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A Historical Document Analysis Comparing High School Academic Eligibility Standards To NCAA Academic Standards In 2014

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A HISTORICAL DOCUMENT ANALYSIS COMPARING HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS TO NCAA ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN 2014

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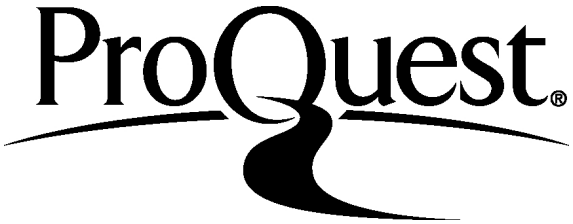

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ABSTRACT

The challenges faced by student–athletes are a growing concern in today's society. Beyond heightened academic requirements, student–athletes face a multitude of tasks including weight training, practice, film review, and travel for competition. This makes the student life very complex. Jolly (2008) indicated that as student–athletes progress through their educational experience, they experience higher structured time demands in regard to their sport participation, this being very true for college freshman. Venezia and Jaeger (2013) noted that "many studies over the past ten years have documented the disconnect between what high school teachers teach and what postsecondary instructors expect with regard to students' preparation for first-year credit-bearing courses in college"(p.119).

As a result, to assist all students, states have adopted the Common Core (Common Core State Standard Initative, 2010) in attempt to level the educational field, prepare students for college rigor and their chosen career field. Meanwhile, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has also increased its initial eligibility rules to insure its incoming student–athletes are ready for college rigor and athletic participation (NCAA, 2014). However, the State and NCAA academic requirements are different. As a result, this leaves the student–athlete potentially unprepared for the academic rigors and challenges that lie ahead in college.

This study looked at all 50 state academic requirements compared to the 2014 NCAA initial eligibility standards. The results of this study indicate the specific qualitative differences in the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements. Based on the differences that

were illuminated, recommendations were provided indicating how interscholastic policy makers can adjust their academic requirements to bring them into better alignment with the intercollegiate level. Future research will allow for the understanding of how the state- level academic requirements affect student–athlete preparation for the Division I level.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The challenges faced by student–athletes are a growing concern in today's society. Beyond heightened academic requirements, student–athletes face a multitude of tasks including weight training, practice, film, and travel for competition. This makes the student's life very complex. According to Watt and Moore (2003), student–athletes are constantly balancing their academic and athletic roles to satisfy their obligations to parents, guardians, coaches, and teammates. Further, Jolly (2008) indicated that as student–athletes progress through their educational experience, they also experience higher structured time demands in regard to their sport participation, this being very true for college freshman.

As a result, to assist all students, states have adopted the Common Core in an attempt to level the educational field, to prepare students for college rigor, and to prepare them for their chosen career field (Common Core State Standard Initative, 2010). Meanwhile, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has also increased its initial eligibility rules to insure its incoming student–athletes are ready for college-level academic rigor and athletic participation (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). However, the state and NCAA academic requirements are different. The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (2009) noted that there are many student–athletes admitted into universities who do not show promising academic skills. These student–athletes are frequently brought in for their athletic talent rather than academic abilities. As a

result, because they are fully immersed into their sport once entering college, they experience chronic classroom and academic failures.

Statement of the Problem

The states and NCAA have both acknowledged this lack of preparedness among entering college students and as a result have increased their requirements (Dickman & Lammel, 2000). However, they have not changed their academic requirements at the same rate. As a result, this leaves the student–athlete potentially unprepared for the academic rigors and challenges that lie ahead in college.

Venezia and Jaeger (2013) noted that "many studies over the past ten years have documented the disconnect between what high school teachers teach and what postsecondary instructors expect with regard to students' preparation for first-year credit-bearing courses in college" (p. 119). Therefore, the Common Core was developed to assist high school students in preparing for their future careers and to help prepare students for college rigor (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015). At the time of this study 43 states in the United States had adopted the Common Core as their curriculum standard (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015; Stewart, 2012; Ujifusa, 2014). Yet, even with the additional academic standards placed on high schools with the Common Core, the interscholastic-level athletic eligibility and graduation requirements still may not meet the initial eligibility requirements deemed necessary by the NCAA for success in college. Even so, student–athletes who wish to continue their athletic careers into the college arena are required to meet rigorous incoming NCAA requirements. Student–athletes wishing to participate at the Division I level are held to requirements in English, mathematics, and social science; must earn a minimum grade-point average; and must earn a combined SAT or ACT sum score that matches the core course grade-point average and test-

score sliding scale (NCAA, 2015a). Moreover, although the Common Core assists in the completion with rigor of some required courses deemed necessary by the NCAA, it does not mandate a GPA requirement. Currently there are only five states that have a GPA requirement for athletic participation at the interscholastic level. Furthermore, Allison, Whitted, and Sawyer (2007) demonstrated that administrators, parents, coaches, and booster clubs have had a stronger influence on interscholastic policy makers than what research or even the motivation to better prepare students for college or career reflects. This means that those student–athletes that wish to move into the college arena are potentially not meeting the incoming NCAA academic requirements and left unprepared for the rigor of college academics. Therefore, this study sought to determine whether or not an academic preparation gap exists between the interscholastic level and the NCAA, Division I for student–athletes, and if so, the parameters of that gap.

Conceptual Framework

In response to the No Child Left Behind Act, the standards known as the Common Core were developed to standardize education across the United States (Stewart, 2012). The Common Core is meant to prepare students for college rigor and their chosen career field. These standards are meant to level out the educational field to insure that regardless of geographical area, all students are encountering the same domains of knowledge and developing targeted skills (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015). The Common Core mandates curriculum requirements for English, Language Arts, and Mathematics (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015). At this point in time, 43 of the 50 states had adopted the Common Core curriculum excluding Alaska, Texas, Hawaii, Virginia, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Indiana (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015; Stewart, 2012; Ujifusa, 2014).

Likewise, the NCAA has developed its own academic requirements to insure its student–athletes are prepared for college rigor in addition to their athletic participation. According to Hosick and Sproull (2012), the NCAA found that high school grades from core courses are better academic success predictors than scores from standardized tests. Next the NCAA found that the GPA from core courses in addition to test scores is a better success predictor than either alone (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). Last the NCAA found that the GPA earned from core courses is a better success predictor than an overall cumulative GPA (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). It was this information that was used to develop the initial NCAA eligibility requirements. These findings provided the underpinnings for the current NCAA, Division I initial eligibility requirements for student–athletes. The initial eligibility requirements include the completion of 16 core-course requirement in eight semesters consisting of four years of English, three years of mathematics, two years of natural or physical science, one extra year of English, mathematics or natural or physical science, two years of social science, four years of extra core courses, earn a minimum required grade-point average in core courses, and earn a combined SAT or ACT sum score that matches the core course grade-point average and test-score sliding scale (NCAA, 2015c).

Purpose and Significance of Study

Due to the differences in interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements an academic preparation gap potentially exists for student–athletes progressing from high school to college. Although states do mandate educational requirements for interscholastic athletic participation eligibility and graduation that are undergirded by state or federal-level content and cognitive-skill standards, specific alignments with the initial eligibility standards required by the NCAA are unclear. To understand alignments and clarify parameters of potential preparation gaps this study analyzed the current state academic requirements for student–athletes in

comparison to initial eligibility requirements set by the NCAA for the Division I level to show whether or not there is truly an academic preparation gap.

It is expected that this study will assist state policymakers in the evaluation of their current academic eligibility requirements. In addition, the study will assist state interscholastic policymakers on what adjustments can be made to insure their academic eligibility requirements are properly preparing their student–athletes for high school graduation, college rigor, and career readiness regardless of whether the athlete progresses to Division I athletics.

Research Questions

The following question was used to guide this study:

Is there a qualitative difference between interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements?

1. If there is a difference, what criteria define the difference?
2. If there is a difference, what specific changes would bring the differences into alignment to best prepare the athlete for the rigors of academics and athletics?

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the following:

1. The official websites utilized for gathering information may not have been current.
2. The official websites utilized for gathering information may not have been correct.
3. High schools have the right to increase the academic standards above the state governing body standard; however, that level of detail was beyond the parameters of this study.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to:

1. The examination of NCAA Division I academic requirements. It did not examine the academic regulations of Division II, Division III, junior colleges, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletic institutions, or National Christian College Athletic Association institutions.
2. The state high school interscholastic academic requirements are minimal requirements each state must follow. Individual high schools may or may not implement further academic requirements. This study was focused around the academic requirements placed only at the state level.
3. This study focused on the completion number of Carnegie units. This study did not look at the specific courses that fulfilled Carnegie units. When evaluating each state requirement the standard had to clearly state the student–athlete must complete a minimum of two Carnegie units each semester or complete four Carnegie units each academic year. Additionally, the academic requirement had to explicitly state that the Carnegie units had to be completed in the preceding semester/year in order to be eligible for play. This insures that the student–athlete has completed the required number of courses and did not just show to be passing during the time of play. While many state requirements mentioned a Carnegie unit requirement during time of play, this does not guarantee that the student–athlete passed the courses at the end of the semester/year making progress towards graduation.
4. Many states determined the type(s) of courses that needed to be passed within the four Carnegie units. For example, Massachusetts states that student–athletes have to

be enrolled in English during time of play to be eligible. However, this study only focused on the number of Carnegie units required for eligibility.

5. Other forms of schooling such as home schooling and hybrid academic requirements were not a component of this study. Only traditional schooling academic requirements were analyzed.
6. This study focused only on the presence of a GPA requirement. This study did not look at the specific GPA number minimum. When evaluating each state requirement the standard had to clearly state a specific GPA that needed to be reached in order to be eligible to play. While there were a few state requirements that mentioned a percentage minimum that courses had to be completed, that did not constitute as a GPA minimum.

Key Term Definitions

Carnegie unit. A Carnegie unit is defined as 120 hours spent within the classroom with an instructor. The breaks down to one hour of instruction a day, five days a week, 24 weeks a year. Most public schools require 18 to 24 credits for a student to graduate high school. Each of these credits is the equivalent to one Carnegie unit (Glossary of Educational Reform, 2013).

NCAA sliding scale. Within the NCAA initial eligibility standards one of the requirements includes meeting the NCAA sliding scale consisting of the minimum GPA and ACT/SAT scores a student must have to be eligible. A higher GPA allows a student to remain eligible with lower test scores within certain limits and vice versa. Limits include a minimum allowable GPA of 2.0, a minimum composite ACT score of 37, and a minimum SAT score of 400 (NCAA, 2014).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a growing concern regarding student preparedness at the interscholastic level for those students preparing to transition on to college. High school success is vital in the sense that it develops the gateway to college admissions. Currently there are growing concerns surrounding graduation rates and overall academic success. As a result, there have been strides regarding minimum academic requirements for student's at all academic levels. Crom, Warren, Clark, Marolla, and Gerber (2008) noted that the best way to approach these concerns is by examining individual subgroups rather than the general population as a whole. One of the subgroups that falls under high scrutiny when it comes to academic success is student–athletes (Crom et al., 2008). For student–athletes, proper high school preparedness, and success is a large part in not only determining their college preparedness but also their initial eligibility for athletic participation (Allison et al., 2007, p. 9). Student–athletes spend their time practicing a balancing act between their academic and athletic commitments (Watt & Moore, 2003). Therefore, this population faces increased concerns when it comes to academic success.

While the majority of interscholastic institutions have set some level of academic standard for student–athletes in order for them to participate in athletics and/or other co-curricular activities, there is not a one-to-one match between academic standards from the interscholastic level to intercollegiate level (Allison et al., 2007, p. 10). Both interscholastic and

intercollegiate governing bodies have increased their requirements to reflect the need to increase success rates among students (Allison et al., 2007, pp. 9-10). However, these requirements have increased at a higher rate at the intercollegiate level than the interscholastic level. Allison et al. (2007) noted that interscholastic administrators, coaches, and parents fear that increased academic requirements will lead to large-scale declines in athletic participation. Meanwhile, individuals at the intercollegiate level are noting declining graduation rates and increasing dropout rates; these declining rates have prompted intense academic reform for the past several years (Crom et all., 2008). As a result, the academic requirements are very disproportionate from high school to college, and therefore, a cause for concern regarding the academic preparation given to the student–athletes transitioning from one level to the next.

This literature review examines information about the governing bodies that determine the academic requirements for interscholastic and intercollegiate athletics. It includes the history of academic reform and covers the key turning points that have taken place in academic requirements since 1995. This review reveals the development of academic requirements over the past decade leading to the establishment of the current academic standards. Hence, the current academic standards will provide the conceptual framework for this study. In addition, Lewin's (2010) change theory will provide the theoretical framework revealing the factors that have hindered academic reform.

Interscholastic Athletics

National Federation of State High School Associations

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA) was established in 1920 and currently resides in Indianapolis, Indiana (NFSHSA, 2014a). The NFSHSA is charged with oversight of all high school athletics and activities within the 50 United States and

the District of Columbia (NFSHSA, 2014a). The NFSHSA organization provides the playing rules for a total of 16 men's and women's sports and fine art programs (NFSHSA, 2014a). The NFSHSA provides the minimum playing standards that each state must follow (NFSHSA, 2014a). If the state associations elect, they can add more stringent standards; however, they must follow the NFSHSA requirements at the minimum (NFSHSA, 2014a). Currently, in regard to academic requirements, the NFSHSA requires the following academic standards as a minimum for athletic participation:

> A student–athlete is required to do passing work [composite score of 70%] in the equivalent of at least 20 periods (four subjects with full credit toward graduation) per week. Failure to earn passing marks in four full credit subjects during a credit grading period or the equivalent shall render a student–athlete ineligible for the following grading period. The record at the end of the credit grading period shall be final and scholastic deficiencies may not be removed for the purpose of meeting minimum eligibility requirements, but they may be made up during an intervening credit grading period if approved by school's state associations (NFSHSA, 2014b, para.1).

Therefore, each student–athlete must pass the equivalent of four courses in the previous grading period or they are deemed ineligible for participation the following grading period. This is the minimum that all states must require of its student-athletes. However, if the individual states or schools elect to add additional participation requirements they have the ability to do so.

State Associations

As noted, all 50 United States and the District of Columbia reside under the oversight of the NFSHSA. The NFSHSA develops and determines sport rules and guidelines for those within its membership (NFSHSA, 2014a). As stated in the NFSHSA's eligibility rules, each state has its

own athletic/activities governing body that determines if more rigorous academic requirements should be enacted for athletic participation (NFSHSA, 2014a). These requirements may include a minimum GPA, enrollment, credit hours completed, and so forth. As a result, every state does not have the same academic requirements for its student–athletes. Thus, the states lack consistency when it comes to academic requirements. For example, the Vermont Principal Association leaves additional academic requirements up to the individual schools within its state while the Georgia High School Association (2014) requires its athletes to "pass classes [with at least a 70%] that carry at least 2.5 Units counting toward graduation the semester immediately preceding participation" (para.1.5). In turn, the difference in requirements can result in different academic expectations for student–athletes from one state to the next. Sequentially, this may cause student–athletes to develop differences in self-awareness when it comes to their academic performance.

Common Core

One of the defining components of academic curricula is the Common Core. The Common Core was developed in 2009 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2013). The CCSSO and NGA have illustrated that the Common Core Standards were developed solely from research that revealed the essential skills students need to master for their future careers and to succeed in meeting rigorous college requirements (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015). Academic standards before 2009 determined what content should be taught in the classroom, however, there was little to assist teachers in determining the cognitive skill benchmarks students should be reaching by the end of each year. This situation created not only a knowledge imbalance for students within a single school but a dramatic difference between

students in different states and countries (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015). Therefore, the Common Core was developed to level the educational field, assist high school students in preparing for their future careers, and to help prepare students for the academic rigors of college (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015).

The Common Core Standards were developed to not only level the education field in the United States but also make it comparable at the international level (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015). Therefore, regardless of what country, state, or school a student is placed in, the student should be achieving the same academic expectations as his peers around the world. To make sure these expectations are being maintained, the CCSSO and NGA ensure that the standards reflect any worldwide changes by further building on its foundations and drawing upon opinions from other entities. These opinions are solicited from "state departments of education, scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, educators from kindergarten to college, and parents, students, and other members of the public" (Common Core State Standard Initative, 2010, p. 3). The Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010) posits that the standards are always a "living work" (p. 3). Therefore, as new research emerges the standards will continue to reflect these changes (Common Core State Standards Initative, 2010).

According to the standards for learning languages within the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2012) the Common Core requirements are focused on the "English Language Arts [ELA] and Mathematics that need to be effectively taught and learned for students to be ready to succeed academically in credit-bearing, college-entry courses and in workforce training programs" (p. 1). It should be noted that the ELA area extends into the subjects of history/social studies, sciences, foreign language, and technical subjects as well (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2013). The ELA standards are developed around the

coverage of four areas: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and languages with the determined goal that these four strands will teach students effective communication skills (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012). The Common Core provides not only the standards for the material that should be covered but also the cognitive proficiency level that should be demonstrated by each student as he or she progresses through each school year. These three proficiency levels are defined as: Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012). Therefore, as students acquire more schooling they should be progressing through the proficiency levels (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012).

In addition, the Common Core and K-12 standards define the benchmarks for student achievement for each academic year and readiness levels upon completing high school. However, it should be noted that, it does not define how a teacher has to administer the material to students. The "standards do not mandate such things as a particular writing process or the full range of metacognitive strategies . . . needed] to monitor and direct . . . thinking and learning" (Common Core State Standard Initative, 2010, p. 4). Thus, teachers can use their expertise to decide what materials and knowledge can be used to meet the standards (Common Core State Standard Initative, 2010).

Moreover, the Common Core Standards (2010) state that upon graduation a student is college and career ready if they can demonstrate they are independent; can build strong content knowledge; respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline; can comprehend as well as critique; value evidence; use technology and digital media strategically; and understand other perspectives of culture (p. 7). However, the Common Core Standards (2010) also note that these are the minimum knowledge and skills with which students should be

graduating. Language in the standards does not assert that additional knowledge and lessons cannot be taught (Common Core State Standard Initative, 2010). It also does not define how to implement and use intervention methods for those students that are low performing or have special needs. It is up to the school and its administration to determine the methods and resources that need to be used for these special circumstances (Common Core State Standard Initative, 2010). However, it is expected that upon high school graduation students should have acquired the knowledge and skills to be a literate and versatile persons of the 21st century (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012).

Standard High School Graduation Requirements

The Education Commission of States provides information on the graduation requirements set by each state in the United States (Zinth, 2013). Each state shows minimum graduation requirements in English, mathematics, social studies, science, PE/health, art, foreign language, and electives (Zinth, 2013). It is shown that the states with the Common Core Standards tend to have higher graduation requirements in the following five subject areas: English, mathematics, social studies, science, and foreign language (Zinth, 2013). Common Core driven states generally require students to complete more classes in these five areas in order to graduate (Zinth, 2013).

However, there are currently no states that require a minimum GPA for graduation (Zinth, 2013). In addition, there are no minimum Carnegie unit requirements for each subject area (Zinth, 2013). Therefore, each state is different in their graduation requirements. As an example, Alabama requires students to complete four Carnegie units in mathematics while Connecticut requires three Carnegie units, and California only requires two Carnegie units (Zinth, 2013). These types of differences can be shown across all states in each subject area

(Zinth, 2013). Thus, there is a notable difference in academic requirements and expectations across the states. Although there is curriculum rigor expectations, such as those expressed by Common Core standards, there are no blanket course requirements or graduation requirements for all of the states in the United States. Therefore, students are engaged in curricula with differing time parameters for each subject; thus, are still receiving very different academic experiences from one state to the next.

Intercollegiate Athletics: National Collegiate Athletic Association

The NCAA, established in 1906, is a "membership-driven organization dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of student–athletes and equipping them with the skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life" (NCAA, 2015b, para.1). The NCAA works in conjunction with its membership including colleges, universities, conferences, and affiliation groups to develop the rules surrounding its student–athletes. From the time of its establishment, the NCAA has developed rigorous rules and regulations to assist in controlling sports and creating a fair competition field (NCAA, 2015b).

In 1973 the NCAA officially divided its membership into three divisions to distinguish between larger and smaller institutions and competition levels (NCAA, 2015b). However, after a time the NCAA and its membership took issue with the original NCAA one size fits all rulings within the divisions (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). Therefore, in 1997 the NCAA decided that each individual division could begin developing its own governing rules (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). As a result of this division, student–athletes encounter different experiences depending on their division. For example,

> Division I student athletes might have fewer opportunities to be a part of the traditional college experience because of the demands of athletic participation at that level,

> including the high benefits and costs (both immediate and long term) of win-loss records, and of media attention and scrutiny. (Watt & Moore, 2003, p. 12)

Division II and III levels pride themselves in their ability to better integrate their student–athletes in with the general student population and give them a more traditional college experience (Watt & Moore, 2003). Therefore, those student–athletes within Division I are expected to abide by more regulations than those within Division II or III (Watt & Moore, 2003).

As the goals and environments of each division are very different, the rulings and requirements of each division are also accordingly different. Those student–athletes within Division I are required to meet very high initial eligibility and continuing eligibility standards in order to participate (Watt & Moore, 2003). Although Division II and III also have requirements, those are not nearly as stringent as those placed on Division I student–athletes (Watt & Moore, 2003). Therefore, student–athletes have to be aware of these expectations while in high school to meet initial eligibility standards in addition to knowing the continuing eligibility rules once accepted to a college or university.

Division I. Division I consists of colleges that have higher numbers of students, manage bigger budgets, and offer scholarships (NCAA, 2015b). Currently, Division I is composed of approximately 350 colleges that house over 6,000 athletic teams and provide athletic opportunities to over 170,000 students each year (NCAA, 2015b). As noted, Division I institutions are required to follow more stringent regulations than Division II or III. One area that contains a clear distinction is academic requirements. Division I has more stringent incoming and continuing eligibility requirements than its counterparts (NCAA, 2015b). Some of these requirements include initial-eligibility academic standards, progress towards degree, and academic progress rates (NCAA, 2015a).

Through years of organizational research, the NCAA has found specific factors that are better predictors of college success than others (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). These factors were put together to develop what is known as the initial eligibility requirements. Student–athletes must meet these requirements in order to be allowed to fully participate in Division I athletics in their first year of college. The initial eligibility requirements insure that student–athletes have completed the core course requirements in addition to earning the denoted sliding scale GPA and SAT/ACT score. The NCAA 2014/2015, student–athlete eligibility requirements include the following:

1. You must graduate from high school
2. You must complete 16 core courses
3. You must receive a minimum GPA of 2.0 in those core courses.

   Core course requirements include: 4 years of English, 3 years of Math (Algebra 1 or higher), 2 years of Natural or Physical Science, 2 years of Social Science, 1 additional year of English, Math or Science and 4 additional years of previously listed classes, foreign language, or comparative religion/philosophy.
4. You must present a SAT or ACT with a minimum 400 SAT combined (Math and Reading only) or 37 composite score on the ACT (English, Math, Reading and Science Sections)
5. Your core course GPA combined with your SAT/ACT score must meet the minimum requirements as laid out by the NCAA Sliding Scale. (NCAA, 2014)

Based on the initial-eligibility requirements, the NCAA is very particular about the academic experiences and training its student–athletes must have in order for those athletes to show the potential of being academically prepared and successful in Division I athletics (Hosick

& Sproull, 2012). While these initial requirements cannot fully predict which particular athletes will or will not be successful upon entering college, these requirements function as a strong predictor of which student–athletes will be able to handle the academic rigor they will face upon entering college programs at Division I schools (Hosick & Sproull, 2012).

Timeline: NCAA Initial Eligibility Academic Requirements

The NCAA dictates a number of areas surrounding its student-athletes, one of the most crucial areas being academic requirements. The NCAA (2014) academic mission statement clearly states that their academic requirements are there to insure "preparedness of… student–athletes for college work and ensure they make steady progress toward a degree" (p. 1). The NCAA began implementing academic requirements in 1965 when it passed the first academic rule, the 1.6 Rule.

> This rule established a predictive methodology to pre-screen student-athletes' potential for collegiate academic success. If the methodology projected that the student–athlete would earn a 1.6 GPA as freshman in college, he or she would be eligible to participate in athletics. (Blackman, n.d., p. 231)

However, because the NCAA did not accept that the data used for the screening was accurate, the rule was replaced in 1973 with the 2.0 Rule (Blackman, n.d.). This rule simply required prospective student–athletes to graduate high school with at least a 2.0 GPA in order to participate in collegiate athletics (Blackman, n.d.).

Nevertheless, through many cases of nefarious activity including recruiting, academic, and financial aid violations, concern developed amongst the public about the integrity of college athletics and academics (Blackman, n.d.). As a result, the NCAA perceived the need for more stringent academic requirements (Blackman, n.d.). As a result, in 1986 the NCAA passed the

academic requirement called Proposition 48 (Prop 48). This ruling implemented the first minimum high school grade requirement and standardized test scores (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). This rule also required that prospective student–athletes score a minimum of 700 on the SAT or 15 ACT, complete 11 core academic courses in high school, and graduate high school with at least a 2.0 GPA (Blackman, n.d.). However, the ruling proved to be extremely controversial and its actual effect came under strong scrutiny (Blackman, n.d.). Unable to give any solid evidence regarding the effectiveness of Prop 48 and with academic integrity in jeopardy, Hosick and Sproull (2012) noted that the NCAA developed a team to perform the Academic Performance Study (APS) (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). The APS collected data about academic success and predictive factors from 1983 until approximately 1990 (Hosick & Sproull, 2012).

Meanwhile, during this same time period, the Knight Commission comprised of college presidents formed under the leadership of John and James Knight (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2014). This group collectively released a report called *Keeping the Faith with the Student Athlete: A New Model for Intercollegiate Athletics* in 1991 highlighting the need for stronger presidential control over athletics to insure athletic and financial integrity by using a certification process (Blackman, n.d.; Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2014). Within this report the Knight Commission placed a number of recommendations for how to strengthen the standards to control the nefarious activity throughout college athletics. One of the Knight Commission's recommendations proposed that the NCAA study university admission requirements (Black, 1991). The information obtained from the Knights Commission report and the APS study led to the adoption of Proposition 16 (Prop 16) in 1992 (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2009). This academic requirement was used to determine initial academic eligibility by requiring that prospective student–athletes pass

two additional core courses and receive a 2.5 high school GPA. In addition to this, a sliding scale for high school GPA and ACT/SAT scores was used (Blackman, n.d.). Prop 16 essentially set the framework for today's initial eligibility rules by using a combination of factors to determine a student–athlete's potential for being successful at the Division I level. Following, a number of additional academic rulings were passed building upon Prop 16. This included an increase in GPA requirements and the number of completed core courses (Hosick & Sproull, 2012).

Hosick and Sproull (2012) asserted that in order to best predict initial academic success the student–athlete's behavior should be measured closer in time to the period in which a specific academic outcome is desired. In other words, an overall GPA or core course completion used as the student–athlete's entrance criteria cannot truly predict the potential academic ability of an athlete. A cumulative GPA and the completion of core courses show academic behavior from an extended time period rather than their academic abilities at that point in time (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). However, this is the current basis used to determine today's current initial eligibility rules. The current ruling requires student–athletes to complete the designated number of core courses with a minimum 2.0 GPA in those courses, obtain the minimum ACT/SAT score, and meet the sliding scale requirement of core course GPA and ACT/SAT score, in addition to graduating high school (NCAA, 2015a).

Historical View: 1995 Case Study

Before the 1980's each state may or may not have had any type of academic requirement for high school athletic participation (Sawyer, 1995). It was during the 1980's that states encountered numerous academic eligibility standard reforms (Sawyer, 1995). The most prominent change that caused a multitude of state eligibility modifications was Texas's adoption of "No Pass, No Play" in 1984 (Sawyer, 1995, p. 113). The initial "No Pass, No Play" rule

mandated that “no student participate in any extra-curricular activity, for a six-week period, if he or she fails any course during the preceding six-week period, other than the last grading period before the summer break” (Sawyer, 1995, p. 113). This eligibility standard was implemented; the effect of which was to promote more focus on the importance of performing well academically in order to participate in extra-curricular activities (Sawyer, 1995). Athletic participation, to this day, is seen as a privilege and not a right by schools and courts alike (Sawyer, 1995). Court cases such as *Spring Branch I.S.D.vs Stamos* (1985) reiterated that academic eligibility requirements are necessary to further ensure quality education and to improve classroom performance. Therefore, some states followed suit and adopted the same or similar academic requirement as Texas while others left it up to the individual schools (Sawyer, 1995).

In addition, the passing of “No Pass, No Play” sparked interest in the NCAA and the evaluation of intercollegiate academic requirements for athletic participation. In 1984 the NCAA released its first rule manual (Sawyer, 1995). The academic eligibility rule during this time was that student–athletes had to earn a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA to participate. This was a far more rigorous requirement than “No Pass, No Play” as students would have had to maintain a C or better in all classes and not just simply pass the course.

Succeeding the adoption of “No Pass, No Play” the state high school athletic associations began taking action in providing better guidance regarding academics for the school districts in each state (Sawyer, 1995). However, without a blanket requirement placed on the states, this resulted in an array of academic eligibility requirements across the United States. Sawyer (1995) demonstrated the most frequent academic requirements adopted by 1995 that were:

- 12% (6) of states require a minimum GPA
- 24% (12) required a minimum number of enrolled hours at time of play

- 68% (34) required a minimum number of passed hours from previous semester
- 28% (14) required a minimum number of hours to be passed at time of play. (pp. 118-129)

Sawyer's (1995) study demonstrated that the majority of states required their students to pass a specified number of hours in the previous semester, specifically four to five courses, in order to be eligible to participate in athletics. Of those 34 states that required a set number of courses to be passed in the previous semester, only four of them also had a minimum GPA requirement (Sawyer, 1995). Evidently, the remaining 30 states allowed their students to pass all classes with a "D." Thus, students could still be eligible to participate in athletics with a 1.0 cumulative GPA.

Although the intentions and academic requirements were improving between 1984 and 1995, states still did not have high expectations for its students in regard to academic eligibility. Even with the most basic of academic requirements, there was a mismatch in interscholastic requirements compared to intercollegiate initial eligibility. Sawyer's (1995) study demonstrated that the majority of states simply required four to five courses to be passed in the previous grading period in order to be eligible for athletic participation. In comparison, by 1995, the NCAA was requiring its incoming students to earn a 2.0 cumulative GPA, complete at least 11 academic courses including at least three years of English, two years of mathematics, two years of social sciences, and two year of natural or physical science, including at least one laboratory course, if offered by the high school (Sawyer, 1995). In addition, a student must also have earned a combined score of 700 on the SAT or composite score of 17 on the ACT (Sawyer, 1995). It can be seen that by 1995 there was a drastic difference in academic requirements between the interscholastic and intercollegiate level.

Environmental Factors

In 2007 a similar study regarding academic eligibility was developed by Allison et al., (2007). This study showed only minimal changes in academic eligibility requirements from those obtained in Sawyer's 1995 research. Allison et al. (2007) found that, again, the most frequent state academic requirement was that students must pass four to five classes the previous grading period to be eligible for athletic participation. In addition, only three of the 50 states required a 2.0 cumulative GPA. As a result, the Allison et al. study concluded that state academic requirements had barely changed in over a decade.

Allison et al. (2007) gave insight as to the outside factors challenging change in more demanding academic requirements. "It is felt by many administrators, coaches, and parents that the greater the academic standard the few student–athletes will be participating" (Allison et al., 2007, p. 8) It was felt by these parties that raising academic standards would potentially lead to the loss of student–athletes and the overall motivation to do well in school. However, this was a point that had never been truly proven (Allison et al., 2007). There have been numerous attempts around the country of administrators attempting to raise the academic standards (Allison et al., 2007). However, outside factors such as the community, parents, and coaches voiced strong opposing feelings (Allison et al., 2007). As a result, the ambitious requirements were overturned and never implemented (Allison et al., 2007).

Allison et al. (2007) noted that by holding high school athletes to low academic standards policymakers are putting students at risk when moving into college. The academic behavior developed from low standards puts the student at risk because they will have

> a questionable academic foundation which is not structurally sound and eventually will collapse leaving the student–athletes ineligible, [dismissed] from the college due to

> unsatisfactory grades or progress, or unable to obtain admission to the university due to low academic achievement. (Allison et al., 2007, p. 9)

By 2007 the NCAA initial eligibility requirements had yet again increased. By this time the NCAA required Division I athletes to complete 14 core courses including four years of English, two years of mathematics, two years of natural/physical science, two years of social science, and three years of additional courses from the previously listed selections, and foreign language or non-doctrinal religion/philosophy (Allison et al., 2007). Allison et al. (2007) noted that the NCAA intended to increase in their initial eligibility requirements again in 2008. Meanwhile, again, interscholastic requirements in the states did not increase (Allison et al., 2007).

There has been strong desire on the part of "state school chiefs and governors that comprise CCSSO and the NGA Center" to see better academic performance from high school students (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015, para.3). This desire has led to the implementation of standards such as the Common Core (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015). However, when truly evaluating the academic standards for our high school students there is a strong disconnect between initial eligibility standards for college and those academic standards set for participation in athletics by the states. Furthermore, Allison et al. (2007) demonstrated that these state-level standards are essentially being set by administrators, parents, coaches, and booster clubs, not research or the notion of better preparing students for college or career readiness.

Change Theory

Change theory was introduced in 1951 by Kurt Lewin (Kritsonis, 2004). Lewin is a theorist known for social and organizational psychology. His change theory helps analyze the forces that drive change and keep individuals/groups at equilibrium. Within this theory there are

three stages that an individual/group must go through in order to develop change. These stages consist of (a) unfreezing, (b) change, and (c) refreezing (Schein, 2010). It is understood that at all times in life everyone is essentially going through this process whether it be within personal lives, work, or social gatherings. When making decisions everyone experiences two types of forces that, when balanced, provide no motivation to change our decisions, however, when unbalanced, it motivates individuals to consider change (Schein, 2010).

Driving and Restraining Forces

Driving forces consist of forces that motivate individuals toward desired change (Schein, 2010). For example, if a coach sees at the end of the semester that the majority of his players did not perform well academically, some players not even able to progress onto the next grade level or graduate, he may decide to implement a team policy that the players must maintain passing grades in all of their classes in order to participate. The driving force in this situation is that the coach understands the importance of the players doing well in school and earning progressing toward graduation. Therefore, he considers making the change by proposing a new academic rule.

However, generally for every driving force there is a matching restraining force. Restraining forces counter driving forces and push an individual away from change (Schein, 2010). Therefore, using the previous example, as the coach begins to promote and seek approval for his new team requirement he may experience backlash from the players, parents, and administration. They may communicate with him their concerns that with this new rule that he could lose a large number of players and potentially be taking away one of the only positive points in their daily activities. As a result, he could be hindering their motivation to be at school all together.

Equilibrium

Equilibrium is reached when driving and restraining forces are equal. When this point is reached, the individual feels no need to change. It is only when the driving force is stronger than the restraining force that the individual feels the need to change (Schein, 2010).

Lewin's change theory reveals that in order for equilibrium to be reached in a situation, a three stage series takes place. Within this process individuals can move through the stages at different paces and move back and forth through the stages as new information is introduced. It is once the individual processes through all three stages and the driving and restraining forces are equal that equilibrium can be reached (Schein, 2010).

Stage 1: Unfreezing

Unfreezing consists of three process (a) disconfirmation, (b) induction of guilt or survival anxiety, (c) creation of psychological safety or overcoming of learning anxiety, and (d) cognitive redefinition (Schein, 2010). This stage allows for identification that something needs to change in a way that matters personally. This can be one of the most difficult stages because the individual must overcome restraining forces, group conformity, and step out of the norm (Schein, 2010). "Some activities that can assist in the unfreezing step include: motivate participants by preparing them for change, build trust and recognition for the need to change, and actively participate in recognizing problems and brainstorming solutions within a group" (Kritsonis, 2004, p. 2).

Disconfirmation. In order for an individual to progress through the unfreezing stage, he or she must experience disconfirmation. Disconfirmation is the state in which an individual becomes dissatisfied with something that is of importance to them. This can be something

personal or within the organization, but regardless it has to be of strong value to the individual. Disconfirmation is what drives motivation for change (Schein, 2010).

Induction of Guilt or Survival Anxiety. The most common restraining force that accompanies disconfirmation is learning anxiety. It is this restraining force that has one of the strongest deciding forces of whether or not an individual will continue down the path of change. "Learning anxiety is the fundamental restraining force which can go up in direct proportion to the amount of disconfirmation, leading to the maintenance of the equilibrium by defensive avoidance of the disconfirming information" (Schein, 2010, p. 2). Therefore, it is vital that the individual find a way to overcome the learning anxiety and/or address the learning anxiety of those within the group in order to move towards change (Schein, 2010).

Creation of Psychological Safety or Overcoming of Learning Anxiety. The concluding factor that allows an individual to pass through the unfreezing stage is that the individual has to feel safe. In order for the individual to feel safe he or she needs to understand the intended goal, the steps to obtain the goal, and feel as though he or she can do all of this safely (Schein, 2010). Without developing the feeling of safeness, individuals will quickly find other resisting factors to reject the need for change. Therefore, when addressing this point, very clear steps should be developed and communicated with attributing individuals to insure the continuance of motivation (Schein, 2010).

Using the previous example, the coach wants to drive academic change on his team. He has already anticipated the backlash and anxiety he will receive from other coaches, players and parents. Therefore, he develops a very clear plan as to how he and his assistant coaches are going to keep an eye on player grades throughout the semester. In addition, he has developed a recovery plan for any player that should show signs of academic struggle during the year. As a

last factor, he has also developed a contract for each of the players to sign stating that the coaches are allowed to communicate grades and any academic deficiencies to the administrators and parents. This way all contributing parties are aware if a player is struggling well before that player is ineligible to play. This plan would allow all parties to be aware of any academic issues throughout the year and what the player will be required to do in attempt to improve his or her grades. As a result, all parties are aware of the chain of events and are able to contribute to the shared goal in a safe manner.

Stage 2: Change and Cognitive Redefinition

This is the process of reconstructing the current thought process, feelings, values, and/or attitudes (Schein, 2010). This means the individual has to find a new form of equilibrium by reconstructing his or her thoughts and judgement (Kritsonis, 2004). This can be obtained three different ways:

> persuading [individuals] to agree that the status quo is not beneficial to them and encouraging them to view the problem from a fresh perspective, work together on a quest for new, relevant information, and connect the views of the group to well-respected, powerful leaders that also support the change. (Kritsonis, 2004, p. 2)

When using the previous example, the coach would need to show a greater reason outside of athletics as to why he is implementing these new rules. Therefore, he would explain why graduating is far more important than participating on the team and how he will use athletic participation as a contributing factor to the student's success. The coach can further explain the levels of opportunity it will give the players if they not only graduate but perform at a high level in high school. This could potentially lead to college opportunities or better job offerings. He can further give the group statistics on college entrance requirements and job opportunities. This will

help explain why holding players to the minimum standard is not enough and what the players can lose in the future if they are not held to a higher standard. Furthermore,

> once some cognitive redefinition has taken place, the new mental categories are tested with new behaviour which leads to a period of trial and error and either reinforces the new categories or starts a new cycle of disconfirmation and search. (Schein, 2010, p. 3)

At this point in the process, individuals may seek out mentors or feel the need to find more information about the change they anticipate making. This can be done through reading, talking to others, schooling, therapy and so forth (Schein, 2010). Therefore, when looking at our example, the coach may look to another coach that has implemented a similar team policy to mentor him through the process. This mentor could assist in anticipating negative backlash, how to address it, developing a good plan for change, and essentially being someone to talk to during the process.

Stage 3: Refreezing

> Refreezing is the state in which the individual has developed a new norm (Schein, 2010). The main point about refreezing is that new behaviour must be to some degree congruent with the rest of the behaviour and personality of the learner or it will simply set off new rounds of disconfirmation that often lead to unlearning the very thing one has learned. (Schein, 2010, p. 4)

"One action that can be used… to reinforce new patterns and institutionalize them [is] through formal and informal mechanisms including policies and procedures" (Schein, 2010, p. 2) When referring back to the example, the coach would need to implement the academic standard as a team rule. By implementing it as a test run or ambiguous policy instead of a rule, the other group members will not take the standard seriously and potentially lead back to the unfreezing stage,

which is not the desired outcome. Therefore, the academic standard will be seen as the new norm for the team.

Summary

The literature currently shows that the move toward academic accountability started in both the interscholastic and intercollegiate level in 1984. However, since then, academic requirements have been implemented at the interscholastic and intercollegiate level in differing magnitudes. As of 1995, there was an alarming difference in the academic requirements at the state level compared to the NCAA initial eligibility requirements (Sawyer, 1995). As time passed, the two sets of requirements have only gotten further apart (Allison et al., 2007; Sawyer, 1995). This potentially leaves the college bound, high school athlete with "a questionable academic foundation which is not structurally sound and eventually . . . leaving the student–athletes ineligible, [dismissed] from the college due to unsatisfactory grades or progress, or unable to obtain admission to the university due to low academic achievement" (Allison et al., 2007, p. 9).

After further investigation, it was determined that entities at the interscholastic level are hesitant to make any additional requirements on its students due to the fear of resistance from administrators, parents, and players (Allison et al., 2007). According to the forces identified in Lewin's Change theory, Allison et al.'s findings infer that the interscholastic level is currently in the unfreezing stage with very strong resistance forces from its stakeholders. While there are currently states that have more rigorous academic requirements than others, none of the states come close to the initial eligibility requirements required by the NCAA. Hence, at this time there are only three states that require a 2.0 GPA. Therefore, there is currently a strong case for the

need to reexamine the current state requirements for interscholastic athletic eligibility and the effects it can have on those with the hope of moving into Division I athletics.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study qualitatively analyzed relevant documents using frequencies to generate themes that revealed whether or not there was a true gap in interscholastic academic requirements and the NCAA Division I (DI) initial eligibility requirements. Differences were identified by comparing requirements that resulted from various educational reforms that occurred between the years 1995 through 2014. The focus of this study was to indicate if academic requirements changed at the interscholastic and intercollegiate levels equally over the past two decades, the lack thereof potentially resulting in an academic preparation gap for student–athletes progressing from high school to college. Therefore, this study analyzed the current state academic requirements for student–athletes in comparison to initial eligibility requirements set by the NCAA for the DI level to show whether or not there is truly an academic preparation gap.

As a result, this study provides target information to assist policy makers as they consider differences between the academic requirements at the interscholastic and the intercollegiate levels. These findings also assist academic support personnel to understand student–athlete preparedness as these personnel seek to facilitate the transition of student–athletes from high school to college.

Research Questions

The following question was used to guide this research:

Is there a difference between the current interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements at the Division I level?

1. If there is a difference, what criteria define the difference?
2. If there is a difference, what specific changes would bring the differences into alignment to best prepare the athlete for the rigors of academics and athletics?

Conceptual Framework

In 2009, the Common Core was developed to standardize education across the United States (Stewart, 2012). The Common Core is meant to prepare students for college rigor and their chosen career field. The standards are meant to level out the educational field to insure that regardless of geographical area, all students are encountering the same domains of knowledge and developing targeted skills (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015). It currently mandates curriculum requirements for English, language arts, and mathematics (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015). At the time of this study, 43 of the 50 states had adopted the Common Core curriculum excluding Alaska, Texas, Hawaii, Virginia, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Indiana (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015; Stewart, 2012; Ujifusa, 2014).

However, the Common Core does not mandate a minimum Carnegie unit requirement for each subject area (Zinth, 2013). Therefore, each state is different in their graduation requirements. As an example, Alabama requires students to complete four Carnegie units in math while Connecticut requires three Carnegie units, and California only requires two Carnegie units (Zinth, 2013). These types of differences can be shown across all states in each subject area (Zinth, 2013). Thus, there is a strong difference in academic requirements and expectations

across the states. While there are rigor expectations for the curriculum, such as those expressed by Common Core standards, there are no blanket course requirements or graduation requirements for all of the states in the United States.

Therefore, each of the 50 United States were analyzed for the completion of at least four Carnegie units in the previous semester for athletic participation. This would indicate that the student–athlete passed at least four courses each semester. The completion of four Carnegie units per semester is important because NCAA DI requires the completion of 16 core courses over the course of eight semesters for initial eligibility (NCAA, 2015c). The Carnegie units do not have to be core courses defined by the NCAA. However, due to the Common Core standards, it can be assumed that the majority of the courses passed would fall into one of the core courses defined by the NCAA. While the type of Carnegie unit was not analyzed, the number of hours completed in a previous semester is still an essential stepping stone to NCAA DI initial eligibility.

In addition, according to Hosick and Sproull (2012), the NCAA found that high school grades from core courses are better academic success predictors than scores from standardized tests. Therefore, the NCAA DI requires student–athletes to achieve a 2.0 GPA in their core courses for initial eligibility (NCAA, 2015c). However, there is no blanket requirement across the United States indicating what GPA students must maintain to be eligible for graduation or participation in athletics at the interscholastic level (Zinth, 2013). Therefore, each of the 50 United States was analyzed for a GPA requirement for athletic participation. While the GPA number was not analyzed, the GPA requirement for athletic participation is another essential stepping stone to NCAA DI initial eligibility.

Furthermore, by looking at the interscholastic Carnegie unit and GPA expectations for athletic participation, it is possible to determine if high school academic requirements are potentially making athletes eligible for NCAA DI athletics and conditioning them for the academic expectations placed on college athletes. By indicating the presence of Carnegie unit requirement and GPA expectations, this study allowed determinations to be made as to whether there are present day academic gaps in interscholastic and NCAA DI initial eligibility academic requirements.

Last, the information obtained on each of the 50 United States and the NCAA DI initial eligibility requirements was compared to Sawyer's (1995) study to determine if and how academic requirements have changed over the past two decades. This component of the study revealed if academic requirements were changing in a similar manner at the intercollegiate and interscholastic level. This also allowed for the determination of themes for academic requirement changes that happened overtime and provided the basis for understanding changes that would bring the differences into alignment.

Methodology

Research Design

This research was conducted as a qualitative study by performing a document analysis. Williams (2007) revealed that document analysis is a detailed "review of forms of human communication including books, newspapers, and films for the purpose of indicating patterns, themes, and biases" (p. 69). This method was used to identify specific characteristics in the data that included verbal, visual, behavioral patterns, themes, or biases (Williams, 2007). Williams (2007) explained that the procedure requires that the researcher identify the material to be examined and define the characteristics or qualities that need to be examined. Once these two

components are defined, a two-step process is used to analyze the data (Williams, 2007). First, the data is put into a "frequency table as each characteristic or quality is mentioned" in the document (Williams, 2007, p. 69). Second, "the researcher must conduct a statistical analysis so that the results are reported in a quantitative format" (Williams, 2007, p.69) In conclusion to the data analysis, the findings are reported through five components including "the description of the materials studied, the characteristics and qualities studied, a description of the methodology, the statistical analysis showing the frequency table, and drawing conclusions about the patterns, themes, or biases" found in the data (Williams, 2007, p. 69).

Hence, the use of a document analysis provided the most meaningful interpretations of the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements because of the way the requirements are communicated. Each of the 50 United States displays their academic requirements in their state constitution and bylaws publically through their state website. The NCAA displays their initial eligibility requirements in their annual NCAA Division I manual that is also publically available online. These documents are updated each year and therefore considered accurate information. The use of a frequency table accurately indicated the themes identifying academic differences that exist between the 50 United States and the NCAA. The numeric findings identified trends and provided the basis for assertions about student–athlete preparation in regard to their transition from high school to NCAA DI athletics.

Data Collection

Documents from each of the 50 United States were obtained from the official state athletic associations online. Each state provides constitutions and bylaws regarding the minimum academic requirements their student–athletes must fulfill in order to participate in athletics. The

documents are kept online and open to the public so that their direct affiliates can access these rules at any time. Therefore, it was assumed that these documents are kept up-to-date.

Like the states, the NCAA also provides their academic requirements online and open to the public. Thus, those interested in intercollegiate athletics can easily access the requirements for initial eligibility. For this study, the NCAA Division I 2014-15 initial eligibility academic requirements were accessed. In addition, the NCAA keeps their handbooks online and open to the public. This way historical rules and regulations can be viewed. For this study, the NCAA handbook 1995-96 was used for the comparison of academic initial eligibility requirements.

Last, Sawyer's (1995) research study was used to develop a comparison of state academic standards from 1995 through 2014. The data from Sawyer's (1995) study and the current state academic requirements provided an accurate look at the longitudinal changes that have taken place over the past two decades. Thus, assertions were made on whether interscholastic academic requirements have increased, decreased, or stayed the same overtime.

Data Analysis

State. In order to analyze the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements, this study used a document analysis utilizing frequencies. Frequencies are referred to as the number of times a specified unit is presented in the data (Creswell, 2009; Field, 2009; Krathwohl, 2009). The use of frequencies allows the data to be described one feature at a time to see the specific spread of data values (Creswell, 2009; Field, 2009; Krathwohl, 2009). In order to understand the differences in interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements, each academic requirement for these areas was analyzed to determine the presence of a GPA and Carnegie unit requirement. By using frequencies to indicate whether a GPA and Carnegie unit requirement was present, comparisons were easily made to determine as to whether or not there

was a difference in interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements. The differences that I looked for in the data included whether or not academic requirements have increased, decreased, or stayed the same overtime, and whether or not those longitudinal changes have evolved into differences in the current high school academic requirements and the NCAA DI initial eligibility requirements.

In terms of procedures, first, in order to keep the data organized and allow for easy calculations, a frequency table was developed. The frequency table was developed in an excel spread sheet with each state name accompanied by three columns to track whether the state requirement includes a GPA requirement, passing at least four Carnegie units in the previous semester, and the actual text of the policy. The columns tracked the GPA and Carnegie unit requirements with "1" for yes and "0" for no. The policy column was a word-for-word copy of the academic requirement displayed in the state athletic constitution and bylaws.

Next, each of the 50 United States academic requirements for athletic participation was analyzed for a GPA and Carnegie unit requirement. These two are of most significance because the NCAA DI currently requires students to pass 16 core courses and have at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA for initial eligibility. Therefore, the best attempt to capture these requirements was to analyze each state for a GPA requirement and the regulation that athletes must pass at least four Carnegie units in the previous semester. Data was pulled from each of the constitutions and bylaws located on the official state athletic association sites for 2014. Sawyer's (1995) study was used for the 1995 state academic requirements for athletic participation data.

Following the state data collection, themes were indicated by the presence of large frequencies. In addition, percentages were calculated to allow for state and regional comparisons

to be made. To accompany these findings, tables were developed for a visual presentation of the data. The tables' visual aspects also allowed for quick verifications in calculations of the data.

Using the 1995 data the following data points were captured: percentage of states that had a GPA requirement, percentage of states that required at least four Carnegie units passed in the previous semester, and the percentage of states that required both a GPA and Carnegie unit requirement. Next, using the 2014 data, the following data points were captured: percentage of states that have a GPA requirement, percentage of states that require at least four Carnegie units passed in the previous semester, and the percentage of states that require both a GPA and Carnegie unit requirement. Last, each of the percentages calculated for the year 1995 were compared to the corresponding percentages for the year 2014. These comparisons concluded whether or not interscholastic academic requirements have increased, decreased, or stayed the same overtime.

NCAA. A frequency table was developed to organize and track the NCAA data. The frequency table was developed in an excel spread sheet. The NCAA DI 1995 and 2014 initial eligibility requirements were tracked by importing data into three columns to show whether the NCAA requirement include a GPA requirement, core course requirement, and the actual text policy. The columns tracked the GPA and core course requirements with "1" for yes and "0" for no. The policy column was a word-for-word copy of the academic requirement displayed in the NCAA DI manual. In addition, the 2014 NCAA DI data included a fourth column. This column indicated whether or not the academic requirement had increased from 1995. For example, if the GPA requirement for 1995 was 1.6 and the GPA requirement for 2014 was 2.0, the fourth column would indicate a "1" for yes. This comparison concluded whether or not intercollegiate academic requirements had increased, decreased, or stayed the same overtime. Following the

data collection, tables were developed to illustrate a visual comparison of the 1995 and 2014 NCAA DI data.

State and NCAA Comparisons. Using the state and NCAA data, a number of comparisons were made to indicate whether or not there are common themes in academic requirement changes. Data was analyzed to see if there were any similar longitudinal changes in the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements. For example, if there was a significant change in the NCAA GPA requirement, there may also have been a significant change in the number of states with a GPA minimum. Thus, this would indicate a theme in a GPA academic requirement.

Using the NCAA and state data, the GPA requirement was analyzed first. The following data points were captured: was there a change in the NCAA GPA requirement, was there a change in the number of states indicating a GPA requirement, did both the states and NCAA indicate a GPA requirement change, and what was the percentage difference, if any, in the number of states that required a GPA requirement from 1995 through 2014?

Next, the state Carnegie unit and core course requirements were analyzed. The following data points were captured: was there a change in the NCAA core course requirement, was there a change in the number of states indicating at least four Carnegie units be passed in the previous semester, did both the states and NCAA indicate a Carnegie unit/core course change, and what was the percentage difference, if any, in the number of states that required the four Carnegie unit requirement from 1995 through 2014?

Last, the 2014 state and 2014 NCAA data were compared. The following data points were captured from this comparison: the percentage of states with a GPA requirement, the percentage of states with Carnegie unit requirement, and the percentage of states that had both

the GPA and Carnegie unit requirement. These percentages provided an indication of how many states potentially met the NCAA DI initial eligibility requirements. This also led to the conclusion of whether or not there are current differences in the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements.

Moreover, with this information, statistical conclusions were made regarding longitudinal academic requirement themes. It also provided verification of whether or not the longitudinal differences, if any, had created differences in the 2014 state academic requirements and the 2014 NCAA DI initial eligibility requirements. The conclusion of this study revealed academic differences between the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements Thus, allowing for recommendations to be made regarding an alignment that best prepares athletes for the rigors of academics and athletics.

Summary

Using Williams (2007) approach to a document analysis allowed for each piece of the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements to be researched. Within the literature review, it was determined that there is a strong difference in academic requirements and expectations across the states. While there are rigor expectations for curricula, such as those expressed by Common Core standards, there are no blanket course requirements or graduation requirements for all of the states in the United States. Thus, by using a document analysis each of the state academic requirements components were analyzed and compared to the NCAA DI initial eligibility requirements. These comparisons determined there is a true gap in academic requirements between the interscholastic and intercollegiate level and allowed for recommendations to be made regarding what specific changes would bring the differences into alignment to best prepare the athlete for the rigors of academics and athletics.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to provide a thorough analysis of the state high school activity/athletic associations' (hereafter referred to as States) interscholastic academic requirements compared to the NCAA Division I (DI) initial eligibility standards. This comparison determined whether a true academic preparation gap exists between the interscholastic and intercollegiate level. In addition, this study determined if the states are adequately preparing student–athletes for the college rigor. The information from this study can be utilized by state policy makers to determine how their academic requirements compare to the NCAA initial eligibility requirements and also to determine what adjustments to policy would insure their academic requirements are properly preparing their student–athletes for college rigor. Furthermore, this information will inform stakeholders such as administrators, coaches, parents, and others associated with support organizations at the interscholastic level, perhaps building grassroots support for policy changes at the state level.

Findings of the Research Questions

Within the study, one research question and two sub-questions were used to guide the research and discussion of the findings. The research question and sub-questions are addressed below.

Is There a Qualitative Difference Between Interscholastic and Intercollegiate Academic Requirements?

When comparing the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements, there were two strong themes that emerged within the data. These two themes included Carnegie unit completion and a GPA requirement. The two main components within the NCAA DI initial eligibility standards reside around core course completion and GPA. These were also the two elements within the state eligibility requirements that showed to have strong variation between states. These specific qualitative differences within the interscholastic and intercollegiate level are discussed below.

Carnegie Unit Requirement

Each of the States was analyzed for the completion of at least four Carnegie units in the previous semester for athletic participation. This would indicate that the student–athlete passed at least four courses each semester. The completion of four Carnegie units per semester is important because NCAA DI requires the completion of 16 core courses over the course of eight semesters for initial eligibility (NCAA, 2015c). Therefore, the completion of four courses a year would potentially put a student in a position to meet the NCAA DI 16 core course requirement. The 16 core course requirements include: 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics (Algebra 1 or higher), 2 years of natural or physical science, 2 years of social science, 1 additional year of English, mathematics or science and 4 additional years of previously listed classes, foreign language, or comparative religion/philosophy (NCAA, 2014). The Carnegie units do not have to be core courses defined by the NCAA. However, due to the Common Core standards, it can be assumed that the majority of the courses passed would fall into one of the core courses defined by the NCAA. Although the type of Carnegie unit was not analyzed, the number of hours

completed in a previous semester is still an essential stepping stone to NCAA DI initial eligibility.

When comparing the findings of Sawyer (1995) with my current review of States' online documentation of required Carnegie units, it was found that the NCAA and States have different requirements regarding Carnegie units and core courses required for athletic eligibility. During this time period, the NCAA has increased its initial eligibility core course requirement from 11 to 16 core courses (NCAA, 2014; Sawyer, 1995). However, only 26 states require the completion of four Carnegie units in the preceding year to be eligible for play. This is a 2% decrease in states requiring the completion of four Carnegie units a year from 1995 to 2014. The completion of at least four Carnegie units a year is important because it puts student–athletes in a position to meet the NCAA initial eligibility standards. As a result, there is a difference in the 2014 NCAA initial eligibility standards regarding core courses compared to the Carnegie unit requirement within the 50 States. The lack of academic rigor required by states of student–athletes places them in a position of not meeting the NCAA DI initial eligibility standards

Grade Point Average

When comparing the findings of Sawyer (1995) with my current review of State's online documentation the NCAA and the States showed to have different requirements regarding the minimum GPA for athletic eligibility. During this period, the NCAA has not increased its minimum GPA requirement. The NCAA requires that athletes have a minimum GPA of a 2.0. However, in 2014 only seven states (Arkansas, California, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah) required a minimum GPA to be eligible for play. This is only a 2% increase in the number of states that require a minimum GPA from 1995 to 2014. The presence of a GPA requirement is important because it puts student–athletes in a position to potentially meet the NCAA initial

eligibility standards regarding a minim GPA compared to the GPA requirement within the States. The lack of academic rigor required by states of student–athletes places them in a position of not meeting the NCAA DI initial eligibility standards.

If There is a Difference, What Criteria Define the Difference?

This study specifically researched two factors within the state academic requirements: (1) the passing of at least four Carnegie units a year and (2) a minimum GPA requirement. A Carnegie unit is defined as 120 hours spent within the classroom with an instructor. This is the equivalent to one hour of instruction a day, five days a week, and 24 weeks a year. Most public schools require 18 to 24 credits for a student to graduate high school. Each of these credits is the equivalent to one Carnegie unit (The Glossary of Educational Reform, 2013). The passing of four Carnegie units a year sets student–athletes in a position to meet the 16 core course requirement by the NCAA. In addition, the presence of a GPA requirement puts student–athletes in a position to meet the NCAA minimum GPA requirement. The presence of these two factors determines the academic conditioning that will allow for a student–athlete to meet the NCAA DI initial eligibility standards. Outcomes of the analysis of these factors are described below.

Carnegie Unit Requirement

Findings from the 2014 study. Review of the State's requirements from each attendant website showed that 31 of the 50 states (62%) had a Carnegie unit requirement for the preceding semester to be eligible for play. However, only 26 of the 50 states (52%) required their student–athletes to complete a minimum of four Carnegie units in the preceding year to be eligible for play. The remaining five states (10%) allowed a minimum of three Carnegie units a year. The full spectrum of Carnegie unit requirements for an academic year ranged from three to six Carnegie units. As a whole, when analyzing the 31 states with a Carnegie unit requirement, the

average was 4.45 Carnegie units. Table 1 displays the frequencies for the range of Carnegie units.

Table 1

2014 Number of Carnegie Units Required per Year

Carnegie Units Required	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage of Occurrence
3	5	10.0%
4	11	22.0%
5	11	22.0%
6	4	8.0%

Before presenting the regional comparisons, it is useful to demonstrate the division of states among the four regions. This division is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

2014 Regional Breakdown by State

United States Region	State
South	Alabama Arkansas Delaware Florida Georgia Kentucky Louisiana Maryland Mississippi North Carolina Oklahoma South Carolina Tennessee Texas Virginia West Virginia

Table 2 (continued)

2014 Regional Breakdown by State

United States Region	State
Midwest	Indiana Illinois Iowa Kansas Michigan Minnesota Missouri Nebraska North Dakota Ohio South Dakota Wisconsin
Northeast	Connecticut Maine Massachusetts New Hampshire New Jersey New York Pennsylvania Rhode Island Vermont
West	Arizona California Colorado Idaho Montana Nevada New Mexico Oregon Utah Washington Wyoming

Within the regional comparison of the states that required the minimum of four Carnegie units, the majority of the states, 11 out of 26 (42.3%), were located in the South region. These

states included Virginia, Tennessee, South Carolina, Oklahoma, North Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, Georgia, Arkansas, and Alabama. The Midwest region contained the second most with seven out of 26 (26.9%) states. These states included South Dakota, Ohio, Nebraska, Missouri, Michigan, Kansas, and Illinois. The West and Northeast regions each contained the least with only four out of the 26 (15.3%) states. The Northwest regions included New Jersey, Massachusetts, Maine, and Connecticut. The West regions included Alaska, Montana, Nevada, and Wyoming. The data frequencies are fully displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

2014 Regional Comparison of States Requiring Four Carnegie Units

United States Region	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage of Occurrence
West	4	15.3%
Midwest	7	26.9%
South	11	42.3%
Northeast	4	15.3%

When looking at the average Carnegie units required between regions, the South region displayed the highest average of a 5.0 Carnegie unit eligibility requirement. The Midwest region had the second highest average with 4.5 Carnegie units. The Northeast region displayed the next highest average with 4.0 Carnegie units. The West region had the lowest average with 3.8 Carnegie units. The data frequencies are fully displayed in Table 3.

When comparing the data in Table 3 and Table 4, a trend is demonstrated between regions. The regions that had a higher number of states requiring a Carnegie unit have a higher Carnegie unit standard. The South region had the most states (11 of 26 states) with a Carnegie unit requirement and the highest Carnegie unit average (5.0 Carnegie units). The West region

had the least states (four of 26 states) with a Carnegie unit requirement and the lowest average Carnegie unit requirement (3.8 Carnegie units).

Table 4

2014 Regional Comparison of Average Carnegie Units

United States Region	Average Number of Carnegie Units
South	5.0
Midwest	4.5
Northeast	4.0
West	3.8

When specifically looking at the 26 states that required four Carnegie units to be completed in the preceding year, 10 of the 26 states (38%) specified that courses must count toward graduation. Regionally, four of the 10 states (40%) were located in the South region. The remaining regions only contained two state each (20%). These data show that the South region has more stringent requirements for Carnegie units to be considered completed for eligibility.

In addition, only three of the 26 states (12%) stated that the Carnegie units had to be new courses for which the student did not previously receive credit. Regionally, there was no trend developing from this requirement. Each region except the West region had one state with this requirement.

Although these factors were not thoroughly analyzed for this study, it is important to note that in order for student–athletes to meet the 2014 NCAA initial eligibility standards they must graduate high school and complete 16 core courses including the following:

- four years of English,
- three years of mathematics,
- two years of natural or physical science,

- one extra year of English,
- mathematics or natural or physical science,
- two years of social science,
- four years of extra core courses,
- earn a minimum required grade-point average in core courses, and
- earn a combined SAT or ACT sum score that matches the core course grade-point average and test-score sliding scale (NCAA, 2015c).

Furthermore, two of the 26 states (8%) explicitly dictated one or more courses that the Carnegie units must entail for athletic eligibility. There was no regional trend associated with this requirement. However, the South and Northeast regions each contained a state with this requirement. This academic requirement was not fully analyzed within this study.

Based on this data, the states located within the South region show more rigorous academic eligibility requirements than the other regions. The South region contains the most states with a requirement of passing at least four Carnegie units in the preceding semester, averages a 5.0 Carnegie unit requirement for eligibility, and displays other specific course requirements for athletic eligibility. The West region contained the least number of states with a Carnegie unit requirement and averaged 3.8 Carnegie units for eligibility. In addition, although the Carnegie unit details were not analyzed, the majority of the states that had more specific requirements such as courses having to be core courses, courses having to work toward graduation, or passed courses having to be new courses resided in the South region. When specifically analyzing the states in the South region, Alabama had the most academic requirements. Alabama has the following academic eligibility policy:

> Students entering the 10th and 11th and 12th grades must have passed during the last two semesters in attendance and summer school, if applicable, at least six new Carnegie units with a minimum composite numerical average of 70 in those six units. 1.) Four core curriculum courses must be included in those units passed and averaged. (English, mathematics, science and social studies are core curriculum courses. Any combination of these courses is accepted.) 2.) Any student that accumulates more than four units of core courses per year may earn less than the required four core courses during the next school year and be eligible as long as the student remains on track for graduation with his/her class. (Alabama High School Athletic Association, 2014, pp. 26-27)

When comparing Alabama's Carnegie unit requirements with the NCAA initial eligibility standards, students would be very likely to meet the core course requirement for DI. This is because of the number of Carnegie units required, the grade required, and the specific core courses required.

Findings from the 1995 study. When analyzing the findings of Sawyer (1995), the data showed that a total of 27 out of 50 states (54%) required their student–athletes to complete a minimum of four Carnegie units in the preceding year to be eligible for play. Within the 27 States, the Carnegie unit requirements for an academic year ranged from four to five Carnegie units. Table 5 displays the frequencies for the range of Carnegie units.

Table 5

1995 Number of Carnegie Units Required per Year

Carnegie Units Required	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage of Occurrence
4	14	28.0%
5	13	26.0%

When regionally comparing the states that required the minimum of four Carnegie units in 1995, the majority of the states resided in the South and West regions, each containing eight out of 27 (29.6%) states. The South region states requiring at least four Carnegie units included Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia. The West region states requiring at least four Carnegie units included Alaska, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. The third largest region was the Midwest with seven out of 27 (25.9%). These states included Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Ohio. The Northeast region contained the least with only four out of the 27 (14.8%) states requiring at least four Carnegie units. These states included Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. The data frequencies are fully displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

1995 Regional Comparison of States Requiring Four Carnegie Units

United States Region	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage of Occurrence
West	8	29.6%
South	8	29.6%
Midwest	7	25.9%
Northeast	4	14.8%

When looking at the average Carnegie units required between regions, the South displayed the highest average of a 4.8 Carnegie unit eligibility requirement. The Midwest region had the second highest average with 4.4 Carnegie units. The Northeast and West regions displayed the lowest average with 4.2 Carnegie units. The data frequencies are fully displayed in Table 6.

When comparing the data in Table 6 and Table 7, a trend between regions can be identified. The regions that had a higher number of states with a Carnegie unit requirement had a

higher Carnegie unit standard. The South region had the most states (eight of 27 states) with a Carnegie unit requirement and the highest Carnegie unit average (4.8 Carnegie units). The Northeast region had the least states (four of 27 states) with a Carnegie unit requirement and the lowest average Carnegie unit requirement (4.2 Carnegie units).

Table 7

1995 Regional Comparison of Average Carnegie Units

United States Region	Average Number of Carnegie Units
South	4.8
Midwest	4.4
West	4.2
Northeast	4.2

When specifically looking at the 27 states that required the four Carnegie units, seven of the 27 states (25.9%) mentioned that courses must go towards graduation. Regionally, three of the seven states (42.8%) resided in the South. The West region contained two of the seven states (28.5%). The Northeast and Midwest regions contained one state each (14.2%). This data showed that the South region required more Carnegie units that count toward graduation to be completed for eligibility.

In addition, only two of the 27 states (7.4%) stated that the Carnegie units had to be new courses for which the student did not previously receive credit. Regionally, there was no trend developing from this requirement. The South and Midwest regions each contained one state with this requirement.

Furthermore, zero of the 27 states (0%) explicitly dictated one or more course contents that the Carnegie units must entail. Therefore, there were no regional trends associated with this requirement. Although specific course factors were not thoroughly analyzed for this study, it is

important to note that in order for student–athletes to meet the 1995 NCAA initial eligibility standards they must have completed 11 core courses (NCAA, 2015c).

Based on this data, the states located within the South region had more rigorous academic eligibility requirements than the other regions. The South region contained the most states with a requirement of passing at least four Carnegie units in the preceding semester, averaged a 4.8 Carnegie unit requirement for eligibility, and displayed other specific course requirements for athletic eligibility. The Northeast region contained the least number of states with a Carnegie unit requirement and averaged 4.2 Carnegie units for eligibility. In addition, although the Carnegie unit details were not analyzed, the majority of the states that had more specific requirements resided in the South region. Specificity of the imposed requirements of those courses used to determine eligibility extended to the fact that they had to be core courses, had to be courses that worked toward graduation, or passed courses had to be courses the student had not previously taken.

Findings from the 2014/1995 comparison. When comparing the 1995 and 2014 state interscholastic academic eligibility requirements, in 1995 there were 27 states (54%) that required at least four Carnegie units to be passed each year compared to the 26 states (52%) that required the passing rate in 2014. This is a 2% decrease in the states requiring four Carnegie units to be passed in the preceding year. Between 1995 and 2014 seven states elected to relax their academic rigor including Washington, Oregon, Iowa, Indiana, Idaho, Florida, and California. Only six states increased their academic rigor by 2014 including South Carolina, South Dakota, Michigan, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Georgia. The remaining 37 states (74%) experienced little to no increase in their academic requirement regarding a Carnegie unit requirement.

Between 1995 and 2014 the Carnegie units range broadened. In 1995 the Carnegie unit ranged from four to five units. By 2014, the Carnegie units ranged from three to six. When specifically looking at the average required number of Carnegie units for eligibility, in 1995 the average Carnegie unit requirement was 4.48. In 2014, the average Carnegie unit requirement was 4.45. This is a .03% decrease in the average Carnegie unit requirement from 1995 to 2014.

When looking at the data regionally, the South region consistently imposed the most rigorous academic standards regarding Carnegie unit requirements from 1995 to 2014. However, when looking at the average Carnegie unit requirements between regions there have been notable changes. In 1995, the average Carnegie unit requirement of the South region was 4.8. In 2014, the average Carnegie unit requirement of the South region was 5.0. This is a 0.2% increase in the average Carnegie unit requirement from 1995 to 2014. In 1995, the average Carnegie unit requirement of the West region was 4.2. In 2014, the average Carnegie unit requirement of the West region was 3.8. This is a 0.4% decrease in the average Carnegie unit requirement from 1995 to 2014. In 1995, the average Carnegie unit requirement of the Northeast region was 4.2. In 2014, the average Carnegie unit requirement of the Northeast region was 4.0. This is a 0.2% decrease in the average Carnegie unit requirement from 1995 to 2014. In 1995, the average Carnegie unit requirement of the Midwest region was 4.4. In 2014, the average Carnegie unit requirement of the Midwest region was 4.5. This is a 0.1% increase in the average Carnegie unit requirement from 1995 to 2014. Overall, 50% of the regions have increased their average Carnegie unit requirement whereas 50% of the regions have experienced a decrease in their Carnegie unit requirement.

In comparison, 1995 to 2014 the NCAA increased its initial eligibility standards for core courses. During 1995 the NCAA required student–athletes to complete 11 specific core courses

to be eligibility. However, by 2014 the NCAA required student–athletes to complete 16 specific core courses for eligibility. Therefore, even though the NCAA increased their academic core course requirement by five courses in the past two decades, the interscholastic level experienced a decrease in the number of states requiring at least four Carnegie units to be passed in the preceding year.

Based on this data, it can be concluded that between 1995 and 2014 the NCAA has increased its core course requirement from 11 to 16 courses for initial eligibility standards. However, 27 of the 50 states required the completion of four Carnegie units in 1995, but only 26 of the 50 states required the completion of four Carnegie units in 2014. This means that the states have experienced a 2% decrease in the number of states requiring at least four Carnegie units to be completed in the preceding year. As a result, there is a marked, negative difference in the 2014 NCAA initial eligibility standards regarding core courses compared to the declining Carnegie unit requirement within a portion of the 50 United States.

Grade Point Average Requirement

Findings from the 2014 GPA study. The research showed that only seven of the 50 states (14%) had a GPA requirement to be eligible for play. These states included Alaska, Arkansas, California, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. Although the specific GPA number was not analyzed, it should be noted that all states with a GPA requirement declared a 2.0 minimum GPA.

When regionally comparing the states that required a GPA minimum, five out of seven (71.4%), were located in the West region. The remaining two of the seven (28.5%) states resided in the South region. The data frequencies are fully displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

2014 Regional Comparison of States with GPA Requirement

United States Region	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage of Occurrence
West	5	71.4%
South	2	28.5%

When specifically looking at the seven states that required a GPA minimum, four of the seven states (57.1%) mentioned that the GPA minimum had to be accumulated in the previous semesters. The remaining three of the seven states (42.8%) allowed the students to use the minimum GPA in the previous grading period alone. In addition, two of the seven states (28.5%) stated that the student might not accumulate more than one "F" when he or she obtained the minimum GPA in the previous semester or grading period. Although the GPA requirement details were not analyzed, the NCAA's minimum allowable GPA for core courses is a 2.0. Therefore, the states that have declared a GPA requirement are in line with the NCAA initial eligibility requirements specifically regarding the minimum GPA.

Findings from the 1995 GPA study. When analyzing data from the Sawyer (1995) study, a total of six out of 50 states (12%) required their student–athletes to complete a minimum GPA to be eligible for play. The full range of minimum GPA's from among the states ranged from 1.5 to 2.0. It should be noted that the state of Florida required students to "comply with the minimum grade point average required by the state statute during the immediately preceding school year" (Florida High School Activities Association, 2014, p. 28). Even though the state did not mention a minimum GPA number, the state is still counted in the data. The purpose of this study is not to analyze the GPA number minimum, but the presence of the requirement. Table 9 displays the frequencies for the range of minimum GPA requirements.

Table 9

1995 GPA Minimum

GPA Required	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage of Occurrence
1.5	1	16.6%
1.6	1	16.6%
2.0	3	50.0%

When regionally comparing the states that required a minimum GPA, the majority of the states resided in the South region containing four out of six states (66.6%). The West region contained the remaining two of the six states (33.3%). The data frequencies are fully displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

1995 Regional Comparison of States with GPA Minimum

United States Region	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage of Occurrence
West	2	33.3%
South	4	66.6%

When specifically looking at the six states that required a GPA minimum, two of the six states' (33.3%) online resources indicated that a GPA minimum had to be accumulated in the previous semester. Both states were located in the South region. The remaining four of the six states (66.6%) allowed the students to show the minimum GPA in the previous grading period or maintain the GPA during the time of play. Fifty percent of the states were located in the South region, and the other 50% were located in the West region. This information revealed an upward trend in academic rigor in the South region. The South region contained more states with a GPA requirement containing specific details when the GPA can be counted toward eligibility.

Findings from the 2014/1995 comparison. When comparing the 1995 and 2014 state GPA statistics, in 1995 six states (12%) required a minimum GPA compared to the seven states (14%) that required a minimum GPA in 2014. This is a 2% increase in the number of states that required a minimum GPA. All of the states that required a GPA minimum during 1995 still required a GPA minimum in 2014 excluding West Virginia that elected to remove their GPA requirement. Between 1995 and 2014, Louisiana and Arkansas increased their GPA requirements to a 2.0 minimum. In addition, two states, Utah and Nevada, added the minimum GPA requirement to their academic requirements by 2014. The remaining 42 states (84%) experienced no change in their academic requirement regarding a minimum GPA. The average GPA requirement in 1995 was 1.82. The average GPA requirement in 2014 was 2.0. This is a 0.18% increase from 1995 to 2014.

When looking at the data regionally, the average GPA requirement between regions demonstrated minor changes from 1995 to 2014. In 1995, the average GPA for the South region was 1.7. In 2014, the average GPA for the South region was 2.0. This is a 0.3% increase from 1995 to 2014. In 1995 the average GPA for the West region was 2.0. In 2014, the average GPA for the West region remained a 2.0. Thus, there was no change in the average between 1995 and 2014.

From 1995 to 2014 the NCAA experienced no change in its minimum GPA. During 1995 the NCAA required that student–athletes earn a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA. However, by 2014 the NCAA declared that student–athletes must earn a minimum of a 2.0 GPA within their core classes. Although the GPA minimum did not change, how the GPA is calculated was changed. As a result, student–athletes' GPAs should be reviewed to see the classes that are composing their GPA. Students need to be sure that they are doing well in their core courses

rather than looking at their GPA as a whole. Even though the NCAA did not experience an increase in their minimum GPA requirement, the interscholastic level did experience an increased in the number of states requiring a minimum GPA.

Based on this data, it can be concluded that between 1995 and 2014 the NCAA had not increased its GPA requirement although the new requirements for calculation of the GPA may impact the eligibility of some students. However, only six states required a GPA for eligibility in 1995, and only seven states required a GPA for eligibility in 2014. Five of the states that had the GPA requirement in 1995 were still among the same states that had a GPA requirement in 2014. This means that the states have only experienced a 2% increase in the number of states requiring a GPA for eligibility. As a result, there is a difference in the 2014 NCAA initial eligibility standards regarding a GPA requirement compared to the GPA requirement within the 50 United States. It is unknown as to whether means for calculating GPA is disparate between the NCAA and the States.

If There Were Differences, What Specific Changes Would Bring the Differences into Alignment to Best Prepare the Athlete for the Rigors of Academics and Athletics?

When specifically looking at the differences in the Carnegie unit and GPA requirements between the states and the NCAA, a few academic requirement changes can be made to bring the differences into alignment with one another.

First, in regard to Carnegie unit requirements, the states need to make sure that student–athletes are making progress toward graduation. They can do this by requiring student–athletes to take courses that work toward graduation and are not repeated courses. For example, states could require the completion of four Carnegie units or four courses that students have not received credit for in a preceding year for eligibility. This would provide the minimum interscholastic

requirement that would potentially allow student–athletes to meet the NCAA initial eligibility standards. In terms that are more rigorous, states could require details such as the completion of four core courses or four courses that go toward graduation to increase student–athletes' chances of meeting the initial eligibility standards. However, depending on the total number of credits a state requires for graduation, the completion of only four courses in the previous semester does not guarantee that student will graduate on time. Therefore, in an ideal situation, requiring that students to complete 25% of their graduation requirements each year to be eligible for play would assist students in graduating and meeting the NCAA initial eligibility rules. The completion of 25% of their graduation requirements each year not only keeps them on track to graduate and meet initial eligibility standards, but it also conditions the student–athletes to meeting degree completion percentages. This is important because during a student–athlete's college experience, the student will have to meet percentage towards degree requirements for eligibility.

Next, the presence of a minimum GPA would help bring the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements into alignment. Based on the data in this study, the presence of a GPA requirement is the scarcest state academic requirement for eligibility. The data shows that currently only 14% of the states impose a GPA requirement, leaving a very big difference in the state and NCAA initial eligibility requirements. Therefore, by setting a GPA standard for eligibility, states would come into a better alignment with the NCAA. However, states that specifically set their GPA minimum to a 2.0 would put their athletes in the best stance to meet the minimum GPA for NCAA initial eligibility standards.

Summary

By using a document analysis, each of the state academic requirements were analyzed and compared to the NCAA DI initial eligibility standards. These comparisons determined that there is a true gap in academic requirements between the interscholastic and intercollegiate level. The differences reside in the Carnegie unit and minimum GPA requirements. The data determined that these two factors have been an academic difference since 1995. From 1995 to this point in time, the interscholastic level has less rigorous requirements than the NCAA DI initial eligibility standards when considering Carnegie units and minimum GPA. By finding the key differences within the interscholastic and intercollegiate levels, specific recommendations were able to be made regarding that changes the interscholastic level could implement to bring the differences into alignment. By closing this academic standard gap, students are able to be better prepared for the rigors of academics and athletics.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NCAA Division I presides over 350 institutions of higher education and a large body of students (over 170,000 athletes) that hold their student–athletes to high academic expectations upon entering college and throughout their time within athletics (NCAA, 2015b). It is stated in numerous ways by the intercollegiate level that students at the interscholastic level in general are coming into college not fully prepared for the academic rigors facing them (Jolly, 2008). Therefore, understanding the current interscholastic academic standards provides a key indicator of the academic preparation happening at that level. The preparation of these students is imperative to their success at the intercollegiate level and within the DI parameters. The data from this study illuminates two of the key factors, GPA and Carnegie unit completion, that can assist in understanding the alignment of interscholastic and intercollegiate academic standards. Knowledge of these differences may be useful for deliberations for those interested in aligning the two sets of standards in order to best prepare interscholastic–level students for success in college.

Discussion and Implications

The basic research question sought to determine if there exists a qualitative difference between interscholastic standards for participation in athletics and intercollegiate requirements for eligibility in DI athletics. Throughout the research two distinct qualitative differences were

found between the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements. The two differences included Carnegie unit and GPA requirements. Data indicated that just over half of the States required a minimum of four Carnegie units to be passed each year and only 14% of States required a minimum GPA for eligibility. Based on this information, it is recommended that at the interscholastic level all States ensure policy requirements specify a minimum of four Carnegie units a year must be passed by student–athletes in order to be eligible to participate in athletics. It is further recommended that a minimum GPA requirement be instituted by interscholastic policy makers across all States. The two academic requirements would place student–athletes in a better position to meet high school graduation requirements and the NCAA initial eligibility standards. In addition, the two academic requirements are key components to aligning the interscholastic and intercollegiate academic requirements. Each of these themes and further suggestions are discussed below.

Carnegie Unit Requirement

The data reviewed for this study revealed that by 2014 just over half of the States required students to pass four Carnegie units in the preceding year to be eligible for athletics. This is important for college athletic participation because NCAA DI requires the completion of 16 core courses over the course of eight semesters for initial eligibility (NCAA, 2015c). Therefore, the completion of four courses a year would place a student in a position to meet the NCAA DI 16 core course requirement for initial eligibility. Furthermore, only 10 of the 26 States with a Carnegie unit requirement stated that the courses had to count toward graduation. When considering these Carnegie unit details, interscholastic policy makers should be creating policies that insure student–athletes are making progress towards graduation. Not only is graduation a requirement for students to enter the intercollegiate level, it is a pathway to postsecondary

education or extended employment opportunities. Due to the limited number of States with a four Carnegie unit requirement, it is possible that some States are keeping their academic requirements at a minimum in an attempt to keep athletic participation rates high and to encourage students to complete high school; but these short–term fixes are impeding the progress of students for the long term. Therefore, policy makers should also be cognitive of the courses required for high school graduation and should ensure that student–athletes are making progress graduation goals.

The Common Core Standards (2010) state that upon graduation a student is college and career ready if the student can, (a) demonstrate he or she is independent, (b) build strong content knowledge, (c) respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline, (d) comprehend as well as critique; value evidence; use technology and digital media strategically, and understand other perspectives of culture (p.7). The academic rigor designed by the Common Core assists students in becoming college and career ready. However, the Common Core does not specify a minimum number of courses to be completed each year. Therefore, although one of the Common Core goals is to prepare students for college, student's course time exposure and course completion rates are not regulated. As a result, this potentially leaves a preparation gap between the interscholastic and intercollegiate levels. Based on these findings, it is suggested that interscholastic policy makers be aware of the 16 specific core course requirements for NCAA initial eligibility and be aware of how their specific state graduation requirements compare to the 2014 NCAA initial eligibility standards. Given that the Common Core assures that interscholastic–level course content and the attendant cognitive skills are addressed, there is a level of confidence that sufficient rigor is embedded in the core courses required by the NCAA initial eligibility standards to adequately prepare students for academic success at the

intercollegiate level. Moreover, interscholastic policy makers should overtly consider the articulation of the curriculum within the realities of high schools in order to determine if their policy is insuring students stay on track for graduation.

The NCAA has determined the 16 core courses for initial eligibility based on the skills that should be developed at the interscholastic level. The NCAA has determined that students that complete these 16 core courses will have developed the academic skills to be able to handle the academic rigor they will face upon entering college programs at DI schools (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). The problem-solving and critical thinking skills the NCAA is basing initial eligibility standards on are the same skills mirrored within the Common Core rigor at the interscholastic level. However, as noted, the Common Core does not dictate the number of courses a student must complete. Therefore, while the NCAA has determined the 16 interscholastic core courses that develop the needed cognitive skills to enter DI and succeed in college, the interscholastic level does not have a blanket core course requirement for eligibility. As a result, this may create a college preparation difference in students that progress out of the interscholastic level.

When looking at this educational disconnect, John Dewey's argument against dualism reiterates the need to align the academic requirements between the interscholastic and intercollegiate level. According to Kliebard (1995), "one had to get rid of the prejudicial notion that there is some gap in kind between the child's experience and the various forms of subject–matters that make up the course of study." (p. 72). Meaning that, the child and curriculum are not separate entities but a single entity. As a child gains power within the curriculum by successfully solving challenging, relevant problems through critical thinking then the child becomes engaged with the curriculum. Therefore, by making interscholastic requirements more

rigorous we are developing a connection between their academic and athletic experiences into a single developmental component. By understanding this developmental connection at the interscholastic level, high schools can adjust the student's educational experience to further build upon their academic goals for students. Without the development of this connection students may simply be fulfilling the minimum requirements for high school graduation to move into the intercollegiate level to continue their athletic careers. Therefore, when considering Dewey's concerns regarding dualisms, and understanding the tie between athletics and academics, the educational experience for students can potentially be further advanced.

Grade Point Average

The NCAA's first academic rule was a minimum GPA of 1.6 in 1965 (Blackman, n.d.). Almost a decade later, in 1973, the NCAA minimum GPA requirement rose to a 2.0 (Blackman, n.d.). However, Sawyer (1995) showed that by 1995 only 12% of the States required a minimum GPA. Two decades later in 2014, only 14% of the States required a minimum GPA requirement for eligibility. Therefore, even though the NCAA has dictated a GPA requirement since 1965, as of 2014 only 14% of the States have adopted a GPA requirement. This is the longest standing academic requirement dictated by the NCAA for initial eligibility; yet, the academic requirement with the most limited use by the States. It is also an academic requirement that has experienced very minimal increased support overtime with only a 2% increase.

Although, the regions with a GPA requirement did experience an increase in the average minimum GPA, the number of States within the South region experienced a 50% drop in the number of States requiring a minimum GPA between 1995 and 2014. Even though the reason for this trend was not analyzed, this decrease could be evidence associated with the short–term goal

of keeping students engaged in athletics to keep them in school, ignoring the long-term consequences for its students.

The presence of a GPA requirement at the interscholastic level does not simply exist to show a correlation in academic requirements between the interscholastic and intercollegiate level, it further compliments the educational performance both levels are attempting to achieve. The presence of a GPA requirement compliments the Common Core by insuring that students meet a certain level of academic rigor. The Common Core provides the standards for the material that should be covered but not the cognitive proficiency level that should be demonstrated by each student as they progress through each school year. The presence of a GPA requirement holds students accountable to meeting the proficiency levels outlined by the Common Core. Allison et al. (2007) suggested the presence of a minimum GPA to provide a clear academic efficiency level student's must meet. As a result, the students increase their academic performance and potentially increase graduation grades, standardized test scores, and enhance their opportunities for higher education. Further, Allison et al. (2007) indicated this assists in meeting the desired increase in academic success across all educational levels (pp. 8-9). In addition, Allison et al. (2007) explained that interscholastic athletics is seen as a better route to life by the youth (pp. 11). By increasing the interscholastic academic requirements for eligibility, better life routes through academics and athletics will be revealed to the youth (Allison et al., 2007). By not challenging high school students academically, they may not recognize their academic abilities (Allison et al., 2007). Therefore, States that have minimal to non–existent academic requirements are allowing " all of these critical scholastic eligibility questions to be answered by local schools and school districts which affords the opportunity to have a great deal

of inconsistency in the academic eligibility standards within these states" (Allison et al., 2007, pp. 11).

Dewey makes it clear that the student and curriculum are a conjoined unit, not separate units that should be thought about individually (Kliebard, 1995). Therefore, by placing a GPA requirement in policies for athletic eligibility at the interscholastic level we are insuring that students are progressing through the academic proficiency levels embraced by that the Common Core and building the sound academic foundation needed to successful in career or college opportunities. This assists the students in not only meeting the desired academic performance within the high school but further prepares athletes for college athletics. A minimum GPA requirement is not just the implementation of another academic requirement, but a standard to build the academic skills students need for future success.

Therefore, based on the findings from this study, interscholastic policy makers should review their current academic requirements and strongly consider the implementation a GPA requirement. At this time, the States that have a GPA requirement have a 2.0 minimum. In addition, the NCAA requires a 2.0 minimum in core courses for initial eligibility. Therefore, when interscholastic policy makers are reviewing their academic requirements they should be aware of the 2.0 GPA trend. Although any presence of any GPA requirement would help academically prepare students to meet the NCAA initial eligibility standards, requiring a minimum 2.0 GPA for interscholastic eligibility would put students in a good position to meet the minimal NCAA initial eligibility standards.

Regional Comparisons

The findings of this study revealed that those States located in the South region tended to have more rigorous academic eligibility requirements. The States within the South region tended

to have requirements that put students in position ready to meet the NCAA initial eligibility requirements. For example, Alabama's academic eligibility policy states:

> Students entering the 10th and 11th and 12th grades must have passed during the last two semesters in attendance and summer school, if applicable, at least six new Carnegie units with a minimum composite numerical average of 70 in those six units. 1.) Four core curriculum courses must be included in those units passed and averaged. (English, mathematics, science and social studies are core curriculum courses. Any combination of these courses is accepted.) 2.) Any student that accumulates more than four units of core courses per year may earn less than the required four core courses during the next school year and be eligible as long as the student remains on track for graduation with his/her class. (Alabama High School Athletic Association, 2014, pp. 26-27)

Alabama's use of more rigorous requirements by defining a minimum course requirement for each semester, determining the specific courses that can be counted for eligibility, and stating the minimum grade requirement students must pass, creates conditions for student's to progress towards graduation and maintain academic efficiency levels. With these types of academic requirements, students encounter the academic rigor that not only helps put them in a position to meet the NCAA initial eligibility standards; but, conditions them to the academic eligibility requirements they will be held to after being accepted into the university. Therefore, States within other regions should be cognizant of how their academic requirements match up to the NCAA initial eligibility requirements and look to those States within the South region for possible academic standards they can mimic.

When considering the findings in this study, it is noted that the interscholastic level has experienced little to no change in regard to Carnegie unit and GPA requirements over the past

two decades. Allison et al. (2007) indicated that while many school administrators or coaches have attempted to increase their academic requirements they were unsuccessful due to increased resistance from parents, players, administrators, and the community (p. 8) The resistance to increase academic rigor stems from the "myth that numerous student–athletes would drop out of school all together if they did not have athletic achievement to keep them motivated" (Allison et al., 2007, p. 8). However, with limited academic standards placed on interscholastic-level athletes, there is a danger that policies are not academically enabling them for the rigors that lie ahead of them in their careers and college. Within the public schools there is a strong national emphasis on improving educational success at all levels (Allison et al., 2007). But, within the interscholastic level there continues to be low academic standards placed on students.

Although little to no change in academic requirements have been noted over the past two decades, Lewin's Change theory, understanding the two forces that have impact on change—driving and restraining forces—may especially help policy makers enact change. Driving forces consist of forces that motivate individuals towards desired change (Schein, 2010). Restraining forces counter driving forces and push an individual away from change (Schein, 2010). It is only when the driving force is stronger than the restraining force that the individual feels the need to change (Schein, 2010). Given this, interscholastic policy makers may determine that athletics has the ability to impact academic performance amongst student–athletes. By viewing academics and athletics as a conjoined unit, interscholastic policy makers may determine that they have the potential to hold students to a higher academic standard, helping to motivate students to increase their grades, standardized test scores, and graduation rates. These kinds of academic achievements could possibly create more opportunities after high school for students as well. This thought process is an example of some of the factors that serve as driving forces within the

considerations of interscholastic policy makers to change requirements affecting academic rigor for their athletic programs. When interscholastic policy makers can clearly define the impact they can have on academic performance they build a driving force. Once they can develop a driving force that outweighs the resisting forces, interscholastic policy makers will have the motivation to change their requirements.

However, past scenarios show that once the academic changes are brought up for discussion, the idea is quickly overturned with the rush of concerns from parents and coaches (Allison et al., 2007). These outside entities are concerned that the increased academic rigor is unfair and could cause increased dropout rates among the high school students (Allison et al., 2007). Because of these strong opinions and potential risks, interscholastic policy makers experience strong restraining forces. This causes the resistance forces to quickly outweigh the driving forces. As a result, interscholastic policymakers lose motivation and no change is made.

Therefore, with this study, the findings can be used to strengthen the driving forces as to why academic rigor should be increased at the interscholastic level. Policymaker can use this information to show interscholastic stakeholders the positive outcomes of increasing academic requirements and what additional opportunities could be available to student–athletes proceeding high school graduation. As a result, the interscholastic stakeholders become invested in the academic changes. This will potentially build driving forces with policymakers and interscholastic stakeholders resulting in the development of academic change. Currently, with the imbalance of academic rigor between the interscholastic and intercollegiate level, there are long term repercussions for our students. Allison et al. (2007) stated that

> the low academic standards established for student–athletes places the student–athlete in academic jeopardy when continuing on to a college or university. The student–athlete

> will have a questionable academic foundation which is not structurally sound and eventually will collapse leaving the student–athlete ineligible, expelled from college due to unsatisfactory grades or progress, or unable to obtain admission to the university due to low academic achievement (p. 9).

Allison et al. (2007) also indicated that only one-third of students from the US are graduating with the skills mandated by colleges; therefore, high schools are increasing their academic standards (p. 10). However, very few state athletic associations are including these requirements in their athletic eligibility standards (Allison et al., 2007).

It is these types of long term repercussions that outweigh the short term concerns expressed by parents and coaches. The athletic arena has the ability to further compliment the interscholastic educational goals of increased academic performance by holding our students to higher academic standards. The increased rigor has the ability to not only contribute to the interscholastic academic goals but provide students with an academic foundation that gives them more opportunity after high school.

Conclusion

The information obtained from this study concerning the academic requirements for each of the 50 States compared with the NCAA DI requirements, allowed for clear qualitative conclusions undergirded by descriptive statistics to be made regarding historical academic reforms and the current academic requirements for both interscholastic and intercollegiate level athletic eligibility. The results from this study reveal that there is a clear academic gap between the eligibility requirements at interscholastic and intercollegiate levels. Interscholastic policy makers should review their academic requirements closely taking note of the recommendations given from this study. The provided recommendations are meant to bring academic differences

into alignment to best prepare athletes for the rigors of academics and athletics at the DI level. Moreover, the recommendations further ensure timely graduation and set students for success in postsecondary education or in careers should the interscholastic athlete choose not to pursue athletics at the DI level. By using document analysis and frequencies to represent the data, conclusions and recommendations could be made with limited bias. Thus, working from the data, conclusions, and recommendations of this study, interscholastic policy makers are able to consider where individual state-level policies lie in regard to academic requirements for their student–athletes and whether or not change should be made.

It is stated in numerous ways by the intercollegiate level that students in general are coming into college not fully prepared for the academic rigors they will be faced with (Jolly, 2008). Therefore, it is imperative that policy makers understand the tie between athletics and academics, and how these conjoining units work together in the development of students. The placement of additional academic requirements at the interscholastic level is not to simply make the interscholastic and intercollegiate level academic requirements comparable but to increase the academic performance of our students as a whole. Policy makers should look to this study's findings to build their driving force for academic change. The findings within this study can be used to address the common concerns of outside entities regarding increased academic rigor. Therefore, it is up to the interscholastic policy makers to further educate themselves on the additional benefits of increased academic requirements and motivate academic change within the athletic arena.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study only focused on the initial eligibility rules of the NCAA DI. It did not include the other NCAA divisions, junior colleges, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletic

institutions, or National Christian College Athletic Association institutions were analyzed. Each of these areas has their own specific academic eligibility standards that may greatly differ from the NCAA DI. Therefore, future research on how the state requirements compare to the other intercollegiate areas would provide evidence of how well the State requirements are preparing student–athletes for college rigor in a wider lens.

This study focused on the completion number of Carnegie units for each of the 50 States. However, this study did not look at the specific courses that fulfilled Carnegie units. Because the NCAA DI initial eligibility requirements specify 16 core courses that each student–athlete must complete to be eligible, research on the specific courses each state requires for graduation would assist in further identifying the differences in NCAA initial eligibility standards and state requirements.

In addition, when analyzing the states with Carnegie unit requirements, many states determined the type(s) of courses that needed to be passed within the four Carnegie units. For example, Massachusetts requires students to always be enrolled in at least one English course. Therefore, further research on how many states require not only courses to be passed to be eligible, but what the specific courses are that need to be passed for eligibility would further show how well the State academic requirements align with the NCAA initial eligibility standards.

Moreover, this research specifically focused on the traditional schooling academic standards. Because technology is a growing component of the academic arena, further research on non-traditional schooling such as online, hybrid, and home schooling could show a comparison in the academic standards to traditional schooling and the NCAA initial eligibility

standards. This would give a more robust idea of interscholastic academic standards and how they compare with the intercollegiate eligibility standards.

Furthermore, this study only focused on the presence of a GPA requirement. This study did not look at the specific GPA number minimum or how the GPA was calculated. Therefore, researching the most frequent minimum GPA within the individual schools would further assist in understanding the academic expectations for student–athletes. In addition, researching how the GPA is calculated would help in understanding academic expectations. For example, some state calculate a GPA minimum based off of all courses, others calculate it on only specific courses. This information would illuminate further information on the common GPA themes happening within the States and if those expectations align with the NCAA initial eligibility standards.

This study only compared the frequencies of GPA and Carnegie unit requirement presence. This study did not look at further explaining any of the trends that were occurring between regions. Therefore, further research about whether or not regions that experienced an increase in academic rigor had increased success in keeping students in school or whether such a move was to just align their academic requirements with the NCAA but did not yield higher graduation rates would assist in understanding the impact of increased academic rigor. Also, further research on whether or not the schools with decreased academic rigor experienced a decrease in high school graduation rates would assist in understanding the effects of academic change. If the regions with increase academic rigor also experienced an increase in high school retention and graduation rates, this could be further evidence that increased academic requirements could assist our students. This information would also help other regions make better informed decisions regarding their academic requirements.

Last, further studies are suggested on any state that elects to apply the Change theory model to understand why change was made, or failed to be made, in efforts to alter their academic eligibility requirements. (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012)

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