugtig et al., 2022). While a convenience sample is executed by the researcher in a un-randomized method, it comes with potential bias (Andersson et al., 2014; Jager et al., 2017; Kriska et al., 2013).

Participants were not chosen at random for this study. Once the researcher emailed out the flyer for focus group participation, only football SAs who responded with intent to provide thoughts and responses, were deemed participants. The researcher did not have communication with SAs directly, until the contact information was shared from the athletic staff. Additionally, football SAs who may have declined the request to participate was not communicated to the researcher. The School Study Site athletic staff communicated any questions, football SAs may have had regarding participation (i.e., was this mandatory, how legitimate is this request, what is the time commitment).

While many SAs compete in various NCAA athletic disciplines across the D1 level, not every SA receives a partial or full scholarship to compete for their university. A full scholarship encompasses 100% housing, tuition, textbooks, and student fees, which is paid by the university (NCAA, 2020a, 2020b). A partial scholarship offers some but not all these scholarship benefits or any benefit less than 100% in monetary value (NCAA, 2020a, 2020b). SAs who have not received athletic scholarships do not receive any athletic monetary assistance. A second category of non-scholarship athletes is known as a Walk-On or Preferred Walk-On (PW or PWO). Many of the study participants identified themselves as PWOs during the focus group interviews, and all but one self-identified as having received at least one athletic scholarship offer, which does not necessarily imply this Pac-12 university offered them a scholarship. Study participants

represented all SA scholarship categories and designations (e.g., PWO, SA with one scholarship offer, SA with no scholarship). A general summary of participant demographic information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Participants' Demographics (Self-Reported)

Participant ID	Age Range	Athletic Classification	Academic Classification	Race	# Of Scholarships Offered
D8943985	18–19	Freshman	Junior	African American	7+
F466A2AC	18–19	Freshman	Freshman	White/Other	1–3
B2BB8136	18–19	Freshman	Freshman	White	7+
1666934D	18–19	Freshman	Freshman	Pacific Islander/Other	0
0E73F41A	18–19	Freshman	Freshman	White	4–6
498C6FE4	18–19	Freshman	Sophomore	White/Other	4–6
05E4213C	18–19	Freshman	Freshman	African American	1–3
DAC403F1	18–19	Freshman	Freshman	Other	1–3
E10275EF	20–21	Freshman	Freshman	African American	7+
EFC3B857	18–19	Freshman	Freshman	Other	1–3
DEF82B18	18–19	Freshman	Freshman	African American	7+
374DF8E0	18–19	Freshman	Sophomore	White	1–3
603E613E	18–19	Freshman	Freshman	African American	7+

Data Collection

The researcher commenced data collection by engaging in discussions with and seeking input from the participating university football athletic staff. The researcher worked with football athletic staff to gather a list of SAs who were available to participate in the study, upon their voluntary consent. Data collection did not initiate until Capitol Technology University IRB approval (Appendix A) was received. While IRB approval was not needed at the participating university, approval was needed from the Provost Committee due to the sensitive nature of the SA involvement. After the Provost Committee approved the study (Appendix B), data collection began. Zoom video conferencing software was employed to gather data from no more than four SAs per focus group.

The first step in collecting the data was to send an email to football SAs Study School Site inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix C). Upon expressing interest, SAs communicated with football athletic staff to adjust their schedules to accommodate their involvement in the study. During the study, the football SAs were asked for consent (Appendix D) and to provide their demographic characteristics (Appendix E). Voluntary participation was described on the consent form and in the email invitation.

Invitations to participate were sent to all football SAs on the roster to increase maximum sampling selection. Criteria required to participate were based on age, current active roster status, and English spoken as the primary language (Appendix C). The researcher engaged with SAs based on these study participation criteria.

The researcher developed a seven question semi-structured interview protocol guide (Appendix F) that consisted of questions while also allowing for probing questions and for conversations to develop. Furthermore, questions were designed to allow participants to control

the flow and topics discussed. Interviews were conducted with five focus groups, each consisting of no more than four participants. Due to the global coronavirus pandemic, Zoom video conferencing software was used to facilitate the focus group sessions. Focus groups were recorded on Zoom and transferred to the researcher's external hard drive. That external hard drive was stored, and password protected when not in use to conceal participants' identity.

Recordings were transcribed within three days of the final focus group session. Due to conflicting SA schedules, multiple focus groups were scheduled across two days. The first set of focus group interviews commenced January 21, 2022, and the final set culminated on January 24, 2022. After data were transcribed, the researcher replayed audio recordings and edited the transcriptions to ensure context and football jargon were accurately reflected.

Data Analysis

The interview data were examined using a thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended this should be the first qualitative technique learned because it provides central analysis skills that can be leveraged in other analysis disciplines. Outlined by Maguire and Delahunt (2017), a six-phase model for thematic analysis includes the following: 1) familiarization, 2) coding, 3) theme development, 4) fine-tuning, 5) labeling, and 6) writing up the results (Anderson, 2021; Braun et al., 2016). The researcher became acquainted with the data by repeatedly reviewing the transcriptions multiple times. Data were transcribed by an outsourced company, DataGain Inc. (Appendix G), specializing in qualitative methodology interviews. Transcript results were reviewed and edited by the researcher to adjust for errors made in transcription. Furthermore, the researcher de-identified participant information while editing context related to football athletics that may have been difficult to understand in the audio recording. Color coding was used to classify similar noteworthy phrases or words from

participant responses. Afterwards, noteworthy phrases or words were color coded and grouped together by similarity to form overall themes. Finally, overall themes were established by evaluating initial themes to certify they represented the essential traits of the codes. The labeling phase was established to certify simplicity and coherence within each theme. Writing up the results is the final phase.

RQ1: What compels a football NCAA D1 SA to accept an athletic scholarship from one university over another?

RQ2: What factors contribute to a college coach's failure to obtain a PSAs enrollment commitment?

Results

The collective findings from the thematic analysis revealed that the factors that influenced the college choice for SAs at this Pac-12 university were academics, athletics, atmosphere curated, and honesty. Of the four themes, atmosphere curated was the most influential factor. The results also uncover actions taken during recruiting that can cause a PSA to lose interest in this Pac-12 university.

Academics

The first research question asked what led the SAs to choose this Pac-12 university over any other offers they had received. The results indicated the majors offered and reputation of the Pac-12 university's colleges and programs were influential during the decision-making process. While multiple subthemes did not emerge for this category, participants did specifically mention this factor.

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Major Offering/Reputation of the College

During recruitment, SAs considered not only how an institution could showcase their athletic abilities but also how it would stimulate their intellectual curiosity. Participants noted they also considered education when determining if this Pac-12 university was right for them. A few SAs indicated that if their preferred major had not been offered, this Pac-12 university would not have been a viable candidate for them.

They had to have my major. I know that I want to go into engineering, automotive systems, which is, like, car chassis and stuff like that. I know a good amount of schools have engineering, but not all of them have that specific discipline and Study School Site has, and they have programs like clubs and stuff that rotate around it. So that was a big one for me. (SA B2BB8136)

SA E10275EF explained the importance of the education provided when choosing a college, noting that a college choice consideration was “if it had my major, what I wanted to do after college.” SA 498C6FE4 referred to choosing Study School Site “for education reasons as well.” A few SAs explained why education was important and why they believed Study School Site excelled in this area. SA DEF82B18 said, “I knew from growing up Study School Site has a good business program. [It’s] always ranked top 10 in the country.” SA B2BB8136 expressed sentiments centered on the engineering school. “I know a good amount of schools have engineering, but not all of them have that specific discipline when it comes to it, and Study Site has” When combined, these reflections suggest education can be an influential factor in the college selection process for this university. Additionally, many SAs observed that coaches neither facilitated nor generally initiated academic conversations during recruitment. “I learned about the academics doing my own research,” commented SA EFC3B857.

Athletics

An athletic theme emerged from conversations with participants, and within that theme, multiple subthemes reoccurred. Play style, playing opportunity, and program success were mentioned multiple times throughout conversations with SAs at this Pac-12 university.

Participants expressed many viewpoints on each subtheme with distinct anecdotes reflecting why they chose the university, based on each categorical level.

Play Style

Numerous SAs believed the play style of Study School Site suited their athletic abilities.

SA 498C6FE4 said:

It was going to a school that threw the ball a decent amount, to be honest, and had kind of an even amount of both run and pass. But definitely, play for an offensive coordinator that threw the ball a lot. Obviously, we didn't throw the ball that much this past season, but ... [laughter] ... yeah, but like we had the opportunity to, but it's just our run game was a lot better than the pass game, so...

SA 498C6FE4's input was vital because it indicated that, although the Study School Site football team's previous season performance did not necessarily feature his talent, the option of it doing so was viable. Furthermore, it indicates a SA may be willing to settle with a different outcome if the play style that suits their athletic ability is considered and available.

Another SA recounted that Study School Site did ask them to convert to a play style that was not familiar to the SA. The participant also described eliminating a school from contention early in the recruiting process, although it was an option they were actively considering. SA 05E4213C explained:

Oh, yeah, I did that because I could have gone Navy. Had offered me one, too, but I knew they was, what's it called there, on that Wing T., and they were telling me they're going to make me play fullback, so I was like no, I couldn't do that. Yeah, I was like I couldn't do that. It's going to feel like it would be 250 [pounds] with my hand in the dirt, so I was like, no sir... The reason why I chose Study School Site because, like, both their offense was similar to my high school offense, so I knew it wasn't going to be that bad for me, like, learning the playbook and stuff. This one was – this is the way he called plays and the way he, like, what's it called, installed and all that. It was very similar to my high school, so it was easier to adapt, so that did play a role.

While some participants provided details on prioritizing play style as influential in their college choice, SA 498C6FE4 kept it simple when explaining why the Study School Site was chosen: “the offensive scheme.” SA DEF82B18 summed up a few of his teammates' thoughts on why they selected Study School Site.

I wanted to really just find a spot that fit me with the offense and coming in and doing what I love to do as a slot and running back, and just a place that feels like home. And I couldn't really find that anywhere else. So, Study School Site is just a good fit all around.

Playing Opportunity

While not every SA participant expressed the opportunity to play as an influential factor for selecting Study School Site, anecdotes from certain participants explicitly stated this reason. One participant detailed the thought-process followed in deciding between two contending college options.

Luckily, SEC School and [Study School Site] gave me a PWO, and then I guess what's it called? Choosing between them two, it was just, for me it was more looking at where I

could play faster, like where I can get on the field faster, because I looked at the depth charts of both schools, and the SEC school had 10, 15 running backs at the school, and they only had three years, four years, so I feel like I could work to, like, get time to play faster, and my chances were better here than they were at the SEC school and stuff.

The SAs who identified playing opportunity as an influential factor in choosing Study School Site demonstrated evidence that they had done their own research prior to speaking with any of the schools recruiting them. None of these SAs reported discussing the opportunity for playing time or the depth chart ranking with Study School Site representatives. Rather, the SAs conducted their own research and made determinations based on the number of athletes in their respective positions. This concept or consciously executed practice is reflected in SA DAC403F1's statement: "Because there was, like, a couple [of schools] that would offer me, like, a POW or something, but they'd have five kickers there. That wasn't going to work out." Another participant stated their narrowing down of Study School Site as a viable candidate revolved around checking the depth chart for their position. "For me, mostly it was, like, availability—seeing if they had, like, a bunch [of players] at my position." These sentiments were expressed by some but not all SAs. However, this categorical theme was significant during focus groups.

Program Success

Most participants commented on various aspects of the program as grounds for their decision to attend Study School Site. The SAs looked at the performance of former SAs who had attended Study School Site, who at the time of the study were in the NFL, to gauge the quality of the program. Even though coaches changed over time, participants did not see coaching staff matriculation as a deterrent. SA EFC3B857 recounted the factors he considered about Study

School Site were “the same thing that SA DEF82B18 said about Study School Site’s offense is, like, they’ve had a lot of receivers be successful, a couple of guys in the NFL right now doing well. So definitely the offense, how they play.” This respondent was agreeing to his teammate’s viewpoint and providing additional context on assessing the success of Study School Site. In explaining why he had chosen Study School Site, SA DAC403F1 stated, “I think just their whole brand that they have with the gear, they’re repeated success, the money flowing into the program. Just how much they show that they care about the football program.”

A few SAs combined different theme elements into a singular abstract concept concerning program success in explaining their reasons for selecting this university. SA E10275EF described it as follows:

I looked into players, how successful they were, whether it’s going to NFL or whether it was getting out of football and being able to get a good job or whatever. I looked a lot into that, too, because, regardless of if I’m doing football or not, I want to be successful.

This dual-themed observation was echoed by SA E10275EF:

I feel like, for everybody, it’s just how well the school and the program sets you up for life instead of kind of looking at the end. The goal that we obviously all have ... is going to the NFL, but I think the biggest thing is setting you up with a good degree and different assets, such as, like, connections within the school, like, different life ... like stuff you can use in life rather [than] just certain aspects to it, such as the NFL and stuff. So I feel setting you up for life is a bigger, is the bigger picture rather than going to the NFL ...

Although SAs mentioned program success as an influential factor in their college choice process for this Pac-12 university, they did not mention that recruiting personnel had discussed this

factor or attribute relating to the program during recruitment. Moreover, the common theme within this subtheme was that SAs who were interested in this Pac-12 university had conducted their own research and done their own fact-finding to learn about the football athletic program. Recruiting coordinators did not present this information to the PSAs as a selling point during conversation but more as an unspoken fact.

Atmosphere Curated

The most influential theme that emerged from the focus group discussions was the atmosphere curated by Study School Site. Nearly all participants provided a reflection centering on this theme, and within this theme, a few subthemes existed, including location/weather, coaches, and familial environment. All subthemes were grouped together for the main theme of atmosphere curated.

Location and Weather

Participants expressed their sentiments toward location and weather, citing both as reasons they chose Study School Site. Location and weather appeared interchangeably at times throughout conversations. Some SAs viewed weather as synonymous with the school location, while others separated the two idea constructs. One SA noted the following:

I think weather was a big deal for me, like, playing football in the cold as an offensive lineman was, like, and playing center at that just is weird. So, I like having good weather and stuff like that. I think that plays a good factor in a lot of the process.

SA 7CF06F56 commented on the same topic:

Actually, my family's all on the East Coast, but when I was speaking about that [weather], yeah, I was looking for more of a warmer climate, and I wanted something farther away from home, so Study School Site also fit that description.

SA B2BB8136 specifically described weather as being an asset to his kicking ability.

Yeah, it is because the ball won't compress as much, and when you're cold, you're not going to be quite as fast, as your legs can be a little slower, so it is a little bit harder if you're in the cold.

SA 0E73F41A recounted the following:

And then it's a little bit closer to home, but it's also far enough away that I can still be independent and rely on myself and stuff, so that, I guess, that you could say that was a part of it as well.

SA EFC3B857 agreed with his teammate that Study School Site's proximity was attractive and a factor in his college choice. "I'm from the Los Angeles area. So not too far. That was definitely something that was attractive." Several participants provided responses stated in fewer words but still aligned with the theme of location/weather. For example, SA 498C6FE4 used the phrase "closer to home" and SA DEF82B18 said "staying home," which reflected further justification by SAs for selecting Study School Site based on location/weather.

Coaches

SAs spoke of and relished their satisfaction for Study School Site football coaching staff. While their observations about Study School Site coaches referred to their ability to coach or their level of knowledge, they also revered their coaches' relatability and connection during the recruiting process. Three coaches were specifically commended during the focus groups: Coach EE, Coach SLOW, and Coach BOW. The SAs described these coaches as being impactful and influential during the recruitment process. While the three coaches were mentioned, Coach EE was mentioned by three participants. "Coach EE as well. Definitely, I feel like he upped the program, making it way better." "Coach EE has definitely made a big impact." "Coach EE."

Coach's names were converted to pseudonym to conceal identities in hopes to avoid revealing the participating Study School Site.

Coaching Staff

A few SAs enjoyed the collective recruiting abilities of the coaching staff. Some pointed out that other schools may have sent one coach but not Study School Site. This university sent multiple coaches to recruit them, which made them feel more connected to the team.

I feel the biggest thing, at least for me, when they were recruiting me that really drew me to Study School Site was that the whole coaching staff was recruiting me. It wasn't just Coach Aggy—it wasn't just Coach EE—it was the majority of the staff, and that's really what separated Study School Site from different offers I had from different colleges. I feel like that was one of the biggest things that drew me to Study School Site.

That SA was not alone in this viewpoint. Another SA mentioned his top college choices were all competitive, but Study School Site stuck out because of the coaching relationship. Although the coach he built a rapport with at Study School Site departed shortly after recruitment began, he still chose Study School Site.

I came here based off the relationship I had with the coach that was supposed to be the offensive line coach at the time. So I had a lot of other top schools in my top as far as who I was thinking about going [with], but Study School Site stood apart because I was talking to KM: [he's] a Hall of Fame center—he played the same position I did. So that had a very strong influence on me coming to Study School Site.

Quality Coaches. Throughout the conversations about Study School Site coaches, issues surrounding winning football games and quality coaches were discussed. When asked whether they would select a school over Study School Site based on winning, they all responded that they

would not. Of those who provided additional follow-up, SA E10275EF stated the coaching staff was a higher factor and consideration than the athletic team's success rate on the football field.

See, that's where, I think, where the coaching staff and, like, stuff like that would trump. Like, say if, like, Appalachian State [University] had a fantastic coaching staff and they didn't have a history of winning, but I can see them winning. I'd definitely take the coaching staff over their previous record.

Entire Recruiting Staff. The same sentiment was expressed by SA 7CF06F56, who noted, "That [the entire coaching staff recruited me] was definitely the biggest reason. Obviously, there's other factors why I committed to Study School Site, but actually, yeah, that was the biggest difference." Comparing Study School Site to a school that did not have as much prestige, SA 7CF06F56 made the following observation:

To me, it goes back to the whole staff recruiting me. That's the issue from the other offers I had because, like you said, it was usually just the running back coach or they had a special person just trying to recruit me. They were pretty much doing the same thing all the other schools are trying to do. And then Study School Site kind of did something different. Yeah.

That SA's evaluation was supported by a SA 498C6FE4 teammate who shared the following feelings about Study School Site: "But I think one of the more important things was the coaching staff and seeing if you could develop a connection with them, and if you like them before you went there, [you'd] like them when you got there."

Familial Environment

Many SAs expressed gratitude or feeling a sense of comfort in the family atmosphere curated by the athletic program and coaching staff at Study School Site in SA comments such as,

“And a lot of other things like the coaching staff. Like they showed me a lot of love to me. It was better than the rest.” Family atmosphere was clearly acknowledged by SA 374DF8E0, who mentioned being family rather than an asset and the feeling it brings. “The coaching staff, like, making you feel, rather than like an asset, they make you feel like you’re actually family. That was a big thing.” This theme was also address by SA 05E4213C:

It was mainly the coaching staff to me. They had to treat me like I was one of their kids ‘cause, like, I didn’t care where I went, you know what I’m saying? ... I could see myself away from my family for a good bit of time without feeling uncomfortable mainly.

SA B2BB8136 described this atmosphere as “really just a home feel all around from the coaches, the players, the city, the campus.” Participants mentioned former high school teammates going to Study School Site and telling them about the home feeling. “It was all around a home feeling from having some previous teammates that went to Study Site High School going to Study School Site.”

Parent/Guardian Approval

Parent or guardian acceptance or blessing of approval also contributed to the family atmosphere Study School Site created. SA E10275EF addressed this point:

Making my family feel at home. My mom hates me being far away from home, but they [Study School Site] made, they assured her and made sure that she was going to feel good leaving me here to play football and being college, in general, just [to] enjoy the experience. So, I would say that’s my biggest takeaway out of getting recruited and stuff like, again, was, sorry, getting recruiting and stuff was just, like, making it feel good for not only me but my family as well because my family [is] everything.

Other participants commented on family approval being considered when they thought about Study School Site, also. While they did not indicate it was the sole or deciding factor, they did praise Study School Site for adopting a family environment. SA E10275EF said, “If my parents weren’t going to like it, I wasn’t going to go..., so ...”

Honesty

Communication was a theme covered by many SA responses related to attending Study School Site, or more importantly, honesty delivered in the form of communication. Participants expressed contentment with how honest Study School Site coaching staff were about recruiting, playing time, expectations, school environment, and similar factors.

I would say another big thing that—it might be different for kickers and punters versus regular position players but—the big thing that showed me they really care was they were very clear and open about the fact that I was the only person they recruited. I had seen other schools say that, and then I would see other guys get letters from that school, from the same coach, and that coach was telling me, I’m only talking to you. ... I got to see this from other schools, and I didn’t see any of that by Study School Site, so that was very big deal—they were being open and honest. (SA 0E73F41A)

When this SA mentioned his experiences with honesty, particularly how schools say things to recruits all the time that they do not back up with actions, another teammate, SA 0E73F41A, agreed.

I believe actions speak a lot louder than words... but yeah, I would say going off the actions, it seemed like they [Study School Site] were way more honest than other schools, especially, like, you hear every school say that, ‘oh, you’re our top guy,’ ‘you’re number one guy,’ and they go out, and they’re offering 10 other kids in the same position... So

they're honesty was the big thing, that said, hey, this is—I can fully trust that guy [Study School Site Coach SLOW], and that's been 100% accuracy since I've gotten here.

While not every SA provided an anecdote or example of Study School Site's honesty during the focus group sessions, the majority agreed or head-nodded when other teammates expressed these views.

Recommendations

During the focus group sessions, SAs gave their opinions, feedback, and memories related to their recruitment. Among those utterances, SAs provided reasons behind and factors that influenced their choice of Study School Site as the college where they would play football and attend school. In addition, the SA participants also commented on other schools' recruitment practices they encountered and some of the aspects of those experiences that they did not like. Recommendations, including practices to continue or implement (or "Practices to Implement") and those to avoid (or "Practices to Avoid"), were unanimously expressed throughout each focus group session. These included strategies other athletic programs followed well that Study School Site should adopt, as well as activities that athletic programs did not do well that Study School Site should avoid.

Do's Practices to Implement

This section includes recommendations from study participants that Study School Site should execute when recruiting PSAs. Some Practices to Implement were activities and actions Study School Site was already executing, while others were activities the SAs liked that they encountered with another university recruiting them, despite not choosing that college in the end. Of the actions and strategies, the SAs recommended Study School Site should implement, the

subthemes that occurred most during the focus group sessions were honesty, checking in, and recruit in-state SAs with intensity.

Honesty

Many SAs expressed the desire to have coaches recruiting them be honest with respect to recruiting, playing time, number of SAs at their position, campus life, and other elements of their school. As SA E10275EF mentioned, given this is his second time getting recruited...

... I would just ask whether it's a player or whether it's a coach or crew member. I'd ask the truth. I'd be, like, I don't, like, especially my second time getting recruited, it was, like, I've already seen how recruiting is supposed to be; you're supposed to show them everything good, nothing bad, tell him everything I want to hear. I just want to know the truth.

That participant's perspective about the importance of honesty during recruitment was not unique. SA 0E73F41A addressed the same factor.

I would say just being 100% honest with what they were thinking, what they were doing, for example, what they saw with their recruiting board or if they were just honest, like, we're dealing with the transfer portal right now.

The SA who made those comments was a walk-on and mentioned that his expenses for attending Study School Site were covered by his own financial backing. One of the reasons he was pleased with Study School Site was because of Coach BOW and his honesty.

Coach BOW was really good about keeping contact, keeping things honest, keeping my hopes up, letting me know they were still interested. So, I think just staying honest with recruits ... and pursuing them hard, because it was pretty easy to pick Study School Site for me, even though it was something, I had to stay patient there and kind of work [for]...

SA E10275EF related the experiences of several friends and mentioned that, while he did not experience any falsehoods from Study School Site, his friends had. He can understand the frustration that accompanies not being presented with the truth.

But definitely people I know that, when they were being recruited, that they said that some coaches weren't really keeping it real with them, even when they got to the school.... Yeah, it's nice to have that good communication, but you want them to keep it real with you on how it's going to be when you get there, not just show and make it sound all good, but then when you get there, it's not really everything that you expected.

Although study participants did not note dishonesty in their own recruitment with Study School Site, it was mentioned they heard of instances from their peers who experienced dishonest encounters.

Checking In

Many SAs expressed satisfaction with having recruiting coaches check in with them after their high school football games.

Like just checking in on me personally, like every Saturday morning I get that call, get that text from, like, them or, like, another coach on the staff, and yeah, it's just, like, really, I feel like they made, like, they actually, like, cared about me. (SA 05E4213C)

SA 498C6FE4 expressed his opinion that he enjoyed a recruiting coach breaking down his football game film on Saturdays, which was the coaches' idea. "I know one of the coaches that was recruiting me, I'd send him some of my film and would go over some of my film, and we talked it over." When asked in the focus group to further expound on that thought, this SA further add the following:

Not just looking at like him pointing out what he likes, but like actually trying to coach me up a little bit, and so I thought that was a really good thing to do regardless if I went there or not.

Multiple participants observed that the coach or recruiting staff had not needed to check in every day but rather “just a once or twice a week thing, just to see how everything is going. It really showed they cared.” Again, participants did not mention whether Study School Site exhibited the practices reflected in these recommendations during recruitment.

Recruit In-State SAs with Intensity

Throughout conversations with Study School Site SA participants, many mentioned the perceived difference between recruiting in- and out-of-state PSAs. Some of these PSAs were high school teammates of those participating in the study or knew them in high school.

Especially for the in-state guys, just pushing a little harder for them. I think they’re [Study School Site] so used to not being able to get in-state kids and so they don’t go as hard as they would for, for example, a State C recruit or someone from the east coast.

(SA DEF82B18)

One SA, 1666934D, felt similarly, as they both were from State X.

Me being a local, I feel the recruitment was much stronger everywhere else. I feel it wasn’t that strong at Study School Site, so I’d say just heftier recruiting at Study School Site because I know there are some ballers that I knew that were hella good, but didn’t really go anywhere.

DEF82B18 expressed his thoughts about Study School Site and how the coaches should go “hard” for the in-state player just as much as they would for the State C candidate.

I would say push as hard as you would for the State C kid. Push as hard as the other schools that were out-of-state were [pushing] for me. You got to get on that same level. I'm not saying they [Study School Site] didn't... but I would say if Study School Site got on that level what they're recruiting, too, it would be a lot better, especially for in-state kids.

Here, also, the SAs did not mention whether Study School Site was currently acting on these recommendations.

Practices to Avoid

One subtheme fell within the recommendations of things not to do when recruiting SAs, and participants were adamant about this topic. At least one SA per focus group session either mentioned this as a personal experience or could relay similar stories from their friends' experiences. Participants in the study suggested Study School Site not over-communicate to their recruits. Over-communication took many forms. SA E10275EF said, "Constantly talking on the phone and stuff, that's just, no one, no teenager or football player getting recruited wants to do that, you know?" SA DEF82B18 added, after listening to a viewpoint on over-communication, "Yeah, I would definitely say the over-communication. We know you're interested, but by then it was just kind of annoying. Yeah, that was part of one of the things that was a turn off." As SAs were expressing their disdain for over-communication, the question of over-communication definition emerged.

And especially, like, you come home, you go to school, you go to practice, you can get some extra work after that. When you home and they want to talk for like two to three hours, like, my attention is not there right now after a long day. (SA 0E73F41A)

One participant, SA D8943985, inspired many nods of the head from teammates after revealing his story.

I think there's such thing as over-recruitment, like schools like West Point and Navy.

Like, they wanted to get on a Zoom call, like, every single day and stuff like that for two to three hours and stuff, and then they want you to talk to all these different people

[various coaching staff]. and it's just, I don't know, it just takes up a lot of time and stuff.

Over-communication was an expressed “do not” by many of the participants. In some form of communication, whether audio, non-verbal cues, or anecdotes, the SAs at Study School Site expressed that Study School Site should not re-enact these gestures or actions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examines themes that emerged during the investigation. Participant voices helped identify factors influencing SAs' college choice during their decision-making process. Although participants recalled experiences from all themes, atmosphere curated, and communication emerged as the most influential factors in the SAs' choice of college.

Chapter V: Limitations, Interpretation of Findings, Implementation of Study, Contribution to Body of Knowledge, Recommendations for Future Research, Chapter Summary, and Conclusion

This study investigated the factors that influenced the college choice of football SAs at an NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 university. Research on this subject further extends our understanding of the SA college choice process. With the knowledge learned, university administrators and college athletic staff can develop a profile fit for recruits interested in attending their schools. Furthermore, resources, such as budgets and staffing, can be better allocated to entice potential SAs.

Limitations

Several limitations to this investigation must be noted. First, a limited number of football SAs participated in the study. With fewer than half of Study School Site's football roster participating, generalized statements about Study School Site are difficult to make. A larger football SA population may reveal additional factors or rank the factors influencing college choice differently than the participants in this study. Second, many participants had not yet competed in their first athletic season for Study School Site, so their responses may have been shaped by their excitement over selecting Study School Site to attend. Finally, SAs were enticed to participate by the offer of a gift card reward. At the beginning of each focus group session, the researcher mentioned gift card distribution would commence after the demographic and consent forms were signed. Both forms were emailed immediately upon participants joining the Zoom call. After signing, a participant could have not engaged or paid only casual attention during focus group sessions and still received a gift card.

Interpretation of the Findings

The purpose of this section is to offer a discussion on the factors that influence the college choice process based on the results of this qualitative study. Most previous SA college choice studies have been executed quantitatively. Factors that influenced college choice were categorically grouped into themes to determine levels of influence during a SA's college choice process. All factors deemed influential were attributes and characteristics of the Study School Site, a particular university in the NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 Conference.

The atmosphere curated by Study School Site athletic staff was the most influential factor in the college selection process for football SAs who selected this college to attend who participated in this study. Many participants in the study mentioned subthemes related to the

Study School Site atmosphere. These subthemes included location, weather, coaching staff, quality coaching staff, recruiting staff, familial environment, and parent/guardian approval. While not ranked in the same order, these discoveries were akin to those of previous studies (Crowley, 2004; Faulkner, 2005; Hill-Eley, 2019; Kankey & Quarterman, 2007; Posteher, 2019).

The communication theme emerged as the second most influential factor in the college selection process for football SAs at this Pac-12 university. More specifically, honesty during communication was highlighted in the experiences shared by study participants regarding Study School Site recruiting practices. SAs expressed their satisfaction with Study School Site's honesty regarding recruitment. Experiences reported to them by their friends who were also SAs and by witnesses of other college recruiting tactics framed their views of Study School Site's honesty. Previous research mentions communication as an influential factor in choosing a college (Huffman, 2011; Huffman & Cooper, 2012; Johnson, 2004). However, honesty is not a factor that has been uncovered in the literature.

All SAs per focus group session mentioned an experience or factor related to athletics. Subthemes for this category included play style, playing opportunity, and program success. Although every participant mentioned a subtheme of athletics, more anecdotes were provided for other themes. Excitement and conversation were sparked more by other influential factor themes than by athletics. Nevertheless, the athletic theme results support findings from previous investigations (Anderson, 2021; Pauline, 2010; Pauline et al., 2008).

Academics was the final theme regarding the influential factors reported for choosing Study School Site. Majors offered and reputation of the college were subthemes discussed. SAs mentioned the prestige and satisfaction of not only playing football for the university but also receiving a quality education. Conversations also focused on preparation for life after football

and development of manhood. These were all qualities that SAs alluded to in their reasoning for selecting Study School Site. Another topic discussed was that, while the SAs praised Study School Site's academic offerings, discussions were not held about the academic programs and related information was not disseminated by Study School Site recruiting staff. SAs' knowledge of the university was obtained from personal homework and research. Previous research investigations found similar academically themed results (Boyer, 2016; Day, 2011; Huntrods, 2019).

Implementation of the Study

The research discoveries revealed the most agreed upon reasons why football SAs chose Study School Site in the NCAA Pac-12 Conference over alternative university options as the institution at which to further their athletic career. Atmosphere curated, communication, athletics, and academics were the categorical themes that emerged during data collection and analysis. These commonalities were triangulated against the literature on this subject and among subject matter experts (i.e., university athletic administrators, university administrators, football coaches, sports journalists, and former collegiate athletes). While the findings resembled those of previous investigations at other universities and on other collegiate athletic sport disciplines, the investigation revealed characteristics about this Pac-12 university that were not unearthed previously. While the recommendation is to tailor recruiting tactics for Study School Site to align with the results from this investigation, the researcher recommends interviewing a wider audience of football SAs at Study School Site for a more accurate depiction of why those SAs chose to attend this university over the rest.

[BLANK INTENTIONALLY]

Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

This research's original contribution to the body of knowledge spans multiple compacities. By addressing a gap in literature on SA recruitment, specifically at the NCAA D1 level at a Pac12 University, this research adds a new and unearthed research location. Additionally, this research provides a blueprint for a Pac12 University that has not been published in current literature. Moreover, this qualitative investigation adds to the current body of knowledge that is mainly populated with quantitative studies, due to lack of access of football SAs (Crowley, 2004; Day, 2011; Hill-Eley, 2019; Posteher, 2019). The qualitative study also adds as an investigation completed on NCAA D1 football SA college choice, within recent years. Lastly, this study's contribution is vital to the college athletic recruiting subject given the high revenue generated by college athletics and the pressure college coaches face to win (Huffman, 2011; Huffman & Cooper, 2012; Huntrods, 2019).

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the results of the current study and the review of the literature on SA college choice, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- Investigate football players at additional Pac-12 universities, particularly in the same state as Study School Site. A review or analysis of what is influential for Pac-12 universities in the same state could showcase how a SA may select one school over another in the same state.
- Investigate additional football SAs at Study School Site to complete a longitudinal study. An expanded investigation of participants may reveal additional insights about Study School Site and what is influential to their football SAs. Additionally, this

- would enable generalizations to be made about Study School Site and a recruiting profile to be developed that can depict their “typical” PSA.
- Investigate college football coaches’ perceptions of what influences a football SA when selecting their school. Comparing what college coaches think influences the SA’s decision versus what SAs say influences them may reveal needed changes. This analysis can help align coaching staff to be more in-tune with their SAs.
 - Investigate football SAs at a HBCU and PWI to compare influential factors related to college choice. SAs may select either institution type for varying reasons, so the factors influencing their college choice should be noted.
 - Investigate the factors influencing the college choice of football transfer athletes. While they navigated the recruiting the process once, something ultimately did not work out in the school they selected. After deciding to step back into the search process for their next college fit, they likely have knowledge of good and bad college experiences. Insights into whether what they believed was influential during their first college recruitment compared to their perception after experiencing their first college experience could reveal great insights and produce quality knowledge.

Chapter Summary

This study investigated the influential factors related to the college choice of football SAs at an NCAA FBS D1 Pac-12 university. Better understanding the college choice process and what influences a SA to select this Pac-12 university may be useful to university administrators and college athletic staff. Although the results mimic the existing literature, what was most important to participants at this university varied from the findings from previous studies.

While findings from this study revealed some of the same factors influencing SAs' college choice that were revealed by previous studies, the college choice influencing factors most common, those most influential, and the specific subtheme factors differed. Moreover, athletics was not the most influential factor of college choice for SAs from this Pac-12 university, as many previous studies found. This study uncovered that the atmosphere curated was most influential for SAs selecting this Pac-12 university. Although academics, athletics, and communication were important to the SAs, none was more important than the atmosphere of the Study School Site. Multiple SAs provided experiences and shared their feelings about recruitment when contemplating attending Study School Site. Many times, throughout the focus group sessions, the feeling and “vibe” of Study School Site being unmatched was mentioned.

Conclusion

This qualitative phenomenological semi-structured focus group research study discovered communal themes in the factors that influence college choice among NCAA D1 football SAs at a Pac-12 university. Detecting themes was deliberate to inform university administration, coaching athletic staff, PSAs, and SAs about reasons SAs choose to play football at this school. Additionally, this study was intended to contribute to developing a recruiting profile of the Study School Site SA to aid in resource allocation for recruiting. The significance of this study is ingrained in the stress coaches face to recruit top-tier athletes who can help lead the team to winning football games (Crowley, 2004; Faulkner, 2005; Hill-Eley, 2019; Huffman et al., 2016; Kankey & Quarterman, 2007; Posther, 2019). Critical gaps in the literature were addressed with this study by executing a qualitative methodology, researching football at the highest NCAA competition level (D1), canvassing a school in the Pac-12 conference, and receiving statements that participants expressed in their own words rather than by choosing options from a survey. All

were identified as lacking within the literature and had been recommended as future research to assist in advancing the knowledge base on the subject of college choice for SAs (Day, 2011; Hill-Eley, 2019; Huntrods, 2019; Posteher, 2019; Ritzen, 2018).

Concluding Statements on Researching Discoveries

The research discoveries showed SAs at this Pac-12 university chose the school and team based on the following themes: atmosphere curated, honest communication, athletics, and academics. While all characteristics were shared among the participants, the atmosphere-curated theme that emerged as the primary reason why participants selected Study School Site over their alternative college options. A deep dive narrative chronological literature review found that gaps existed in the current body of literature, which this study helped to fill. This study is the first qualitative investigation conducted at the most competitive athletic NCAA level (D1) in recent years. Additionally, this study is one of few that solely investigated football as the athletic sport discipline. Upcoming researchers should build upon this research to continue filling the gap in this body of literature surrounding SA college choice. Investigations into this subject area are vastly important, given the competitive level of recruiting to ascertain elite talent in college athletics.

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Appendix A: Capitol Technology University IRB Approval



Capitol Technology University Institutional Review Board Application to Conduct Research Using Human Subjects

The Capitol Technology University Institutional Review Board (IRB) must review all requests to conduct research involving human subjects.

Please note that it is the researcher's responsibility to give complete information. The IRB form is a stand-alone document. The IRB team is not provided a copy of anything other than this form and do not assume they will know, The following as applicable must be part of the document, not separate files: organization consent form signed, a copy of the participant consent form, Data collection tool (e.g. survey instrument or interview/guiding questions, verbal script), and a copy of the CITI certificate. If the student is working with protected groups additional material will be required. Please note that your specific study may include additional requirements/forms. Make sure the form is signed by your Chair and they submit to irb@captechu.edu

Please be very detailed in your responses to the following questions. This will make the IRB process much more efficient.

Primary Investigator (faculty, staff, student, etc.)				
Your name:	Padric Hall			
Your status: (e.g., student, faculty)	Student			
Your affiliation: (college/dept.)	Doctoral Programs: Business Analytics and Data Science			
Phone contact:	702-370-3388			
Email contact:	prhall@captechu.edu			
Submission date:	Click or tap here to enter text. <table border="0" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> new</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> amendment to protocol number:</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> renewal of protocol number:</td> </tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> new	<input type="checkbox"/> amendment to protocol number:	<input type="checkbox"/> renewal of protocol number:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> new				
<input type="checkbox"/> amendment to protocol number:				
<input type="checkbox"/> renewal of protocol number:				
Any vulnerable subjects (risks)?	<input type="checkbox"/> minors <input type="checkbox"/> pregnant women <input type="checkbox"/> medically sensitive <input type="checkbox"/> prisoners <input type="checkbox"/> other:			
Additional permissions	None			

needed? (e.g., employer)	
--------------------------	--

DECLARATION BY ALL INVESTIGATORS: This proposal is guided by the ethical principles regarding research involving human subjects as set forth in the [Belmont Report](#). I/We agree to abide by the policies and procedures of the IRB, including obtaining appropriate training in human subject research. I/We will not initiate any research associated with this application until authorized by the IRB. I/We will report to the IRB about any adverse events or unanticipated problems (unexpected, possible greater risk, etc.) that occur. I/We will inform the IRB of a need to modify the study design requiring an amendment. I/We understand that approval, when granted, is valid for up to one year and will submit a renewal for its continuation if needed.

(PI) Primary Investigator: Padric Hall Date: 17 September 21

IRB office use		
Approval: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Not Approved	Research Classification: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full Review <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Not Human Research	
Date Rc'd:	Approval Date:	Application #:
Name	Signature	Date
Ian McAndrew	<i>Ian McAndrew</i>	21st September, 2021
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Appendix B: Study School Site University Provost Committee Approval

University Office of
Evaluation and
Educational
Effectiveness

MEMO

DATE: January 4, 2022

TO: Padric Hall, Ph.D. Student
Business Analytics and Data Science
Capital Technical University

FROM: Shelly A. Potts, Ph.D.
Senior Director

RE: Review Process for Study School Site Student Recruitment/Data Collection

On 1/4/22 the Study School Site Student Recruitment/Data Collection committee reviewed the following request:

Title: Where to play: An Edge in Recruiting NCAA D-I Football student athletes

Investigator: Padric Hall

Unit: Capital Technical University

IRB ID: n/a

Documents reviewed: Study School Site Student Recruitment/Data Collection Review form, IRB submission, questionnaire, recruitment messaging, consent form, and PI communications.

Committee response: **Survey is approved.** Refer to Study School Site policy on raffles when planning survey incentives: https://ogc.schoolstudysite.edu/gambling-raffles_

cc: Susan Metosky
Sheila Ainlay
Sondria Miller
Kendall Stewart

Appendix C: Study Email Invitation**\$20 Amazon Gift Card (in less than 45 minutes)**

Hello,

My name is Padric Hall and am a doctoral student at Capitol Technology University, in Maryland. I am conducting research to discover the influential factors of college choice for Division I football student-athletes, particularly at a Pac-12 university. This study falls under the Business Analysis and Data Science program, under the direction of Dr. Sondria Miller.

I am soliciting participants for no more than a 45-minute focus group. To contribute, you must be:

- Between the ages of 18 and 25
- Current NCAA Division I student-athlete
- Speak English

The focus groups feature audio recording. Once transcribed, audio files will be erased. Understanding your time is restricted and valued, I offer my gratitude and appreciation. All responses will be confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous. You have the right to forgo answering any question and to exit the focus group at any time. You will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card and catered food, as compensation for your participation.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at (702) 370-3388. If you have questions about the study, please email Capitol Technology University IRB at irb@captechu.edu or call [240\) 965-2491](tel:2409652491).

Thank you,

Padric Hall
Business Analysis and Data Science Doctoral Student
Capitol Technology University

Appendix D: Consent Form

Research study title: Where to Play: An Edge in Recruiting of NCAA D-I Football Student-Athletes

Researcher: Padric Hall, under the direction of Dr. Sondria, Miller smiller@captechu.edu

Research purpose:

To discover influential factors of college choice of NCAA D-I football student athletes, particularly at a Pac-12 university.

What will happen to the research data collected?

Use and disclosure of personal information and responses will be restricted for those who have a “need” to review. Study results and findings can be used in research reports, presentations, or publications but the research study site nor participant’s name will be revealed.

All research data will be anonymously assigned. Audio files will be transcribed and afterwards destroyed upon transcription. Transcriptions will be maintained for no more than 5 years and can be used for future research purposes.

Who can I speak with if I have questions?

Feel free to contact Padric Hall at (702) 370-3388 or prhall@captechu.edu regarding any questions, concerns, complaints, or comments.

Capitol Technology University IRB has reviewed and approved this research study. You can contact them by emailing irb@captechu.edu or calling (240) 965-2491.

Your signature indicates your participation and acknowledgement of the consent letter distributed for this research.

Participant printed name

Participant signature

Researcher printed name

Researcher signature

Date

Date

Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

- 1) What is your race? (Select all that apply)
 - African American
 - Asian
 - Native American
 - Pacific Islander
 - White
 - Other

- 2) What is your ethnicity?
 - Hispanic
 - Non-Hispanic

- 3) What is your age?
 - 18-19 years
 - 20-21 years
 - 22-23 years

- 4) What is your academic affiliation?
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Graduate Student

- 5) Are/were you a Red or Grey Shirt? (if applicable)
 - Yes
 - No

- 6) What is your athletic affiliation?
 - Freshmen
 - Sophomore
 - Junior

Senior

7) How many scholarships (full/partial) were you offered during recruiting?

- 0 scholarships
- 1-3 scholarships
- 4-6 scholarships
- 7+ scholarships

8) What conferences were your offered scholarships in?

9) What City and State did you graduate from?

10) Did you transfer from another college to Study School Site?

11) If yes from question 10, please list the college.

Appendix F: Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Protocol Guide

1. Disburse consent & demographic forms via DocuSign.
 2. Answer any initial questions about research.
 3. Explain compensation for research participation and completion.
 4. Researcher introduction.
4. Proceed with protocol questions:
1. [ICEBREAKER] Describe a moment or event in your recruiting, that you will always remember, whether good or bad.
 2. [ICEBREAKER] Talk about how recruiters communicated with you and which you preferred best.
 3. What did you consider when choosing a school?
 1. Of those, which were non-negotiables, if any?
 4. If you had more than one offer, what led you to choose Study School Site?
 5. How did Study School Site recruiters get your attention?
 6. What was a turn off during your recruitment?
 7. What did other recruiters do that you liked but did not choose their school?

Appendix G: Datagain Inc. Flyer**SERVICES****Transcription**

- We provide transcription of qualitative interviews, legal proceedings, zoom interviews, doctor patient interviews, and host of others.

Translation

- We help transcribe and translate audio recordings in over 100 different global languages including all the major ones including Spanish, Cantonese, Japanese, German, Italian, but also rarely spoken languages and dialects.
- We also help translate documents and websites from different 100 languages.

Machine Transcription

- We also provide automated transcripts which help our customers save both time and costs.

Coding and Categorization

- We offer coding and categorization of survey responses. Our in-house team delivers thematic analysis which involves coding and then rolling up categories to create themes / subthemes. The final report generated provides a sentiment analysis and themes.

REFERENCES**Reference 1**

Name of Firm: Stanford University
Contact Person: Lauren Griffin
Email: lauren.griffin@stanford.edu
Phone: 650-785-5081

Reference 2

Name of Firm: University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Contact Person: Sarah L. Goff MD, PhD
Email: sgoff@umass.edu
Phone: 413-218-3176

Reference 3

Name of Firm: Columbia University
Contact Person: Dr. Dawn Goddard-Eckrich, Ed.D.
Email: dq2121@columbia.edu
Phone: 212-851-5660

Appendix H: North American Society for Sport History

2022 Annual Convention of the North American Society for Sport History

May 27-30, 2022 | In-Person & Virtual via HopIn

% Sessions
5:24:57pm CDT
Padric Hall /
& Logout

[Overview > Conference Agenda](#)

Conference Agenda

Overview and details of the sessions of this conference. Please select a date or location to show only sessions at that day or location. Please select a single session for detailed view (with abstracts and downloads if available).

Please note that all times are shown in the time zone of the conference. **The current conference time is: 17th July 2022, 05:24:57pm CDT**

You have selected a **personal time zone (CEST)** in your user account details.
 Your corresponding local time is: **18th July 2022, 12:24:57am CEST**. You can find the local time of each session in the session details.

! Hide Downloads
" Authors
My Agenda

hall ✖

Sessions including 'hall'

Canadian Sport and (Challenging) Colonialism

Conference Time: **Monday, 30/May/2022: 9:15am - 10:15am**

Session Time in Your Local Time Zone: **Monday, 30/May/2022: 4:15pm - 5:15pm**

Session Chair: **Janice Forsyth**, Western University

Location: **Huron**

Session room seats 40

Presentations including 'hall'

Changing Perspectives in Turbulent Times

Time: 29/May/2022: 5:30pm-6:30pm - Virtual location: **Remote on HopIn** -

6:00pm - 6:15pm *In Your Time Zone: Monday: 1:00am - 1:15am*

This contribution has been accepted as 12-15 minute remote presentation. The presentation will be a pre-recorded video followed by live Q&A.

ID: 184 / Remote ID: 3

2022 Remote Individual Research Presentation

Keywords: College-choice, Football, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Pac12, Qualitative, Division-I (D1)

Student Athlete College Choice Profile: An Update is Needed

Padric Hall
 Capitol Technology University, United Kingdom

In 1999, Gabert, Hale, & Montalvo, (1999) developed the Student Athlete College Choice Profile Survey (SACCPs). This survey was created to ascertain student athlete's differences of college choice factors, ranked on 5pt Likert Scale. Still today in 2022, SACCPs is being used survey and collect data asking student athletes what was influential during their college choice process. SACCPs can be seen in literature from (Huntrods, 2019), (Kankey & Quarterman, 2007), (Crowley, 2004), & (Hill-Eley, 2019). Although SACCPs has been used, it presents considerable integral concerns of relevancy, in our current world. One of the SACCPs factors is labeled Social Climate. That designation is very broad and potentially provocative. With the rise in Historical Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), a new social climate and landscape is taking the world by storm. A study set in a different social climate and century but used to seek responses from participants, has huge policy concerns.

This project examines college choice factors of influence at a Pacific 12 (Pac12) university in 2022, from the mouths of football individuals. Football student athletes are providing anecdotes and commentary rather than ranking options from a 1990s survey. Serving as one of the few qualitative investigations in football division-I (D1) competition, this investigation provides a counter viewpoint to a historical 1990s college choice survey.

Reflecting on focus group sessions at a Pac12 university in a semi-structured interview format, exploration divulges four factors of college choice that are influential in selecting this Pac12 university. Of these factors, the most influential being the atmosphere the athletic staff created. SACCPs utilization in current day literature raised questions about relevancy in the 21st century. This investigation adds to historical relevance of collegiate athletic recruiting, through informing coaching staffs on new influences of millennial student athletes.

[Overview > Conference Agenda](#)
Mobile View * Print View (+)

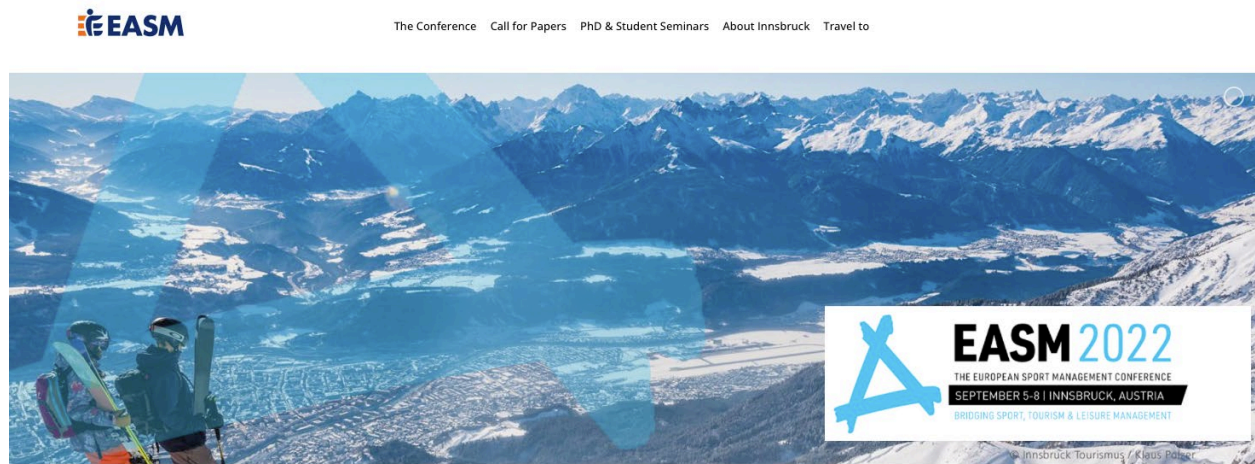
Contact and Legal Notice · Contact Address: conftool@nassh.org
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Privacy Statement · Conference: NASSH2022
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Appendix I: American Marketing Association (AMA) Sport & Sponsorship-Linked Marketing Special Interest Group (SportSIG)

Continued from Saturday, 13 August	
2pm	<p>Sport SIG Marketing's Role in Driving Positive Change in Sport & Sponsorship-Linked Marketing Chaired by: Dr. Ashley Stadler Blank (United States) and Dr. Julie Rousseau (United States) and Mr. Rich Rodriguez (United States) and M.s. Jannah Motani (United States) and Mr. Frank E. Martin II (United States) and Dr. Arianna Uhalde (United States) and Dr. Jbe Cobbs (United States) and Dr. B. David Tyler (United States) and Dr. T. Marius Truta (United States) and Dr. Bridget Nichols (United States) and Mr. Padric Hall (United States) and Dr. Sudipta Mukherjee (United States) and Dr. Jennifer Stoner (United States) and Dr. David M. Houghton (United States) and Dr. Yiran Su (United States) and Dr. Bradley J. Baker (United States)</p> <p>Sport SIG: Marketing's Role in Driving Positive Change in Sport & Sponsorship-Linked Marketing » <u>Dr. Ashley Stadler Blank</u> (United States) - Xavier University, <u>Dr. Julie Rousseau</u> (United States) - USC Athletics, <u>Mr. Rich Rodriguez</u> (United States) - USC Athletics, <u>M.s. Jannah Motani</u> (United States) - USC Athletics, <u>Mr. Frank E. Martin II</u> (United States) - USC Athletics, <u>Dr. Arianna Uhalde</u> (United States) - USC Athletics, <u>Dr. Jbe Cobbs</u> (United States) - Northern Kentucky University, <u>Dr. B. David Tyler</u> (United States) - University of Massachusetts Amherst, <u>Dr. T. Marius Truta</u> (United States) - Northern Kentucky University, <u>Dr. Bridget Nichols</u> (United States) - Northern Kentucky University, <u>Mr. Padric Hall</u> (United States) - Capitol Technology University, <u>Dr. Sudipta Mukherjee</u> (United States) - Xavier University, <u>Dr. Jennifer Stoner</u> (United States) - University of North Dakota, <u>Dr. David M. Houghton</u> (United States) - Xavier University, <u>Dr. Yiran Su</u> (United States) - University of Georgia, <u>Dr. Bradley J. Baker</u> (United States) - Temple University</p>
3:15pm	<p>Networking and Coffee Break</p>
3:45pm	<p>Higher Ed SIG Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Higher Education Chaired by: Dr. Divya Ramachandran (Canada) and M.s. Ashley Hass (United States) and Dr. Atefeh Yazdanparast (United States)</p>
3:45pm	<p>AMA EBSCO RRBW Award Chaired by: Dr. Karen Winterich (United States)</p>
3:45pm	<p>Journal of Marketing Editorial Review Board Meeting (By Invitation Only)</p>
3:45pm	<p>Sales SIG Understanding the Buyer's Perspective to Better Inform Professional Selling Chaired by: Dr. Stephanie Mangus (United States) and Dr. Maria Rouziou (Canada) and Dr. Ellen Pullins (United States)</p>
3:45pm	<p>Understanding the Buyer's Perspective to Better Inform Professional Selling » <u>Dr. Stephanie Mangus</u> (United States) - Baylor University, <u>Dr. Maria Rouziou</u> (Canada) - HEC Montreal, <u>Dr. Ellen Pullins</u> (United States) - University of Toledo</p>
3:45pm	<p>Retail and Pricing SIG Conversation with Katrijn Gielens, Journal of Retailing Editor-in-Chief, on the Journal of Retailing and the Future of Retail Research Chaired by: Prof. Riley Krotz (United States) and Prof. Stacey Robinson (United States)</p>
3:45pm	<p>IO SIG Lifetime Awardees from 2020, 2021, and 2022</p>

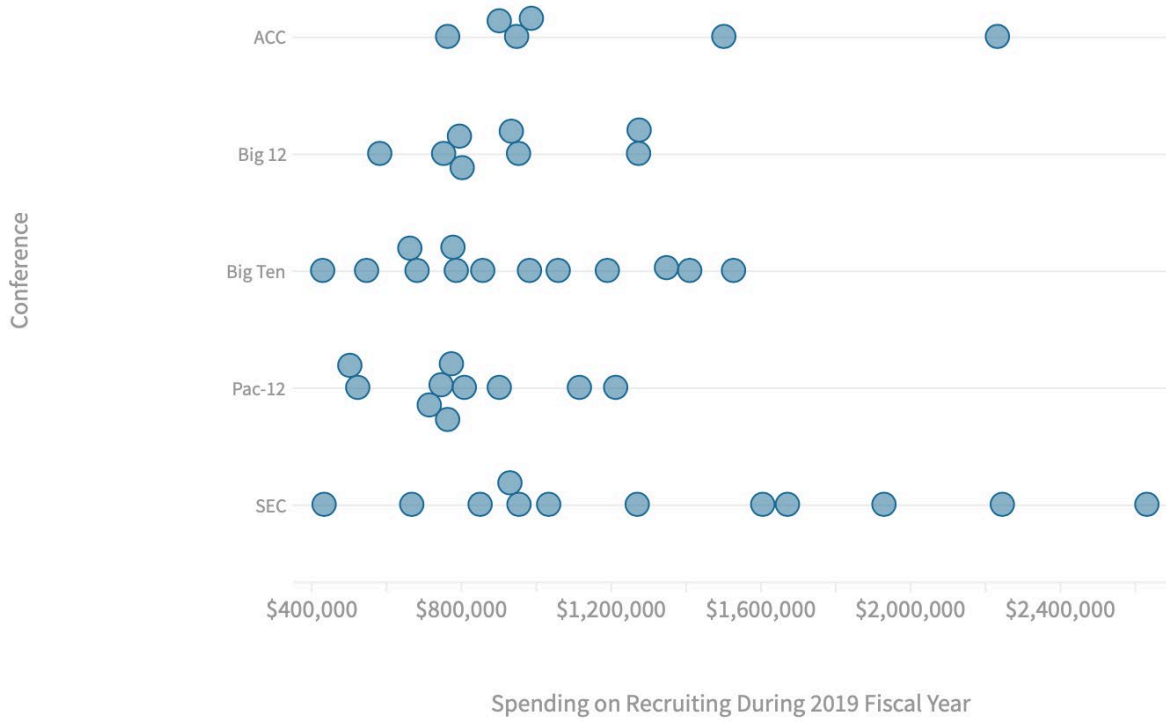
Appendix J: European Association of Sport Management (EASM) Conference



Welcome to the EASM Conference 2022
The 30th European Sport Management Conference hosted September 5-8, in Innsbruck, Tirol, Austria

Appendix K: Figure 1

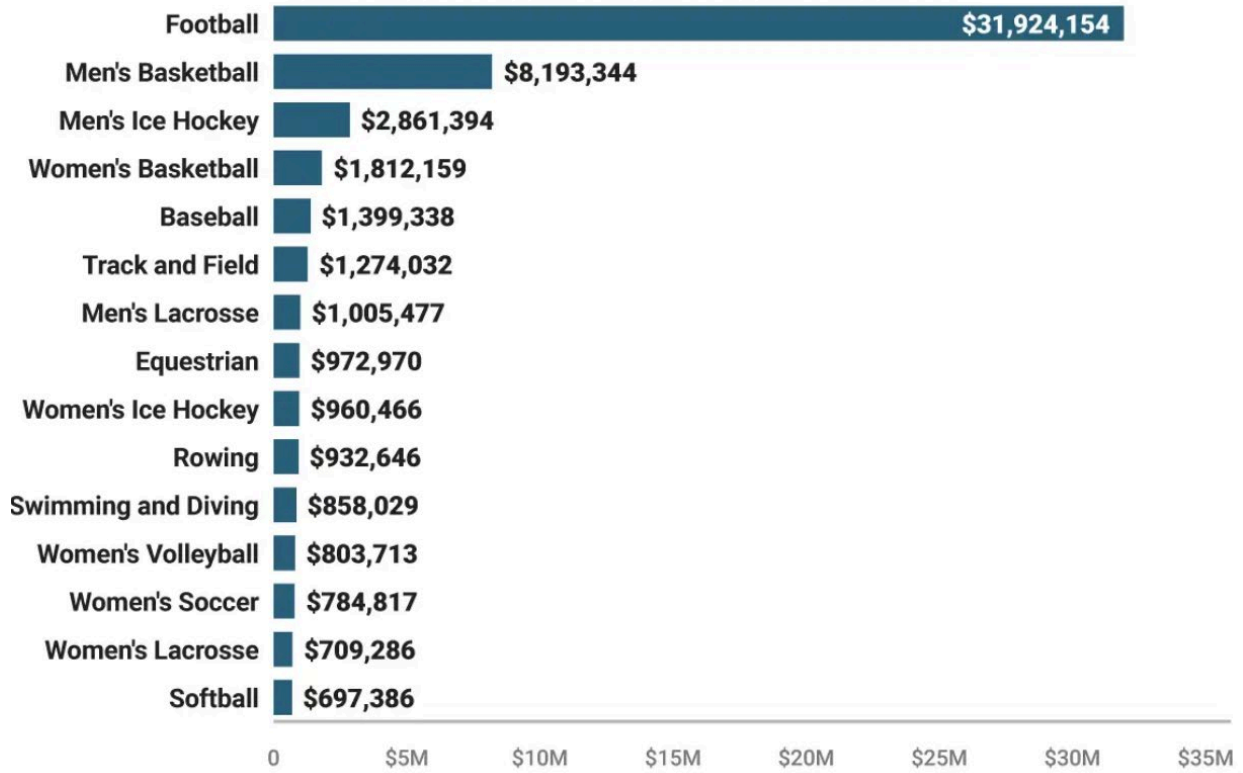
Annual Recruiting Spending per NCAA D-I Conference



Note: The NCAA SEC referred to their recruiting as just being different which is evident in the amount spent in recruiting. Referenced from (Wittry, 2020).

Appendix L: Figure 2

Average Revenue Generated per NCAA Athletic Discipline



Note: NCAA collegiate sports and their respective average amount of revenue earned per year. List is not comprehensive of all NCAA sports. Referenced from (Gaines & Nudelman, 2017, para. 3).

Appendix L: Figure 3

Early 1900s football



Note: Football championship game played on a hockey rink, in 1932. (Photo from Shuck, 2021, Odd & original football rules that are no longer used)

[<https://www.dawgsbynature.com/2021/6/8/22460859/odd-original-football-rules-that-are-no-longer-used>].

Appendix M: Figure 4

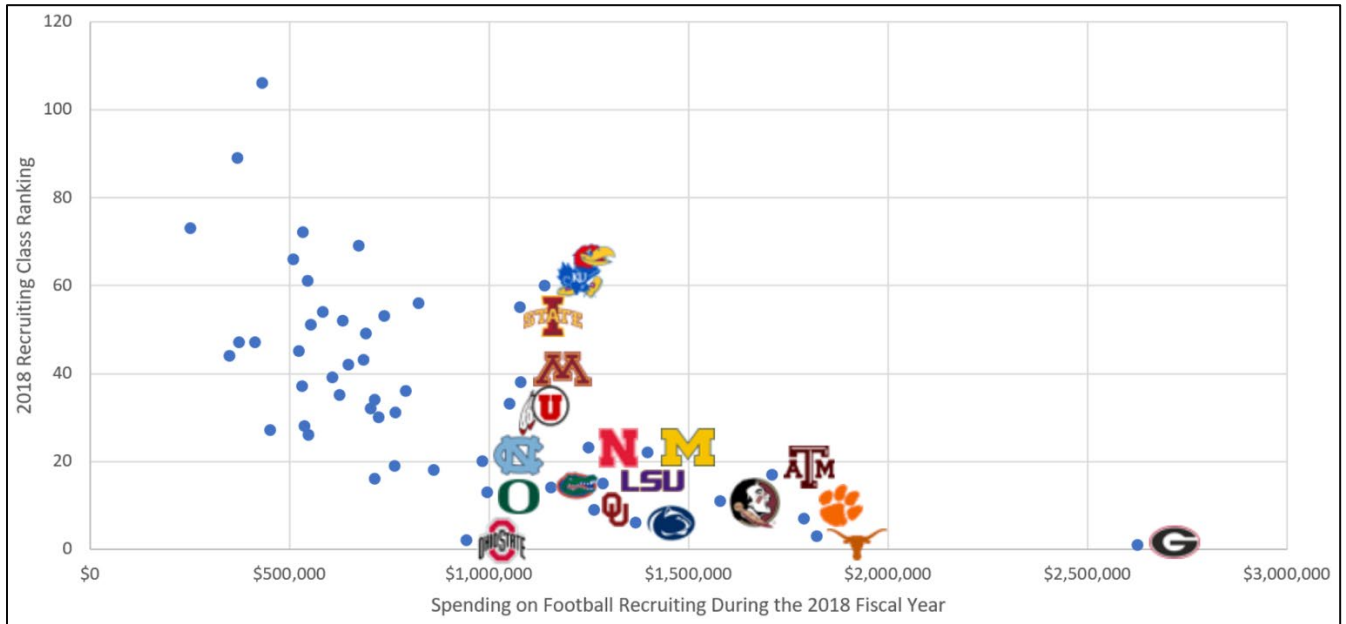
2019 Estimated Probability of Competing in College Athletics

	High School Participants	NCAA Participants	Overall % HS to NCAA	% HS to NCAA Division I	% HS to NCAA Division II	% HS to NCAA Division III
Men						
Baseball	487,097	35,460	7.3%	2.2%	2.2%	2.9%
Basketball	551,373	18,816	3.4%	1.0%	1.0%	1.4%
Cross Country	270,095	14,270	5.3%	1.8%	1.4%	2.1%
Football	1,036,842	73,557	7.1%	2.8%	1.8%	2.5%
Golf	144,024	8,609	6.0%	2.0%	1.6%	2.3%
Ice Hockey	35,060	4,229	12.1%	4.8%	0.6%	6.6%
Lacrosse	113,313	14,310	12.6%	3.0%	2.4%	7.2%
Soccer	456,362	25,072	5.5%	1.3%	1.5%	2.7%
Swimming	138,935	9,697	7.0%	2.7%	1.1%	3.2%
Tennis	158,151	7,838	5.0%	1.6%	1.0%	2.3%
Track & Field	600,097	28,698	4.8%	1.9%	1.2%	1.7%
Volleyball	60,976	2,163	3.5%	0.7%	0.6%	2.2%
Water Polo	22,501	1,047	4.7%	2.7%	0.8%	1.2%
Wrestling	245,564	7,239	2.9%	1.0%	0.8%	1.2%

Note: Various high school sports along with percentages of likelihood competing athletically in each NCAA competition area i.e., Division 2, Division 3. Referenced from (NCAA, 2020a).

Appendix N: Figure 5

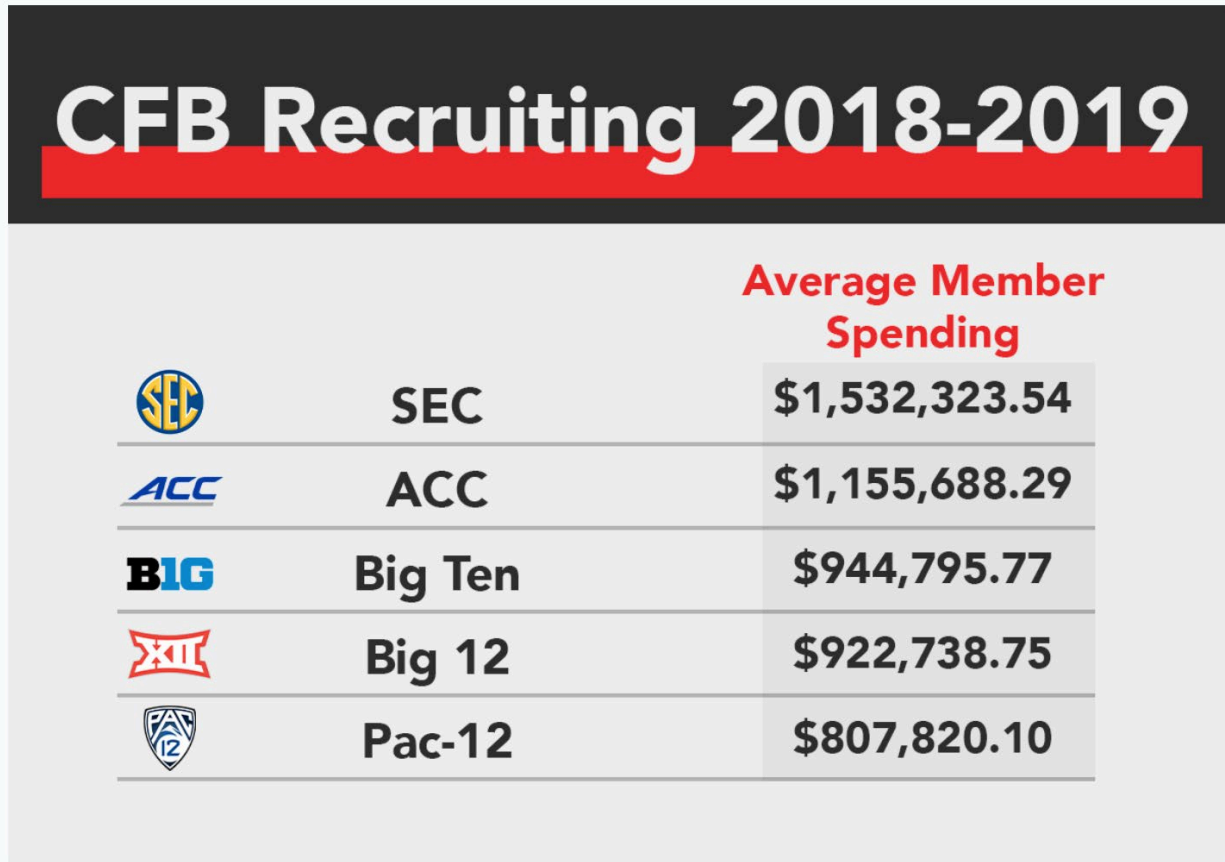
Correlation between football recruiting and the recruiting class ranking.



Note. 2018 NCAA FBS football schools spending at least \$1 million on recruiting and their recruiting class ranking. Not a comprehensive list. Referenced from Wittry, 2019.

Appendix O: Figure 6

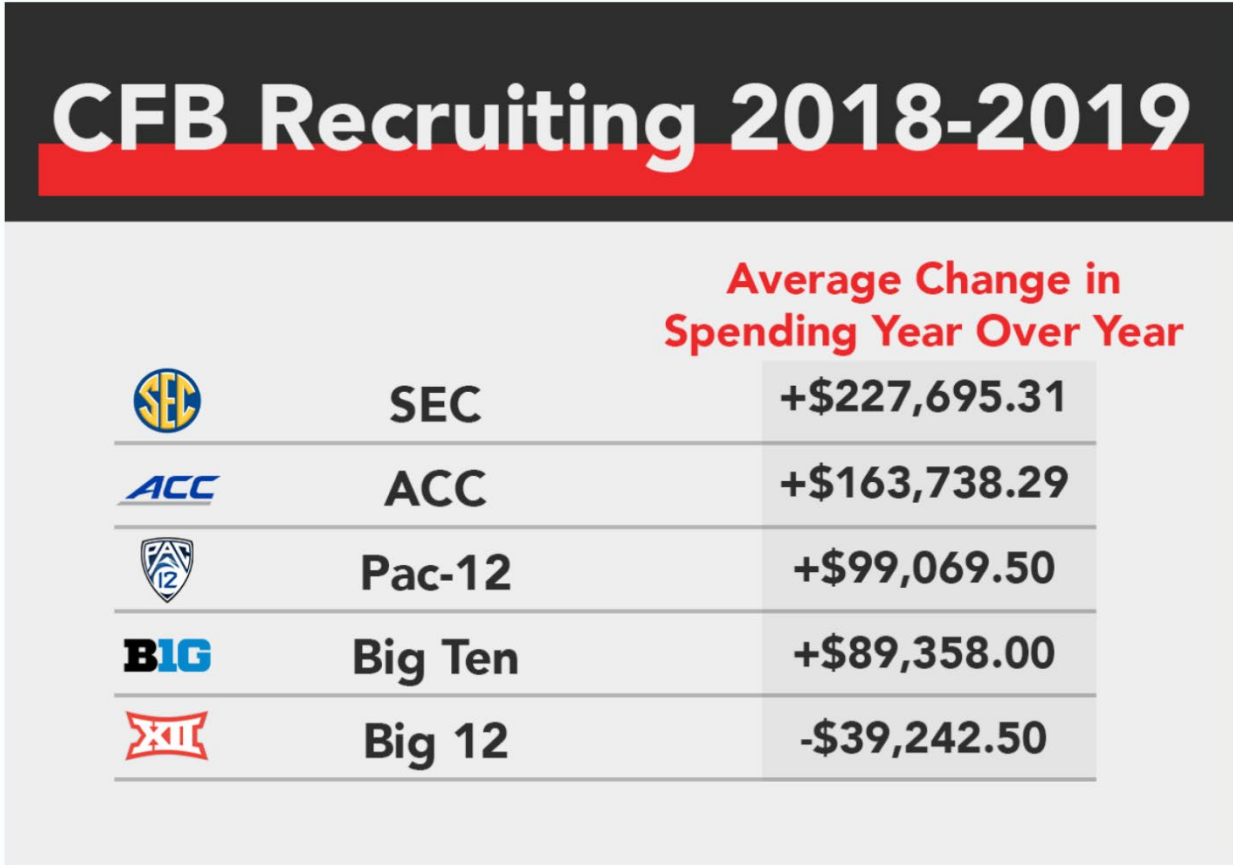
Average Spent on Recruiting for only public schools in each NCAA D-I Conference



Note: Not every school within an NCAA conference is public. For instance, schools such as Stanford University and University of Southern California are private tuition schools. Private universities set their own guidelines and tuition rates and are privately funded. Referenced from (Wittry, 2020).

Appendix P: Figure 7

Increased spending on recruiting per NCAA D1 conference



Note: Not only are schools in the NCAA D1 Southeastern Conference (SEC) spending more on recruiting than others, but they are also increasing their recruiting budgets more, year over year. Referenced from (Wittry, 2020).

Appendix Q: Figure 8

Average Recruit Rankings (1-5 Stars) per NCAA DI Conference

Average Recruit Quality by Conference								
	Whole Sample	Big 10	Big 12	ACC	Pac 10	SEC	Big East	Non-BCS
Five Star	0.2984	0.3415	0.448	0.5191	0.5964	0.963	0.1463	0.3061
Four Star	2.7684	3.9837	4.736	4.5649	4.921	7.1555	2.159	0.4064
Three Star	8.1108	10.5935	12.472	10.7862	11.4561	11.4741	10.4756	4.318
Two Star	11.1777	6.8455	5.968	6.0458	5.4649	4.9926	10.3292	16.9455
One Star	0.0484	0.0162	0.024	0	0.701	0.0962	0.0609	0.0544
Average Star	2.6116	2.89	2.9759	2.9521	3.0142	3.156	2.633	2.199

Note: Documenting the amount of quality recruits rated 1-5 Stars with 5 Stars being the highest quality caliber of football student athlete, is displayed per conference. Referenced from (Bergman and Logan, 2021).

Appendix R: Figure 9

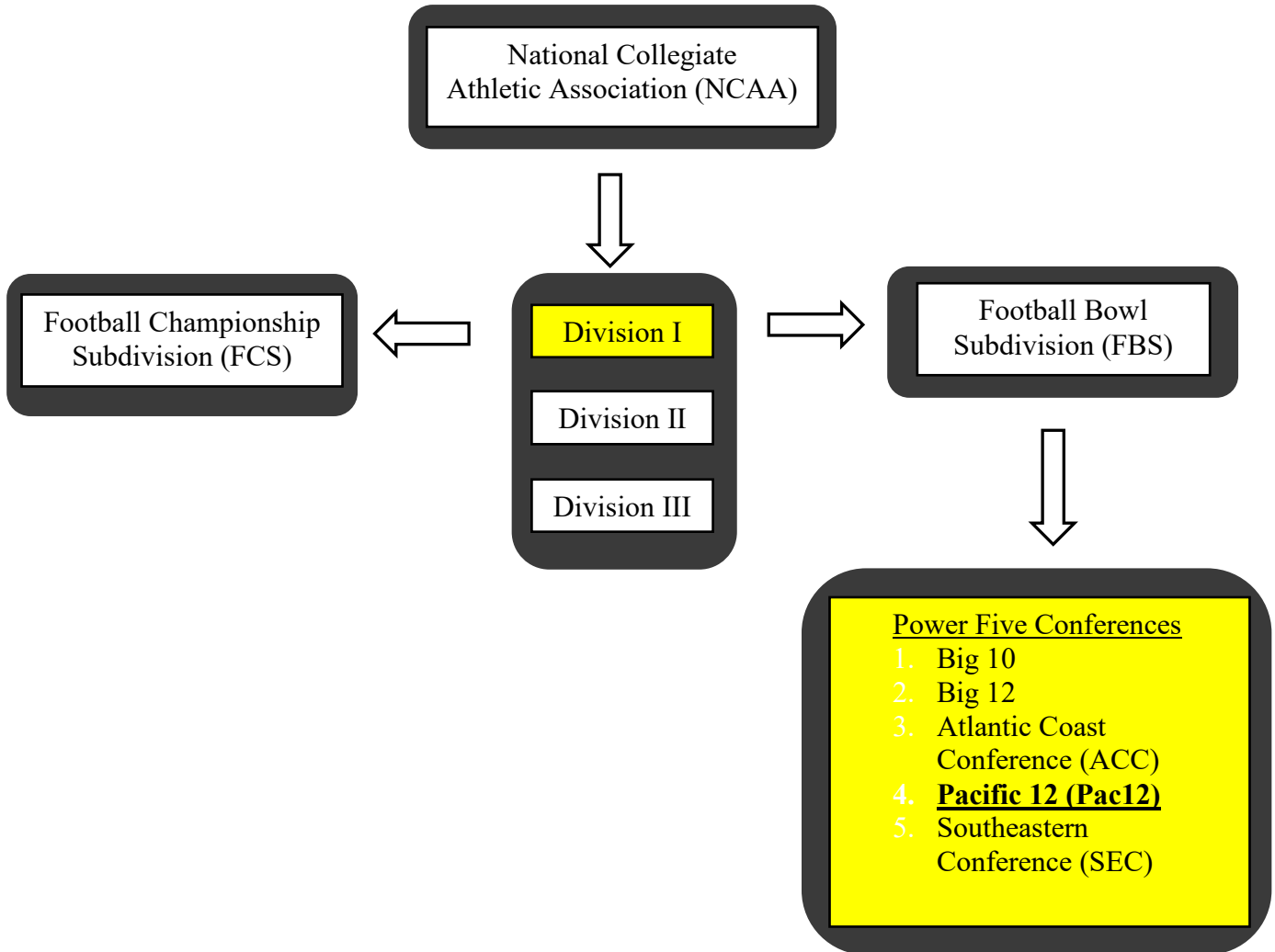
Top rated college football prospective student athletes



Note: The projected revenue brought in per player to a college program, based on their athletic Star quality during recruitment. Rankings for athletic players are based on a 1-5 Star scale. All players have transitioned to the National Football League (NFL) after their collegiate careers. Referenced from (Bergman and Logan, 2021).

Appendix S: Figure 10

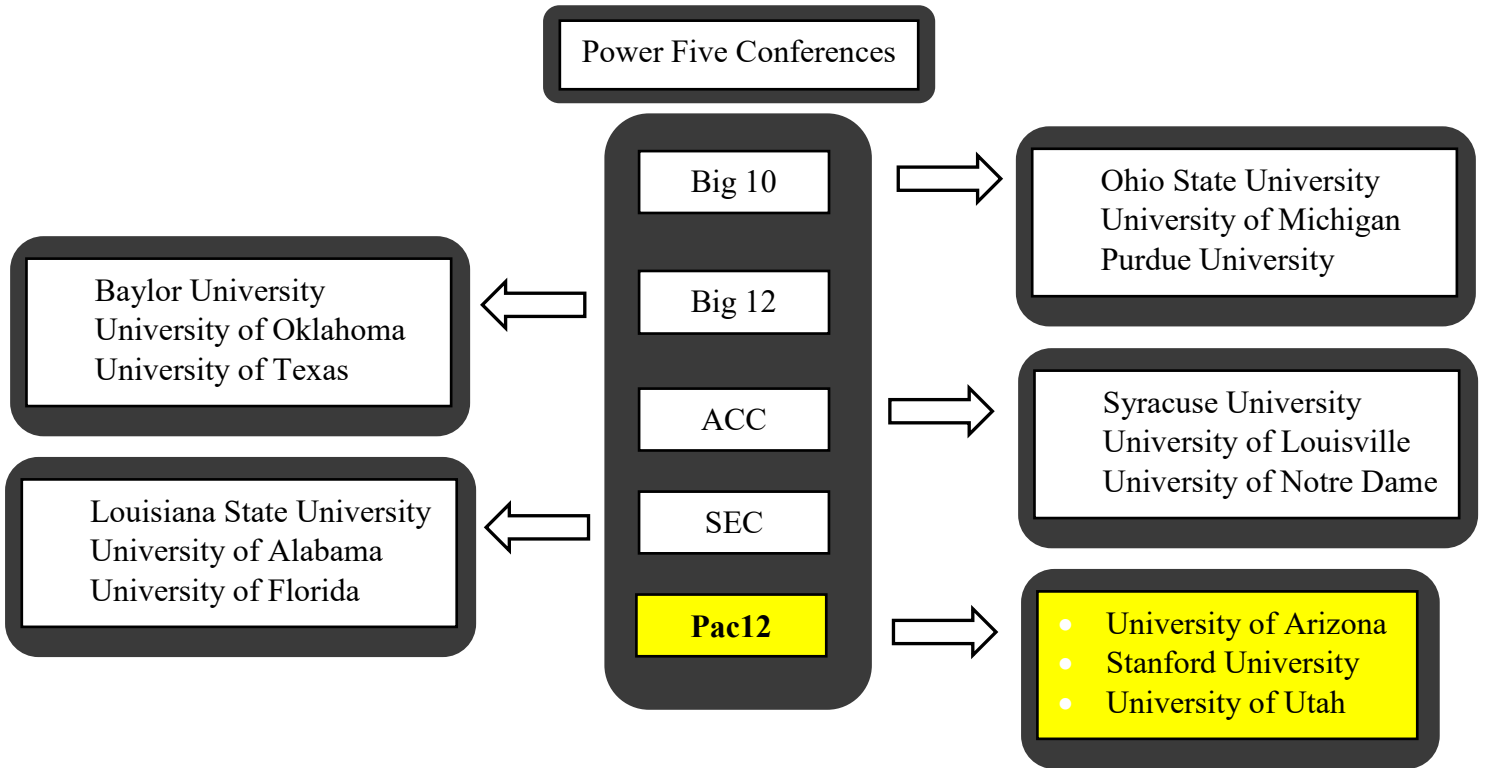
NCAA competition levels, divisions, and conferences.



Note. The NCAA dissected into its’ main divisions of athletic competition. Only Division I FBS is further detailed because it contains the study school, a Pac12 university. Referenced from NCAA, 2021.

Appendix T: Figure 11

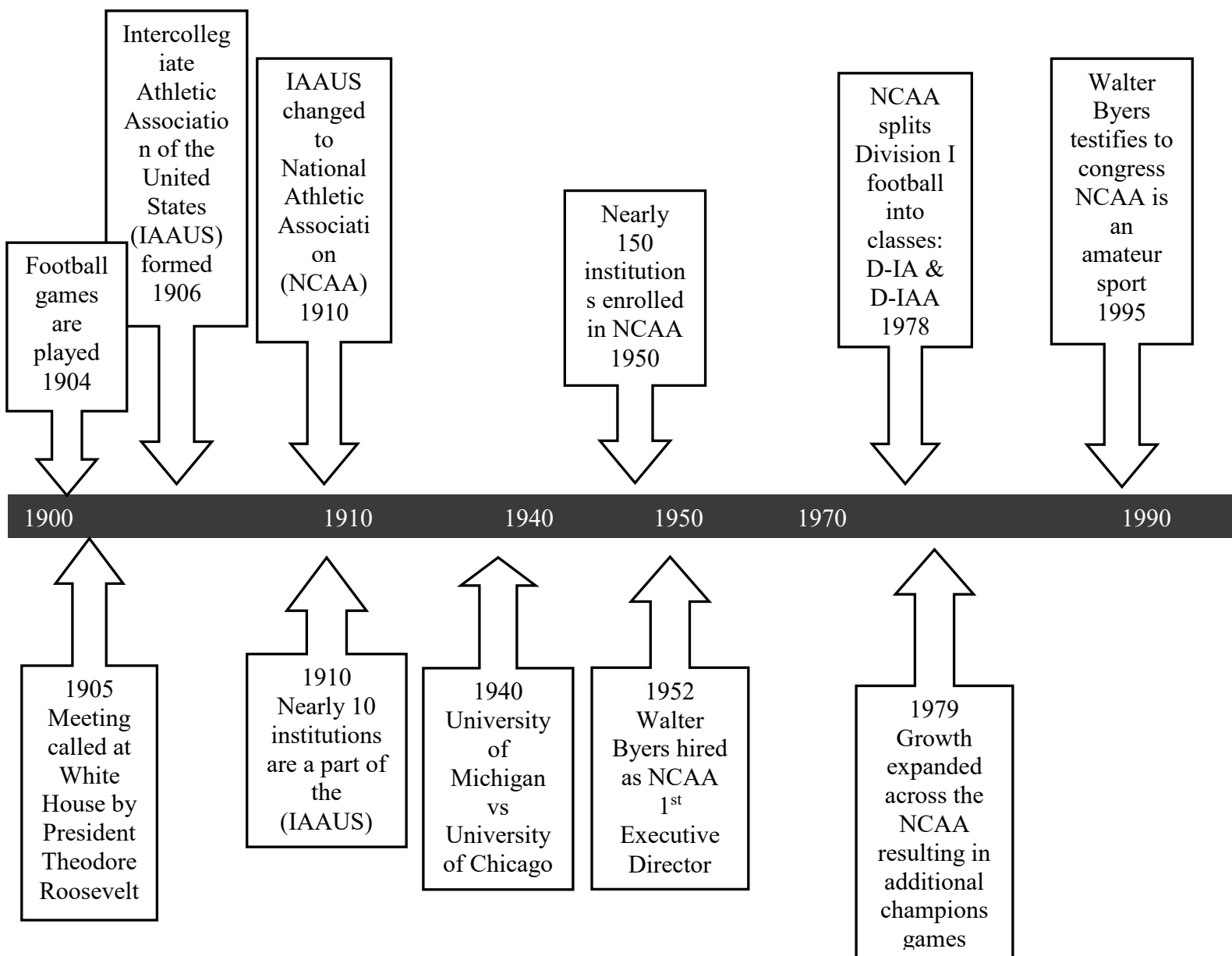
NCAA Power Five Conferences and notable schools.



Note. Like Figure 5, a dissection of the Power Five conferences is depicted. These are the five most athletic and revenue-generating conferences, with a few examples of university names from each college, that may be household names. Not a comprehensive list of schools or NCAA conferences. Referenced from NCAA, 2021.

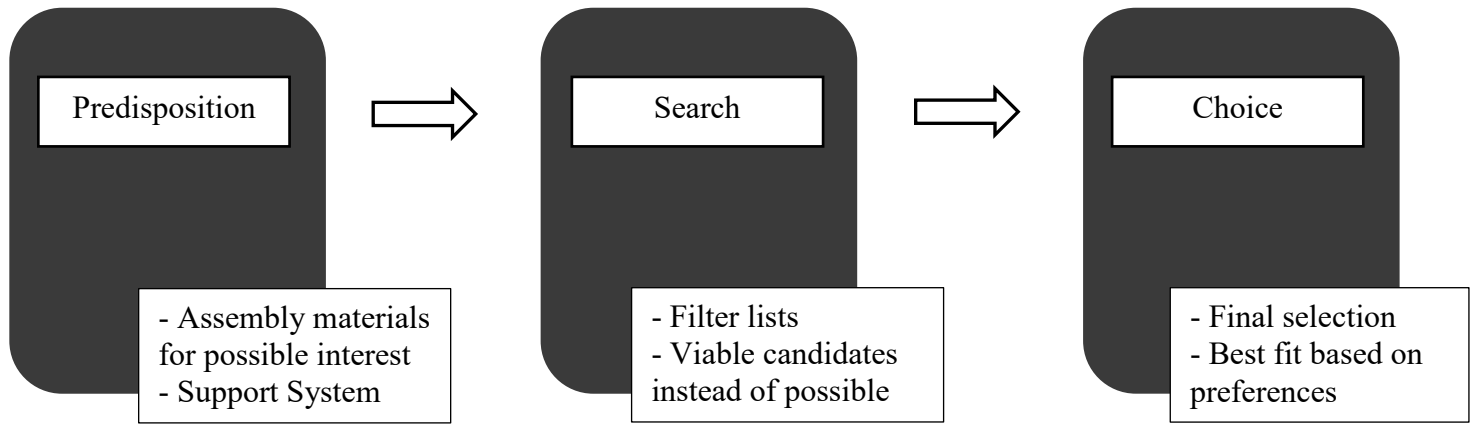
Appendix U: Figure 12

1900-1990s NCAA milestones since inception.



Appendix V: Figure 13

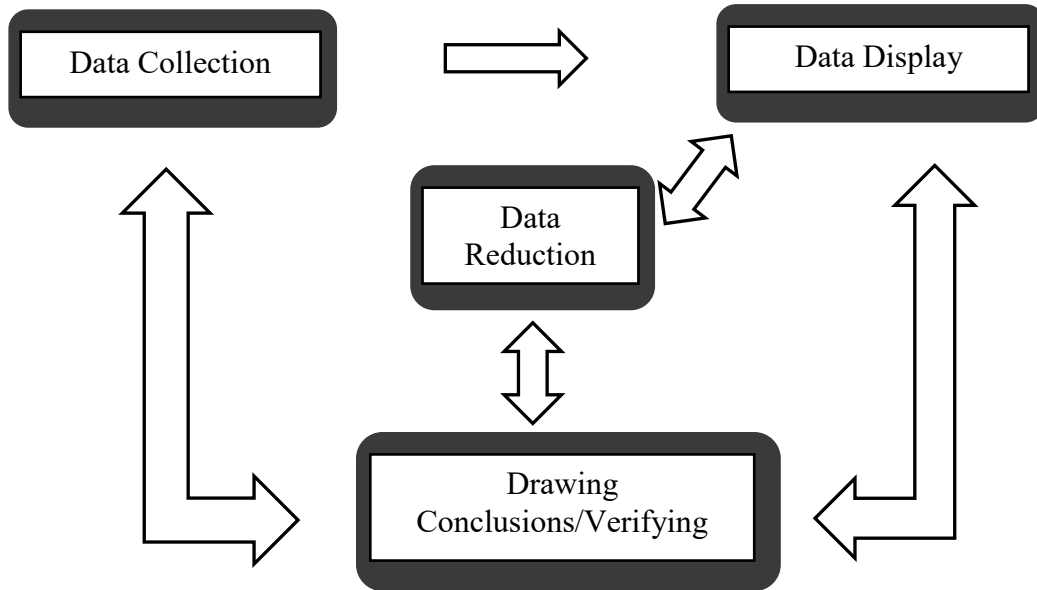
Hossler and Gallagher (1987) Three-Phase College Choice Model as a Theoretical Framework.



Note. The three phases students matriculate through during college selection.

Appendix W: Figure 14

Data analysis lifecycle.



Note. The data analysis process as described by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 174).