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**An Assessment of Academic Support Services for Student-Athletes at
Community Colleges in the State of Texas**

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**An Assessment of Academic Support Services for Student Athletes at
Community Colleges in the State of Texas**

by

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Dedication

This dedication is made in celebration of my dearly departed mother and father, “Alease” and “Doc”, who always believed in me and motivated me to complete this program. They were model parents whose love and support have been the “wind beneath my wings”!

For my sister Carol, I love you and thanks. For my “road kitty”, “J”, it was a “conspiracy and a set-up!” Now it’s time to let ’em have it! I could not have done it without you.

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An Assessment of Academic Support Services for Student-Athletes at Community Colleges in the State of Texas

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The purpose of the study was to determine which institutions provide academic support services to student-athletes at Texas community colleges and to determine whether student-athletes are using the services. Part two of the study was designed to develop some generalizations that would enable community colleges in Texas to better understand the pattern of use by student-athletes. To facilitate the purpose of the study the answers to the following questions were sought.

Question #1. Are academic support services provided to student-athletes in Texas community colleges?

Question #2. Do student -athletes use the services that are available to them?

The nation's community colleges play a vital role in education. In athletics, community colleges have the reputation of housing the farm teams for some four year institutions. These two-year colleges have a second function, to try to change some of the academic behaviors of student-athletes

The National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Operating Principles state that "an intercollegiate athletics program shall be designed to be a part of the institution's educational system, and student-athletes shall be considered an integral part of the student body". The Operating Principles further state that "adequate academic support services shall be available to student-athletes and the support services shall be approved and reviewed periodically by academic authorities outside of the intercollegiate athletic

department”.

The findings from this study may also be crucial because of the potentially significant impact that availability of academic support services can have on the academic success of student-athletes. With the high level of emphasis placed on athletic success, particularly in Texas, it is easy to miss the importance of academic support services at community colleges.

Researchers have addressed the relationship of academic support services to the academic success or lack of academic success of student-athletes, but their findings may have been implicitly over generalized to four year colleges and universities. Consequently, there is a lack of significant hard data for community colleges. This study was confined to surveying only the academic support services programs at community colleges in Texas.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Community colleges across the United States play a substantial role in the fulfillment of educational objectives for thousands of students. In the world of athletics, community colleges are often considered to be the location where farm-teams are cultivated on behalf of traditional four-year institutions, and where students who are not quite prepared to enter the world of four-year academia begin their college careers in a more comfortable setting (Herndon et al, 1996).

Community colleges have become an increasingly popular option for many students. They are seen as a viable means of advancing students' education beyond the high school level. In particular, many students who live in poorer areas, where schools are not as academically challenging or physically accessible, have largely benefited from community colleges and what they have to offer. Across the United States, more and more students have begun to take advantage of the low-cost tuition, flexible course offerings and transferable credits in order to advance their education. Although community colleges do not possess the extensive resources of most four-year colleges and universities due to reduced access to capital, the large majority of these schools that have solid enrollment statistics do offer many extracurricular activities, including competitive sports, for their students (Johnston, 1990). Many students at community colleges, however, find it difficult to organize their extracurricular activities and to

balance their study requirements. Therefore, if they are truly committed to academic success and achievement, they must learn how to better organize their lives so that considerable achievements are made that improve learning and knowledge outcomes (Ryan, 1991).

NCAA

The primary governing body of college athletics, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is also concerned with improving academics for student-athletes. The organization has identified a set of basic Operating Principles, which state that "an intercollegiate athletics program shall be designed to be a part of the institution's educational system, and student-athletes shall be considered an integral part of the student body" (www.ncaa.com). This set of principles also states that "adequate academic support services shall be available to student-athletes and the support services shall be approved and reviewed periodically by academic authorities outside of the intercollegiate athletic department" (www.ncaa.com). Considerable efforts must be made to accommodate the academic needs of student-athletes, regardless of the sport or sports in which they participate, since these students must often spend considerable time in practices or in competitive events and away from the classroom and their required study commitments. The positive findings from this study could be critical because of the potentially significant impact that the availability of adequate academic support services may possess on the academic success of student-athletes. Because there is a paucity of published

studies about two-year college athletes and services for them, the need for this research was important. With the extreme emphasis that is now placed upon athletic achievement and sports in general, particularly in the state of Texas, it is not difficult to recognize the need for academic support services in community college settings (Herndon, 1998).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Colleges and universities are complex organizations, and athletic departments are among the most difficult components to manage (Duderstadt, 2000). The relationship between athletics and academics is marked by a myriad of contradictions (Zimbalist, 1999). One such contradiction concerns student-athletes trying to balance academic demands with demands of extracurricular activities (Thelin et al, 1989). To handle this contradiction, a support network is necessary. The network serves as a valuable promoter of student success. Unfortunately, many students having to deal with this contradiction are ones who perform poorly academically. Certain services are needed to counterbalance this problem. Among these are academic counseling and guidance services (Boylan, 1994). The ability of students to gain access to these services, and how they balance sports and their studies, is of particular interest to researchers in the field of education.

The level of support that is generally offered to community college students is based upon a number of factors, including the number of staff members at the institution, the programs that are offered and the available

academic resources (Gibson & Creamer, 1987). If students choose to participate in athletics while attending a college, there is a strong possibility that many will require additional academic support from college staff members who are trained and experienced in providing a level of support that will advance academic potential to a new level (King, 1993).

SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREA

The specific problem posed in the study is to examine community colleges to determine the degree to which these institutions regularly provide academic support services to student-athletes. A second objective of this study is to determine whether student-athletes are using the services that are offered. The unit of analysis will focus on the student-athletes and their use of the academic support services, rather than on the institution and their provision of academic support services.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two questions must be considered regarding the ability of community colleges in Texas to provide academic support services to student-athletes on a widespread basis. The primary issues involved in this discussion include the following: 1) are academic support services regularly available to student-athletes at community colleges in Texas; and 2) are student-athletes using the services that are available at these institutions? These issues will serve as the primary basis for the study, in which the researcher identifies a number of significant points regarding these questions. The following section of the

discussion will define a number of useful terms that will be utilized frequently in the study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In college settings, there are a number of terms that are commonly used to describe the college athletic experience relative to academic requirements:

Academic Advisor - is an individual who is responsible for providing assistance to students in selecting courses, choosing a major, and other issues related to academic requirements. (www.advising.vt.edu/aag.html).

Academic Eligibility - is the minimum grade point average (GPA) that a student is required to maintain in order to continue their participation in athletics; this standard is established by each individual college, but it is typically a minimum of a 1.75 GPA out of a possible 4.0 GPA for student-athletes and is based on the policies and procedures of the National Collegiate Athletic Association or the National Community and Junior College Athletics Association.

Academic Support Services – is the assistance provided by a college in supporting academic achievement through mechanisms such as tutoring, mentoring and course selection (www.math.umd.edu).

Intercollegiate Student-Athlete – is a student who assumes a full-time course-load and also participates in one or more sports at the collegiate level (http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FCR/is_1_36/ai_85007768).

National Collegiate Athletic Association – is the primary governing body of college athletics, (NCAA).

National Community and Junior College Athletics Association - is the primary governing body of community and junior college athletics (NJCAA).

ASSUMPTIONS, DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In the course of preparing this proposal, the researcher made the following assumptions. There is a substantial lack of relevant information regarding academic support services and their degree of success at community colleges across the country. The primary reason for this lack of data is that much of the emphasis in the collegiate world is associated with four-year colleges and universities. These institutions produce a significant portion of student graduates who move on to careers that offer higher salaries and facilitate lifestyles that are commonly desired (DeBerard, 2004). Other assumptions are made by various authorities. For example “community colleges are not "real" colleges; rather, they serve merely as a stepping-stone to bigger and better objectives, including four-year colleges” (Gibson & Creamer, 1984). In the eyes of many, an Associate Degree earned from a community college does not weigh favorably against a Bachelors Degree, regardless of the major, and it is not, therefore, worthwhile to examine the data provided by community colleges. In addition, it is assumed that community colleges do not provide the same level of difficulty and intensity in academics and coursework that four-year colleges provide, and therefore it is easier for most students to juggle a full course-load and athletic commitments at the same time (Astin, 1978). Also, it is estimated that most community college academic support services are primarily designed for those students who might possess full-time jobs or have families at home, leaving them little time to conduct their academic responsibilities in a conscientious manner

(Hollis, 2001). These assumptions often plague community colleges, as they are often perceived as a means of providing only those students with limited intelligence the opportunity to attend college, without any intention of attending a four-year college or university at any point in the future (Pope, 1997).

Initially, this study was confined to a survey of administrators at 77 community colleges in the state of Texas to determine if these institutions are providing academic support services to student-athletes. Additionally, three coaches and two student-athletes from each of the three selected community colleges, ranging in size of programs from large to very small, were interviewed. The purposive sampling procedure of the study decreased the likelihood that these findings could be generalized for future practice because participants for the study were selected based upon their availability to manage the requirements of the study (Babbie, 1990).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The problem in question, which examines the use of academic support services by student-athletes at community colleges in Texas, is of considerable importance. This discussion has been going on for many years, as more and more students have realized that their desire to participate in student-athletics might interfere with their ability to achieve success in the academic world (Richards & Aires, 1999). Furthermore, many students now realize that without a college education, they are not likely to succeed in life in the manner that they desire. As a consequence, it is important to recognize that academic support services at community colleges serve as a lifeline and as a valuable resource for many students in their strive for academic achievement (Knapp & Raney, 1988).

Another important reason that academic support services are so essential in community college environments is that many of the student-athletes who attend these colleges are from disadvantaged backgrounds. More often than not, these programs provide considerable emphasis on remedial skills and achievements that are not necessarily considered to be significant in four-year colleges, where it is often assumed that students are already adequately prepared for the rigorous academic commitments that are required (Boylan, 1999). However, the reality is that many students who attend community colleges, which typically accept all students regardless of their backgrounds, are not remotely prepared for the requirements that college coursework introduces into their lives (King, 1993). It is often the case that these students lack the basic skills that are

necessary to advance their academics to a higher level. For students who also participate in athletic programs, there is an additional element of confusion and even frustration regarding their ability to balance their athletic commitments with their course requirements, leading them to either seek assistance for these issues or to abandon them altogether (DeBerard et al, 2004). This in turn can result in an increased likelihood of failure over the long-term.

Community colleges also offer students a means of camaraderie and fellowship among students with similar problems or circumstances (Wittmer et al, 1981). The camaraderie and fellowship found at most community colleges allow these students to develop friendships and to recognize that they are not alone in their struggles to achieve academic excellence (Ryan, 1991).

A more important function or purpose of the community is their attempt to initiate changes in response to the negative academic behaviors of students and student-athletes (Kanter & Lewis, 1991). Therefore, adequate academic support services and their use are essential components of the development of successful student-athletes at community colleges. If these students are successful, it is likely that they will graduate or move on to additional college coursework at a four-year institution, where athletics generally play a more important role in their college careers (Gaston-Gayles, (2002).

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Some four-year institutions and researchers have looked at predictors of academic success of male student-athletes (Brigham, 1982), factors in student-athletes' choices of colleges (Mathes & Gurney, 1985), academic support for student-athletes (Gibson & Creamer, 1987), achievement motivation of student-athletes (Simons, Van Rheenen & Covington, 1999), academic performance and campus involvement (Richards & Aries, 1999), career development of varsity athletes (Martens & Cox, 2000), educational impacts of intercollegiate athletic participation on male student-athletes (Wolniak, Pierson & Pascarella, 2001), and beneficial academic services for student-athletes (Hollis, 2001-2002).

Only a few studies were located that included two-year college-athletes, and nearly all were limited in generalizability. Knapp and Raney (1988) analyzed the transcripts of a sample of male university students at the University of Nevada Las Vegas who had two-year college credit and compared the academic performance of athletes who played basketball, football, and baseball, with student-athletes without transfer credits. Kanter and Lewis (1991) investigated the academic performance of student-athletes at 11 California community colleges, while Lewis and Markopoulos (1989) conducted a study at San Joaquin Delta College (a California community college) to determine the demographics and course completion rates of student-athletes. Kornspan and Etzel (2001) examined the relationship among demographic and psychological variables in a

sample of two-year college student-athletes. Pope (1997) examined programs provided by four-year post-secondary institutions for student-athletes. He designed a survey to measure perceptions and opinions of athletic directors and senior student affairs officers about academic support services at the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I-A football colleges during 1995-1996. The population consisted of 106 colleges and universities, and 106 athletic directors and 106 student affairs administrators were surveyed. The study also identified specific components that were considered essential for effective programs. All of these studies touched on critical issues that relate to community college athletics.

CRITICAL ISSUES

There are a number of critical issues that facilitate the development of effective programs and initiatives that provide adequate academic support services to all students, and in particular, student-athletes (Pascarella & Tetrenzini, 1980) It is now necessary to review these issues as presented in current literature treating this topic, and to identify what information exists regarding the current effectiveness of academic support services in improving academic achievement.

RATIONALE FOR ATTENDING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Community colleges are a significant component of the nation's system of higher education. A total of over 1200 institutions enroll approximately 11,000 million students (NCAA, 2004). This enrollment represents close to 50% of all

U.S. undergraduates, including close to half of all first-year students (NCAA, 2004).

In a research article, Montiel (2002) addresses the increased level of students who are enrolled in Texas-based community colleges. Montiel writes that "historically, the community college system provided space for minority populations to enroll in higher education through the open door policy of community colleges for remediation of academic skills and occupational training" (p. 203). Additionally, student development in community colleges is based upon a philosophy that embraces student success and continuous learning modules throughout all stages of life. As community colleges in Texas became increasingly popular and more affordable for minority and non-traditional students, the Texas government also became aware of these issues and recognized them in a legal context by creating new regulations regarding mandates at these institutions. Specifically, the following actions were enacted by the Texas legislature: "In 1999, the 76th session of the Texas legislature enacted House Bill 1678. This bill, now known as ¹ 61.068, directed the Access and Equity Division of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop a uniform strategy to identify, attract, enroll, and retain students that reflect the population of the state of Texas" (Texas Legislature, p. 339). As a result of this legislation, community colleges sought to create new opportunities for students to enroll in these institutions in the hope that considerable efforts would be made so that these students could excel in their academic studies while

simultaneously participating in extracurricular activities, including collegiate athletics.

Community colleges are perhaps best recognized for their efforts to enroll students with weak academic histories, as well as those who may require additional remedial support in order to achieve adequate grades (Boylan, et al, 1997). Since collegiate athletics are often considered most popular at four-year colleges and universities, they often attract the most gifted as well as the brightest students to their schools, leaving community colleges with what might be perceived as second-rate student-athletes (Wolniak et al, 1981). However, this is not always the case, since many individuals seek to establish themselves academically through the community college circuit, particularly if they do not possess the knowledge or the skills that are necessary to begin their college careers in four-year institutions (Smith 2004). At the same time, these students, although they might possess a strong interest in collegiate athletics, are likely to find that entering sports in larger colleges and universities is a difficult process to undertake. More specifically, these students may be marginally talented or they do not possess the academic credentials that are necessary to gain acceptance into four-year colleges (Howard-Hamilton & Watts, 2001). The less talented are usually more influenced by their coaches as posited by Gaston-Gayles (2004).

COACHES INFLUENCE

The coach serves a multi-faceted purpose in scholastic athletics. While they are hired to perform in the field of competition, much more is expected and required of them, off the field. A study by Underwood (1984) determined that if a coach does not give complete backing to the academic program, their attitudes can be transmitted to the student-athletes, and they will be less inclined to take advantage of academic support services, or if they do they will not use the time wisely and effectively (Underwood, 1984). A coach, whether or not they are an instructor, must fill the role of one, being responsible for promoting and contributing to the total education of the student-athletes in their program (Bailey and Littleton, 1991). "If a coach is not convinced that education is important to that student-athlete, the student-athlete is not going to be interested in going to class and making as good grades as s/he can. The student-athlete has the only excuse s/he needs. It really doesn't matter what s/he does as long as they show up for the game. They have been taught from day one: please the coach and everything is ok."(Bailey & Littleton,1991, p.80). The coach, beyond being concerned about wins and losses, should impress upon student-athletes their concern about academic progress towards graduation (Underwood, 1984). This dynamic is present at both four-year colleges and universities and community colleges.

COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT

According to research by (Thelin, 2002), there are varying degrees of influence and support of student-athletes in reference to their academic aspirations other than the influence of the coach. For example, it is often estimated that student-athletes with a stronger commitment to athletics are not as influenced by the coach and are more likely to earn lower GPAs, and these students might not complete the necessary coursework to earn a college degree (Gaston-Gayles, 2004). It is therefore essential that weight must be placed upon the academic sector, so that student-athletes who are not up to par academically may still be able to earn a college degree and still maximize their potential for a future academic career (Wittmer et al, 1981).

Gaston-Gayles (2004), stated, "student-athletes who were classified as failure acceptors (i.e. not motivated to approach success or avoid failure) were more committed to playing their sport than success-oriented student-athletes (i.e. those motivated to approach success, but not avoid failure)". Simons et al (1999) suggested that "the primary reason for attending college for failure acceptors was to be an athlete" (p. 77).

Gaston-Gayles (2004) also suggests that there are positive steps towards improved academic support services in the works in many institutions:
"Institutions and athletic programs must accept that interventions can and do help student-athletes develop confident attitudes and more commitment in the classroom in the same way they learn to feel confident about their skills in their

sport. Additionally, the ability to transfer skills from the athletic domain to the academic domain can make a significant difference in how student-athletes approach academics" (p. 82). This concept demonstrates that considerable efforts must be made by college personnel on a regular basis to identify the specific needs of community college students who participate in athletics.

Among these needs is the need for remedial education.

REMEDIAL INTERVENTION

According to Cedja and Rhodes (2004), "The need for academic support services is most often a result of poor academic preparation". A number of studies have found that many minority students enter college with academic deficiencies (Belcher, 1992; McGregor, Reece, & Garner, 1997; Ramirez & Thayer, 1989; Rendon, 1995; Smith, 1990). One explanation for these deficiencies is that minorities have been found in disproportionate numbers in vocational, general, and non-college tracks in high school (Lee & Bryk, 1988; Oakes, 1985). As a result, Latinos, Blacks and other culturally diverse students often enter the higher education pipeline through remedial or developmental courses" (p. 251).

If student-athletes do not possess the academic credentials to compete academically, there are developmental programs at most 2-year schools to address the issue. According to Montiel (2002), "Nearly 100% of public 2-year institutions maintained comprehensive remedial education programs that served nontraditional minority students (National Center for Research in Vocational

Education, 1996). In contrast, the majority of the institutions of higher education with recruitment programs in place focused their recruitment efforts on high-achieving students with above-average high school grade point averages" (p. 341). In this context, it is suggested that considerable weight is likely to be placed upon the recruitment of students at community colleges who would typically be accepted at four-year colleges and universities. Therefore, it is important that community colleges continue to be proactive in modifying their strategies in order to include a wider subset of students in their recruitment processes, including minority, non-traditional students and student-athletes (Gaston, 2004).

With student-athletes, continuous improvement regarding adherence to academic standards as well as other requirements will be the key indicators of academic success in the community college setting. However, these individuals require different considerations altogether. They attend these colleges for a number of reasons, including but not limited to the anticipation that their athletic participation will lead to increased opportunities for transfer to a four-year institution, where athletic programs are much more advanced and experienced due to the availability of extensive resources for use (Aries et al, 2004). Boylan (1999) states: "Obviously, the key to the success of efforts to reduce the need for remedial courses is a systematic relationship between assessment, advising, and placement activities". Such a systematic approach requires a strong advising program based on information obtained from a combination of cognitive and affective assessments (Smith et al, 2004). It would probably require some

retraining of academic advisors and counselors and would certainly require retraining of some faculty. This systematic approach would also require greater collaboration between developmental educators and those who provide Supplemental Instruction, freshmen seminars, critical thinking courses, and other interventions representing an alternative to remedial courses. If more developmental students are to take advantage of these alternative interventions, it might also require that more personnel and financial resources be assigned to these interventions, regardless of whether they were provided by the developmental program, the learning center, or through other campus agencies" (Boylan, p. 31). Additionally, these interventions don't always translate into increased utilization of these services. One of the most critical program components to be evaluated is the developmental education service.

Researchers have reported that participation in intercollegiate athletics can also be developmentally detrimental for many student-athletes (Lanning, 1982; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The research describes the developmental factors contributing to restricted development in student-athletes to be the early and continuous narrowing of one's focus upon athletic participation and subsequent sport career. As such, the opportunities to engage in developmentally appropriate opportunities are often suppressed by an athletic system that regards winning as paramount. Consequently, remedial programs, as well as all other academic support services and their use must be evaluated on a consistent basis to determine their effectiveness in serving student-athletes (Boylan, 1999).

UTILIZATION OF SERVICES

A wide body of research currently exists regarding the academic achievement of student-athletes at traditional four-year colleges and universities. One study by Gaston-Gayles (2004) indicates that although there are a variety of services that are typically available for student-athletes in terms of academic support services, they are not always utilized. Gaston-Gayles (2004), posits that it is of critical importance that there are a number of influential components at work, including those characteristics that lead to academic achievement for individuals. It is suggested that there are a number of issues related to various ethnic groups, and that as more and more individuals seek to establish considerable measures to achieve a greater level of academic success, it is often the case that this process is flawed in many ways (Gaston-Gayles, 2004). In essence, individuals should consider such factors as GPA, standardized test scores and socioeconomic status when developing strategies for academic success (Kanter & Lewis, 1991). Choosing where to attend college for the first time while determining the actual purpose of attending college, and deciding whether to get an associates degree or a bachelors degree are also considerations (Commander et al, 2004).

ASSOCIATES DEGREE

Another point of interest is the desire of students to achieve their aspirations of earning Associate Degrees at community colleges. A study by Cedja and Rhodes (2004) addresses this argument in the realm of the Hispanic student,

and his or her ability to complete all work related to an Associate Degree. This study documents that many students in community colleges completed their core requirements at these institutions as a means of transferring to a four-year college or university in future years; however, some students and student-athletes sought only to achieve an Associate Degree as a means of moving on to their career of choice (Cedja and Rhodes, 2004). Many students seek to achieve these degrees and to excel in their academic pursuits as a means of fulfilling their goals and objectives. In this context, these students might find that community colleges offer them exactly what they are seeking relative to their academic pursuits and aspirations, serving as a stepping-stone to additional academic coursework or to their career of choice. In relation to college athletics, community colleges provide student-athletes with the opportunity to improve their academic skills and talents in athletics with less known yet nonetheless competitive athletic programs. While the associate's degree may be the primary reason for attending community colleges, student-athletes still maintain their athletic dreams.

THE ATHLETIC DREAM

Many individuals hold different beliefs regarding the degree to which athletic excellence will be achieved in the college setting. According to Gaston-Gayles (2004), "Black student-athletes desired to play on the professional level more than White athletes". In Parmer's (1994) study, this desire was called 'the athletic dream' and defined it as 'a multidimensional set of behaviors and fantasies propelled by the desire to pursue superstardom through sport participation' (p. 333). Demands and career aspirations associated with college sports have also been linked to the failure of some athletes to balance academic and athletic tasks (Adler & Adler, 1991; Simons, Van Rhee, & Covington, 1999)" (p. 76). Additionally, many minority student-athletes often believe that success in the sports arena will lead them away from potentially difficult circumstances in the home environment (Gruber, 2003). Many of these athletes dream of improved life circumstances and contentment in the athletic world, as a means of escape from a difficult situation (Simons et al, 1999). Unfortunately, these dreams are not realistic, and many student-athletes will consequently experience intense levels of disappointment and even depression as a result of their desire to escape from the real world (Traux, 1987). Consequently, community colleges must stress academic aspirations as well. At issue also is the possibility that the desire for the "athletic dream" may lead to cheating and corruption.

CORRUPTION

Corruption of collegiate athletics is a critical issue that has been identified in some of the larger Division I schools across the United States. This subject has garnered much controversy in recent years (Underwood, 1984). Underwood (1984) has studied the impact of corruption on many four year colleges and universities and found that corruption may be caused because coaches actually rate their athletic programs as more significant than their academic programs. This happens at community colleges as well. However, much of this corruption is well hidden by athletic programs and public relations officials at community colleges (Underwood, 1984). It is also likely that these activities do not occur as frequently at community colleges because there are fewer stakes on the line and a smaller student-athlete population to manage. The stakes are not as high or as risky as in four-year colleges and universities (NCAA). Furthermore, community colleges do not receive the publicity and the notoriety of larger division schools that spend millions of dollars annually on their athletic programs, or attract widespread media attention for their athletes. According to a research summary article by Thelin (2002), "At the macro level, college sports is an orbit of shoe contracts, deals with television networks, and bowl sponsors, i.e., commercial promotion. Yet the NCAA's brochures and television advertisements emphasize its role in balancing academics and athletics" (p. 414). This argument implies that there is a significant demand for athletes in large four-year colleges and universities to succeed in their sport of choice for a number of reasons, including

their strong ability to bring in extensive financial returns to the university through intense media exposure, ticket sales and television advertising, which leads to corruption. The necessity for student-athletes to perform academically is, therefore, often nonexistent as the money and notoriety that they bring to their college or university outweighs their academic needs. This research is disheartening in many ways. Yet, it offers insights into why many college athletes do not possess the academic knowledge and skills necessary for career development after their athletic careers have ended. For many students, the opportunity to participate in athletics at the college level might lead to problems in the future. Much of the blame for these problems must be placed upon the failure of their chosen college or university to provide the academic support, whether four-year institutions or community colleges (Pope, 1997). The following data discusses a four year institution that has been described as an exemplary example of an academic support services program and one which has decided to provide academic support services to student-athletes.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: BEST PRACTICE

A notable example of an academic support services program at a four-year college exists at the University of Southern California, whose agenda professes the following mission statement: "Academic Counselors are responsible for monitoring the academic progress of each student-athlete to promote effective communication among the students, academic counselors, coaches and faculty members. Through a proactive system of intervention, the counselors are able to highlight potential academic challenges and celebrate academic successes. All information gathered encourages student-athletes to take ownership of their academic programs and make appropriate decisions regarding their future. Academic progress updates are also provided to the coaches on a daily basis to ensure that the coaching staff is fully aware of how their students are progressing in their courses and how their progress may affect their eligibility status" (www.usc.edu). Student-athletes are hence in tune with their academic pursuits through their participation in this type of program. Some other services that provide student-athletes with the tools for academic achievement include computer laboratory services, laptop computers and tutoring services, all of which are designed to encourage student-athlete academic achievement (www.usc.edu). This program allows student-athletes to improve their basic skills and to understand what is expected of them academically, with the anticipation that they will eventually graduate and earn their degree. The program incorporates all of the major components identified by

the National Association of Academic Advisors (NACADA) and the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) that must be included to be considered as exemplary as documented in a study in 1998 by the N4A.

The primary mission statement of the University of Southern California Student-Athlete Academic Services Program encompasses the following: "The USC Student-Athlete Academic Services (SAAS) Program is committed to providing the necessary support to assist all student-athletes in reaching their full potential academically, personally, and professionally. The SAAS Program is fully integrated within the University. The program includes academic advising, career development, community service, tutorial programs, and learning specialists, which are all aimed at promoting a philosophy of individual responsibility so as to encourage each student-athlete to value their educational experience. In providing such services, student-athletes will be afforded the opportunity to develop the skills needed to persist towards graduation, become leaders within the community, and lead successful and productive lives" (www.usc.edu). It is therefore essential that students seek out these programs to help balance sport and study and community colleges should be equally capable as larger institutions of providing such programs for their student-athletes.

Unfortunately, the likelihood of exemplary academic support services programs at community colleges is highly unlikely until there is a significant increase in the recognition and importance of these services at community colleges and more studies to confirm their importance. There is a need for

reform for the academic support policies for student-athletes at community colleges because of the advent of rule changes initiated by NCAA. Community college athletes are now being held to a higher standard of completion rates. In a study by Thelin (2002), he states, "The problem of intercollegiate athletics policy reform is that the structures and vocabulary are calcified. Substantial change is unlikely soon, because negotiations and vocabulary are caught in a gridlock of predictable liturgies by presidents, coaches, athletic directors, and NCAA officials" (Thelin, p. 419).

Much of the current research that exists is based on large colleges and universities that have extensive resources and attract much media attention for their athletic programs. These institutions often possess the ability to create opportunities for smaller colleges, including community colleges. Community colleges should utilize some of the larger schools strategies to develop academic programs that will filter intelligent and athletically talented students into these transfer institutions. Among these strategies, planning for the major time commitments that athletics require is essential.

TIME COMMITMENTS

Significant time commitments to athletics often take away from a student's ability to effectively prepare and fulfill their academic requirements in a satisfactory way (Aries et al, 2004). In their study, the authors continue, "Greater commitment to the athletic role and less to academics is associated with lower grade point averages in college". It is difficult not to recognize these issues when considering the influence that athletics possess in life, generally. Individuals from all over the world possess a strong admiration for athletes, and this typically begins at a young age. As the talent and skills are honed and cultivated throughout grade school and high school, students with a natural talent for a given athletic sport are often recruited by colleges and universities and are prepared by college athletic programs to further advance their skills and eventually participate in a high-profile sports, all taking critical time from studies (Richards & Aries, 1999).

For many students, their athletic talent may be natural and instilled in them from birth, but they must continue to work hard to maintain this ability through the college years. Unfortunately, time spent on developing athletic potential takes away from the academic aspect of high school and college, which leads to lower than expected academic potential for many students. In some instances because student-athletes may be highly skilled, they suffer academically and socially and may be perceived negatively by themselves and other students.

PERCEIVED INFERIORITY COMPLEX

Gibson & Creamer (1987) identified a negative component of the athletic versus academic argument in that student-athletes are often perceived in a negative context. In the study they noted athletes as being perceived as academically inferior to non-athletes (Gibson & Creamer, 1987). For example, Richards & Aries (1999) state that "Concerns have also been raised about the difficulties athletes themselves face once on campus". Student-athletes at highly selective schools encounter greater academic challenges given their lower academic skill levels, and like members of other minority groups face prejudice and discrimination (Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston, 1992). Both faculty (Engstrom, Sedlacek, and McEwen, 1995) and students (Engstrom and Sedlacek, 1991, 1993) may perceive athletes negatively in academic competence. "Negative stereotypes of athletes may help to further separate athletes from the rest of the student body" (p. 579). This argument represents a common assumption in college athletics, particularly when the media and attention paid to these programs in national outlets often facilitates these assumptions to an even higher level. It is estimated that as these discrepancies continue to evolve and to spread across college campuses around the country, there will be a substantial divide between the academic performances of student-athletes versus non-athletes. Gibson & Creamer (1999) state that community colleges fair much better concerning this subject. Usually, a smaller student population and the facilitation of knowing student-athletes on a more personal basis at community

colleges translates into student-athletes being a more respected portion of the student population and participating in more activities at the school (Gibson & Creamer, 1999).

Additionally, several studies identified a significance of self-perception amongst student-athletes versus non-athletes in college environments. Aries et al. (2004) state that "High-commitment athletes were distinguished from non-athletes by their lower perception of themselves throughout college as smart, intellectual, and artistic/creative, and higher perception of themselves as socially skilled, outgoing, confident and good leaders. High-commitment athletes were as likely as non-athletes to report every year that they had grown as a person, pursued new activities and interests, gotten to know people from different backgrounds, and found a place at the college/university. These athletes also had slightly higher levels of overall well-being" (p. 597). Considerable weight is placed upon the ability of student-athletes to convey a sense of responsibility and understanding regarding their commitment to athletics, and this leads to improved relationship development and leadership capabilities as well as an increase in self-esteem (Wolniak et al, 2001).

Faculty members and other college officials might find that the talents expressed by student-athletes on the field do not necessarily translate into the classroom setting (Wittmer et al, 1981). Much of the disconnects between college academics and athletics leads to seriously underperforming students and student with negative self perceptions, in many instances. This does not fare

well for students who want a future beyond athletics, for graduation and earning a college degree, and for establishing future careers (Thelin, 2002). There is also an important lesson to be learned regarding the ability of college faculty and staff members to shift their attitudes towards student-athletes. Aries et al. (2004) state: "Faculty and administrators need to re-examine negative stereotypes about student-athletes in general. In addition, highly selective schools that choose to admit athletes with lower academic credentials, and whose athletic programs make great time demands on these students, need to provide the academic and social support and assistance these students need once on campus in order for them to fully participate.

Perceived discrimination by faculty and administrators also has the potential to contribute to performance anxiety and lowered performance by athletes (Steele and Aronson, 1998). It is thus necessary to consider that there are some substantial differences amongst student-athletes and non-athletes within these institutions, particularly as a result of the beliefs and opinions of faculty members, since they are often the persons responsible for influencing a student's academic future and group participation (Thelin, 2002).

These negative connotations associated with college athletics and student-athletes as a whole, and these perceptions, continue to thrive in the media and on college campuses. These issues will have an impact on the ability of student-athletes to overcome stereotypes and to excel in their academic careers (Suggs, 2002). If these perceptions are instilled too deeply into faculty members and

other college personnel, the widespread belief may transpire that these students will never achieve the level of academic performance that is expected of them, and could lead to their eventual failure in the classroom and in life (Suggs, p a43). Hence, these perceptions must be altered, so that students are recognized for their athletic potential as well as their academic strengths.

Unfortunately, colleges and universities, might lower academic standards or remove them altogether in favor of accepting and enrolling candidates who do not necessarily meet minimum academic standards in favor of working with and providing services that address the negative issues (Pope, 1997). The relevance of this argument is of considerable importance on all today's college campuses. Media attention, financial windfalls and notoriety that college athletics provide to these institutions may be more than officials are willing to refuse, relative to the ability of these schools to continue to attract new students and additional dollars in the future. Therefore, college and university athletic programs often tend towards fewer academic standards and less restrictive acceptance criteria for student-athletes, thereby leading the institutions down the road to improved financial resources and media attention but away from improved academic performance for student-athletes (Gaston-Gayles, 2004). This is even more possible at community colleges since the "open door policy" of most community colleges allow for admittance of students without great academic credentials.

WHO PARTICIPATES?

Aries et al. (2004) also examined a number of issues related to student-athletes versus non-athletes participation at selective schools, which are quite distinct from community colleges. Nonetheless, the information is relevant. Over a four-year period, two schools in the Northeastern section of the United States were evaluated in terms of student participation in athletics at an Ivy League school and a small liberal arts college (Aries et al., 2004). Each participant in the study was given the same questionnaire to complete, designed to evaluate student expectations, self-esteem and group membership (Aries et al, 2004). The data indicated that there were a substantial number of student-athletes at each institution; one-quarter and one-half of all students were athletes at the Ivy League school and at the liberal arts college, respectively (Aries et al, 2004). The authors explain, "When compared to members of non-athletic extracurricular groups, high-commitment athletes experienced group membership as posing more obstacles to academic performance, specifically to being taken seriously by professors and to earning good grades". It cannot be determined from these data whether professors on these campuses actually held more negative attitudes about the academic potential of athletes, but professors have been found to hold negative attitudes about athletes' academic competence at other universities (Engstrom et al., 1995). Even considering the negative attitudes that professors may hold, mentoring from professors has been proven to be beneficial to students in general and student-athletes alike.

MENTORING

The concept of mentoring is of critical importance to the development of academic achievement in community colleges, particularly when student-athletes are involved in the mix. Faculty mentoring has been identified as an important component of academic success. Phrases used by faculty members to describe their strategies or techniques for improving student retention and persistence were fundamental to mentoring as noted in a study by Evanski (1988) and Otto (1994). The faculty strategies included serving as role models, providing practical day-to-day advice, developing trust with the students, serving as guides to the field, and assisting students with employment (P. 221). It is necessary that community college faculty heed particular attention to this strategy, since it can improve overall academic outcomes and individual academic performance amongst all students (Hollis, 2004).

EVALUATION

The final literature that will be reviewed addresses the evaluation of the influence of academic support service programs on student performances. In a study by Boylan et al. (1997), indications are that those students in developmental programs, also known as remedial programs that allow students to improve basic skills, are related to successful outcomes on a long-term basis. The authors write, "Although the presence of a tutoring program coupled with a tutor training component was strongly related to student success, training in all areas was also related to student success". The study also found that the

association of advising and counseling as well as the association of remedial courses to student success was strengthened whenever training was added to the component (p. 28).

Many individuals possess the ability to learn from tutors and academic support services staff in remedial programs, but it is essential that these programs also provide measures to ensure that those providing these services are adequately trained and prepared to assume their duties and responsibilities (Knapp & Raney, 1988). It is very difficult for students to learn the skills that are necessary to achieve academic excellence if those providing training in those skills are not effective teachers and learners themselves (Thelin & Wiseman, 1989). Therefore, remediation and the training aspect of academic support services must be continuously reviewed and improved upon so that students will receive the best possible benefits.

It is necessary to conduct routine evaluations of these programs in order to fully realize their potential in community college settings. Boylan et al. (1997), state that "The act of engaging in evaluation may enable program staff to monitor and improve performance in those components which do provide direct services to students. Without such evaluation, it is impossible to determine how successful various courses or activities may be".

Unless educators are aware of the impact of their services, they cannot improve them. Therefore, "the presence of a regular and systematic evaluation component characterizes the more successful programs" (Petitpas &

Champagne, 1988). These programs will continue to improve upon their weaknesses if they indeed possess an effective evaluation mechanism that is utilized by academic support services staff members and school officials on a routine basis. Educational processes, problems and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps improve practice (Merriam, 1998).

In this instance, there are a number of problems that are evident in the ability of student-athletes to obtain the means and support that are necessary in order to achieve better than average or even superior academic performance. In locations where there are large numbers of minority students, including Texas, this research may possess considerable influence on how academic support services are managed, particularly for those students enrolled in community colleges, since they offer students with opportunities to lay the groundwork for successful college careers. For student-athletes at community colleges, this argument is important since many are often disadvantaged from the very beginning, possibly having had less than prestigious high school careers and often failing to fulfill their obligations required for college coursework. It is this underperformance that is the pinnacle of academic support services, serving as the primary reason that they are essential in the first place. For community colleges across Texas, a substantial majority of these students are from minority groups, particularly Hispanic groups (Cedja and Rhodes, 2004). As a result of their disadvantaged backgrounds, it is likely that these students will not

experience academic achievement at the high school level. However, with the availability and affordability of community colleges, these students have alternatives that can lead them into the college life. These opportunities require that students who also possess some form of athletic ability should be permitted to cultivate that ability through an athletic team. Community colleges serve as a positive step in the right direction for students who seek to fulfill their academic dreams while simultaneously enjoying participation in athletics, especially when those students are not quite prepared for the difficulties of a four-year college or university academic program (Richards & Aries, 1999).

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH RATIONALE

The use of qualitative analysis is based on the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting in their social worlds (Sherman & Webb 1988). To understand the impact of the use of academic support services on student-athletes, a research design was proposed that was qualitative in nature. The character of the research design reflects attention to two research questions that will guide this inquiry:

1. Do community colleges in the state of Texas provide academic support services to student-athletes?
2. Do the student-athletes take advantage of and use these services?

These questions as purported by Marshall and Rossman (1995) "serve as boundaries around the study without unduly constraining it (p. 28)."

Due to the nature of identified research questions, the case study approach has been used to examine the extent to which student-athletes use the academic support services available to them at the community colleges in Texas.

According to Yin (1982) the case study approach has a distinct advantage when a "how" or "why" question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control.

CASE STUDY

Three community colleges in Texas served as the case study sites for this research project. The colleges selected were based on the size of their programs and their locations within the state of Texas.

According to Merriam (1998), the case study plays an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base. Because of its' strengths, the case study is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education. Educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can effect and perhaps improve practice (p. 41).” Furthermore, the researcher is confident that the case study sites will meet the ideal criteria described by Marshall and Rossman (1995):

1. “Entry is possible;
2. There is a high probability that good mix of the processes, people programs, interactions and structures are present;
3. The researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants in the study; and
4. Data quality and creditability of the study are reasonably assured (p. 51).”

SAMPLE SELECTION

The purpose of the research was to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences could be made about some characteristics, attitude or behavior of this population (Babbie, 1990). In keeping with the intent of the study and to determine the how and why of student-athletes using the academic

support services which are available to them, interviews with coaches and student-athletes were conducted. All coaches were asked the same questions. All student-athletes were asked the same questions.

For purposes of answering the first research question, the researcher had access to the published list of all community colleges in Texas, found on the official website of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The sample included 77 community colleges in Texas, and each institution's representative offered data that was provided by those employed in academic support services areas. A sample was used "wherein potential respondents were chosen on the basis of their convenience and availability (Babbie, 1990)".

DATA COLLECTION

Merriam (1998) asserts that "investigation of the case involves observing what is going on, 2) talking informally and formally with people, and 3) examining pertinent documents and materials that are a part of the context (p. 137)." Therefore, these three strategies of data collection were employed by the researcher. Patton (1990) also supports the use of these strategies in case study data collection. "Multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective...By using a combination of interviewing and document analysis, the researcher is able to use different data sources to validate and crosscheck findings" (p. 244).

Initially data were collected by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was mailed to all 77 community colleges in Texas. The main questions concerned whether or not academic support services were offered to student-athletes, what those services were and who was responsible for providing academic support services to student-athletes at the institutions. This questionnaire was pre-tested at six institutions with similar characteristics of the research sample before being used in this study. Pre-testing was important to establish the face validity of the instrument and to improve the questions and format (Creswell, 1994). The final version of the instrument incorporates the expertise of the contributors.

Additionally, data collection of interviews with the coaches and the student-athletes were conducted. With the participants' permission, interviews were audio taped and transcribed and followed a semi-structured protocol. Transcription of interviews allowed the researcher to "re-access data for accuracy" during the analysis process.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of data for this study was simultaneously conducted in a manner that allowed the researcher to acquire insights, pursue leads, and develop emerging themes from the data. According to Merriam (1990) "the right way to analyze data is to do it simultaneously with data collection. At the outset of a qualitative study the investigator knows what the problem is and has selected a sample to collect data in order to address the problem. But the researcher does

not know what will be discovered, what or whom to concentrate on or what the final analysis will be. The final product is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating (p. 162).”

Therefore, the researcher analyzed data through an ongoing naturalistic inquiry paradigm. This concept as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), states that “within the naturalistic paradigm, designs must be emergent rather than pre-ordinate because meaning is determined by context to such a great extent; and because the nature of mutual shaping cannot be known until they are witnessed. All of these factors underscore the inter-determinacy under which the naturalistic inquirer functions; the design must therefore be played by ear; it must unfold, cascade, roll and emerge (p. 209).

Finally, the collected data was managed in two ways. Taped interviews were transcribed and all information, notes and documents were categorized by theme. The HyperResearch computerized software package was used to assist in data management. HyperResearch is a software package designed for qualitative analysis. The use of the qualitative software selected was to assist with searching, sorting, retrieving and re-arranging data.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the data gathered during the course of the study, focusing on student-athletes. The purpose of this study was to determine whether community colleges in the state of Texas provide academic-support services to student-athletes as prescribed in the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) operating principles. The NCAA mandates that "adequate academic support services shall be available to all student-athletes and that support services shall be approved and reviewed periodically by academic authorities outside of the intercollegiate athletic department" (NCAA, 2004). In theory, then, all community colleges should provide comprehensive academic-support services to all of their student-athletes. Such services should be designed to improve the student-athlete's academic performance. The collected data, however, suggests that in most cases these crucial services are not provided to student-athletes.

NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Collegiate sports offer athletes an opportunity to compete on a higher level after their high school careers are finished. More importantly, they provide many student-athletes access to a college education that would otherwise be outside of their reach. In recent years, hundreds of thousands of young men and women participated in NCAA-sanctioned sports at one of the nearly 1000 schools that comprise the NCAA's Division I, Division II, and Division III levels.

The NCAA sets minimum academic requirements that student-athletes must meet in order to compete at the collegiate level. These requirements are based on a student-athlete's grade-point average and ACT or SAT scores. The NCAA uses a sliding scale, that is, the higher a student's grade-point average, the lower she may score on the SAT or ACT. A student that completes high school with a grade-point average of 2.5 (based on a 4.0 scale), for example, needs only a score of 820 or above on the SAT, while a student with a 2.0 grade-point average must score at or above 1010 (NCAA, 2004).

In April 2004 the NCAA member colleges and universities adopted a comprehensive academic-reform package designed to improve the academic success and graduation rates for all student-athletes. The centerpiece of the package is a new metric, known as the Academic Progress Rate (APR), to measure academic achievement for sports teams. This landmark reform was unanimously approved today by the NCAA Board of Directors. A comprehensive, three-year effort to improve the academic progress, retention, and graduation rates of student-athletes, the new system is unprecedented in the NCAA's history, according to NCAA President Myles Brand. "This landmark legislation marks the beginning of a change in college sports," Brand said. "These are strong and well thought-out reforms that are critically necessary to ensure that student-athletes are academically successful. For the first time ever, the NCAA will have the ability to hold institutions and teams accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes." Known as the

Incentives/Disincentives Program (IDP), it will penalize those programs that fail to meet established requirements for educational progress. Robert Hemenway,

Chair of the NCAA Board of Directors, describes the IDP in glowing terms:

“The reform package fulfills the NCAA's mission of making the education of student-athletes paramount in collegiate sports. With these proposals, institutions, teams and coaches will know exactly what they need to accomplish to ensure their student-athletes are progressing in a timely fashion toward completing a degree. If they do not meet the requirements, they will suffer consequences”

The changes described by Hemenway and Brand will affect colleges at all levels, and move beyond earlier attempts to improve educational outcomes of student-athletes competing in NCAA-sanctioned competitions. Brand stressed that “the new academic accountability requirements for institutions and teams build on new academic standards already established for student-athletes to ensure steady progress toward degree completion.” Among many new accounting measures, student-athletes must complete 40% of degree requirements by the end of their second year of college.

Clearly, such rules will have a major impact on community colleges and other two-year colleges. Other reforms implemented by the NCAA and the National Junior College Athletic Association (NCJAA) include:

- a. More stringent requirements for student-athlete eligibility: including, higher GPA requirements, higher standardized test scores, and more rigorous core requirements.
- b. Fewer remedial courses permitted as part of curriculum.
- c. Higher graduation rates.
- d. More accountability for coaches.

- e. Evaluations of academic-support services programs.
- f. Standardized academic-support services programs that meet all the academic needs of student-athletes.
- g. Pressure to hold community college presidents responsible for the academic success and graduation of student-athletes.

NATIONAL JUNIOR COLLEGE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

The NJCAA is a member organization of the NCAA and serves as the governing body for intercollegiate athletics at two-year colleges. Its purpose is to foster and regulate junior college athletics at the intersectional and national levels for a consistency with the total educational program of its members. As such, its programs are designed to meet the unique needs of a diverse group of student-athletes who come from both traditional and non-traditional backgrounds. The reasons that these students decide to attend a junior college are as varied as their pre-college backgrounds.

The NJCAA was conceived in Fresno, California in 1937 and its charter formally approved the following year. A handful of junior college representatives met to organize an association that would promote and supervise a national program of junior college sports and activities consistent with the educational objectives of junior colleges and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

During 1987-88, the NCJAA was fundamentally reorganized with the addition of four college presidents to its board. These new board members were

appointed by the American Association of Community and Junior College Committee (AACJCC). The addition of these new board members initiated a discussion regarding academic requirements for athletes and thus made the annual meeting one of the most important in the history of the organization. In subsequent years the NJCAA grew rapidly and worked to improve both the academic and athletic environment for its member schools and student-athletes.

TEXAS LEGISLATION

Other reforms affected the environment in which the NJCAA operated. In 1999 the Texas legislature passed House Bill 1678. Now known as 61.068, the bill directed the Access and Equity Division of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop “a uniform strategy to identify, attract, enroll, and retain students that reflect the population of the state of Texas” (Texas Legislature, p. 339). As a result of this legislation, community colleges sought to create new opportunities for students to enroll in their institutions. They hoped that additional resources would be available to help these students excel academically while simultaneously participating in extracurricular activities, including intercollegiate athletics.

Given these dramatic changes to student-athletics in Texas’ community colleges, this study sought to determine whether students participating in intercollegiate athletics were actually using the academic support services. Three coaches, three female student-athletes, and three male student-athletes were interviewed. The interviewees were drawn from three different community

colleges. A total of nine interviews were conducted, with three interviews from each college type (small rural setting, large urban setting, and a medium-sized, suburban institution). The questions were the same for all coaches and all student-athletes. Interview questions were designed to address specifically the research questions proposed in the study. Responses were kept anonymous in an effort to draw out complex and revealing information. To maintain anonymity to support my findings, excerpts of the interviews were incorporated throughout the study. Disclosing the names of the interviewees would compromise their anonymity and therefore they are not included in this study. Both the coaches and student-athletes were very concerned that their interview answers might be made public.

Research Question #1 Do community colleges in the state of Texas provide academic support services to student-athletes?

Research Question #2 Are student-athletes using these services?

The following list comprises the 10 interview questions designed to answer the two research questions.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS-CORRELATION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Research Question #1

Institutional Questions:

Does your college provide academic support services targeted specifically toward student-athletes? ____ yes ____no.

If yes, what are the specific services? Please check all that apply.

____A comprehensive academic-support services program

____Tutoring

____Advising

____Study Hall

____Study-skills class

____Other, please describe_____

If no, what best describes the reason for not providing these services?

Financial constraints_____

Facility limitations_____

Staff limitations_____

No model for comprehensive program_____

Other reason_____

Who is responsible for the academic support services at your institution?

____Head coach and coaching staff

____Academic advising staff

____Other, please identify

Would you be interested in learning about the components of a comprehensive academic-support services program and joining a state

organization that attempts to standardize these types of programs at community colleges in the state of Texas?

___ Yes ___ No

2. Research Question #2

Student-Athlete Interview Questions

Do you use the academic support services that are provided for you?

___ yes ___ no If no, why? _____

What services do you use most frequently?

___ Advising

___ Tutoring

___ Study Hall

___ Study-skills class

___ Other, please list _____

Do you feel these services help you?

Why or why not? _____

Who has the most influence over your academic program?

___ Coach and coaching staff

___ Academic advisor

___ Myself

___ Other, please explain

3. Research Question #2

Coaches Interview Questions

Please describe how you are responsible for student-athletes' academic preparation.

What do you believe are the responsibilities of the College President to the student-athlete?

How do you promote and contribute to the education of the student-athletes in your program?

PROFILE OF INTEREST GROUPS

This section characterizes the areas that each group of interviewees represents in the community-college environment. The descriptions isolate interest group views, and thus provide boundaries within the study. The Interest groups surveyed are characterized as follows.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT-ATHLETES

This group of participants included six community-college student-athletes. The group included freshmen, sophomores, males, and females. They attended community colleges of different sizes and in different locations. They also encountered a wide range of academic support, from no services at all to comprehensive programs. These student-athletes provided the core data for the study. The student-athletes are identified as Interest Group One.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE COACHES

Participants in this group included three community college coaches. Two coaches were male and one was female. The coaches represented three different sports teams including volleyball, basketball and tennis. They are identified as Interest Group Two.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC SERVICES PROVIDERS

These participants were community college employees responsible for the academic-support services. In some cases these providers were the coaches. Programs included in the study represented institutions with populations ranging from 17,000 plus to as small as 2500 students.

STUDY RESULTS

The official website of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which lists all 77 Texas community colleges, provided the data for research question one. Of Texas' 77 community colleges, 47 had at least one intercollegiate sport. After surveying these 47 schools, it was determined that 23 schools had some type of academic-support services targeted specifically at student-athletes. Seven schools had no academic support services for student-athletes. Seventeen schools did not respond, giving a response rate of 61%. Additionally, three institutions provided what they described as "comprehensive academic-support services programs." These three schools all had over 10,000 students. Of the 23 schools that provided basic services, 20 offered tutoring, academic

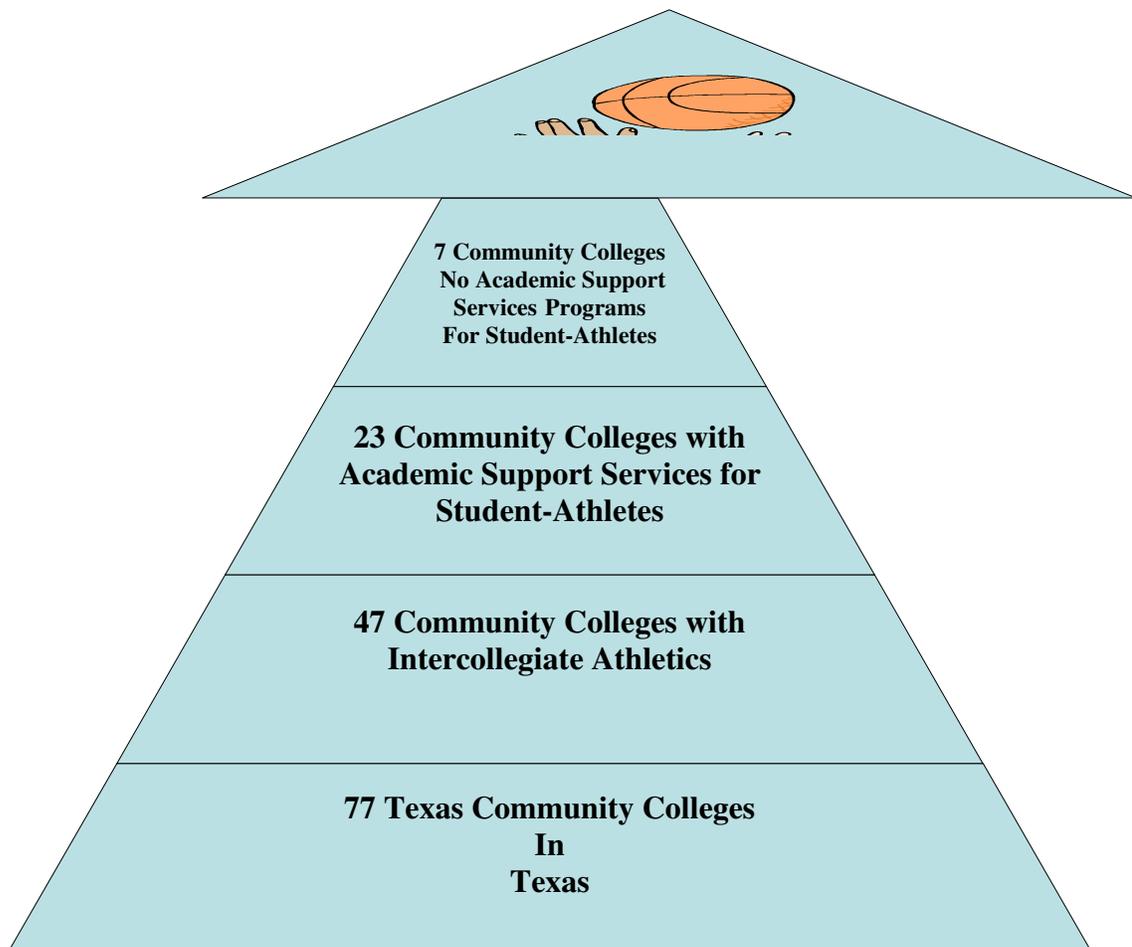
advising, and study halls. Only three schools required study-skills classes or a college-survival class.

Of the 47 schools that participated in intercollegiate athletics, the seven schools that did not provide academic-support services for their student-athletes blamed financial constraints and staff limitations. Of the 20 schools that provided tutoring, advising, and study halls, surprisingly, six institutions did not want further information regarding models for academic-support services programs, nor were they interested in joining an organized state organization. The reasons ranged from time constraints to not really caring about “a program of services” Not surprisingly, the respondents for all six of these institutions were head coaches also responsible for the academic-support services.

Six student-athletes and three coaches from three different community colleges provided the data for research question two. While the questions were straight forward and direct, the data from the two interest groups provided five major emerging themes. Six additional items of interest were each, also identified by at least one participant.

Diagram 1

Academic Support Services Programs for Student-Athletes
At Community Colleges in Texas



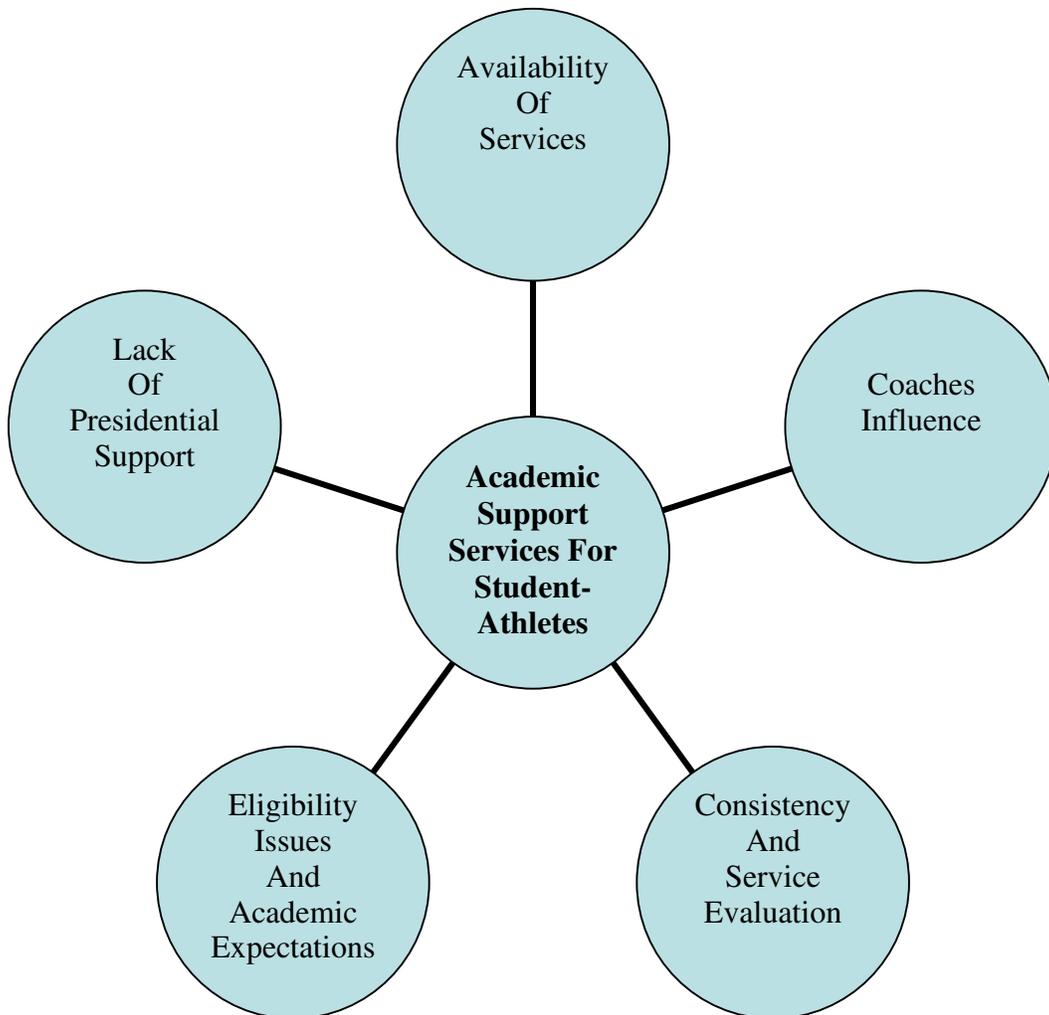
EMERGING THEMES

The findings presented in this research report emphasize themes that emerged from the interviews. By focusing on themes, rather than discrete data, such findings provide rich, “context-bound” information and uncover patterns that help to explain a phenomenon (Creswell, 1994). The themes address research questions related to the provision of academic-support services for student-athletes at community colleges in the state of Texas. The themes also address whether student-athletes actually use the services that are provided for them. A total of five themes emerged from the data acquired during the study:

1. Availability of services
2. Coaches Influence
3. Consistency and Service Evaluation
4. Eligibility Issues/Academic Expectations
5. Lack of presidential/ institutional support

Diagram 2

EMERGING THEMES



These themes helped to answer two key questions: First, do community colleges in Texas provide academic-support services to student-athletes? Second, if they are available, do student-athletes take advantage of these services? To support the findings, comments from the interests groups are woven into each topic. Interest Group One comprises student-athletes. Interest Group Two consists of coaches.

The aforementioned themes resonated throughout the study. However, there were some other concerns worth mentioning by one or more of the study participants but did not rise to the level of being a major theme. They included:

1. Professors view student-athletes as dumb jocks.

Student-athletes and coaches as well, mentioned this issue. Student-athletes felt that instructors, whether consciously or subconsciously, treated them as if they would not be able to keep up in class or the class may be too difficult for them. This determination was made on the first day of class before any assignment had been turned in. One coach commented that he had been contacted by an instructor who was being “pro-active” in notifying him that “his student-athlete” probably wouldn’t be able to handle her very challenging class. The student eventually received an A in the class.

2. Required practice sessions during non-sanctioned times (an NCAA violation).

Two student-athletes complained that they were aware of this violation because the coach told them it was illegal for him to “officially” run practices during non-sanctioned practice time and that he knew how to get around that “little problem”.

3. Reneging of promised financial aid.

One student-athlete was quite concerned that he and his parents were promised “a full ride”. They understood that to be a scholarship. However, upon arriving on campus, the student-athlete learned that he had to fill out financial aid forms and apply for most of this “full ride”.

4. Unfair treatment of student-athletes by head coach and staff.

Another student-athlete reported international student-athletes received preferential treatment and more financial aid. In his opinion, since the student-athlete was touted as being the next Dirk Nivitsky, he was pampered and “treated like royalty”.

5. Coaches lying to parents to attract student-athletes.

One student-athlete reported that his parents were painted this wonderful picture about students being provided with excellent academic help. That was one of the coaches’ main recruiting points. However, the actuality of the situation was a

critical lack of any services at all including a study hall that was too noisy to study. The coach out right lied.

6. Lure of professionalism.

This issue was a concern brought up by the basketball coach. In his experience, many student-athletes, even though they are at the community college level, still have aspirations of “going pro”. To combat this situation, a special segment in athlete-orientation is dedicated to this subject.

THEME ONE: AVAILABILTY OF SERVICES

The NCAA has adopted a comprehensive academic-reform package designed to improve the academic success and graduation rates of all student-athletes. As part of the program, the NCAA is committed to helping institutions find educational resources to help student-athletes succeed in and out of the classroom. The reforms deemed essential to meet these goals build on a foundation of respect—respect for the dignity of the young men and women who compete, and a belief that they are legitimate students who deserve to be on campus. Such convictions demand adequate academic-support services for student-athletes at all colleges and universities, including community colleges.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) have gathered information concerning strategic actions that have been or will be implemented in relation to

student-athlete support programs and services . A fundamental concern is whether these services are actually available to all student-athletes. Are these organizations truly improving the educational outcomes of student-athletes or simply spouting the rhetoric of reform? Unfortunately, the responses of student-athletes suggest the latter:

“My coach only mentioned academic services just before classes started. I haven’t heard anything else, except that I have to turn in a progress report three times a semester.” (Interest Group One)

“We have an academic advisor that gives us a lot of information on getting academic help. She tells us everything that we need to know. Sometimes we do have to wait to get help.” (Interest Group One)

“What are academic support services?” (Interest Group One)

“This is a small school so we use the same services that are available to all of the other students. Nothing special for us. ” (Interest Group One)

The services seem to be fragmented at best. Students may be made aware that some services exist, but emphasizing their availability and use is not happening in the community colleges in Texas.

THEME TWO: COACHES’ INFLUENCE

How coaches relate to the academic lives of their student-athletes is a critical theme. The coach serves a multi-faceted purpose in intercollegiate athletics.

Though coaches are hired to perform in the field of intercollegiate competition, a lot more is often expected of them. A coach, whether or not he or she is a formal educator, must always be a teacher and mentor who promotes and contributes to the total education of the student-athletes in his or her program (Bailey and Littleton, 1991). Coaches and student-athletes described such responsibilities as follows:

“If I, as coach, am not convinced that education is important to the student - athlete, the student-athlete is not going to be interested in going to class and making as good grades as he can. He’s got the only excuse he needs. The person he looks up to for all his guidance has made it clear that it really doesn’t matter what he does as long as he shows up on Saturday and performs. He’s been taught from day one: you please the coach and everything is OK. The athletic side of me loves that!” (Interest Group Two)

“My role as coach, is to make sure that my athletes are informed about the services that the college has available to them. During our orientation for student-athletes, the students are given a tour of computer labs and the Student Services Center, and given a brochure on all of the academic-support services available at the college. Quite honestly, my assistant coaches take it from there.” (Interest Group Two)

“I try to stress the importance of an education to my players. The majority come in thinking that basketball and girls are all there is to college, especially those who come in on scholarship. I tell them everyone won’t make the pros or even the farm teams, so having the degree should be the number one priority. This would allow them to continue their aspirations for the sport as well as go on to get a four-year degree.” (Interest Group Two)

“It would be nice if there was a better relationship between us (the coaches) and the academic side of the house so we know what’s going on sooner. I get the feeling sometimes that our academic folks think they are the coach and therefore don’t consult with me on some things.” (Interest Group Two)

“Let’s be honest here. My major concern is whether my players are eligible to play when it comes time to play. Yes, I do care about their grades but they are here to play ball and they know that. I do try to give them a reality check and let them know if they are here at the community college level the chances of them going pro most likely “ain’t goin to happen,” so they might as well try to get the degree before they get up out of here”. (Interest Group Two)

“My biggest problem is with the coach lying to my parents and saying that I am on a “full-ride” scholarship. This coach has a lot of influence and came around my family ‘skinin and grinin’ and making a lot of promises. He told my momma

that he would be my father away from home. The truth is I only see him during practice and the game of course, but the assistant coaches are really the ones who feel like my 'peeps' (family)". (Interest Group One)

"My coach is a really nice person, although she cusses us out when we need it. She motivates me to play the best I can all of the time if I want to be the best and she is really strict on me about getting my grades. We have to do progress reports for the advisor and coach makes us attend the athlete study hall and we have our own (team) study hall on Sundays. Coach makes me feel good about myself. She's cool! (Interest Group One)

"My coach is down! He is really cool with all of the players and a lot of the ladies on campus like him almost as much as they like us. He doesn't make us go to study hall and he tells us which teachers are cool. He looks out for the 'brothers' just like he looks out for the 'white boys.' He drives a 'Benzo' and a SUV. So he got it going on! As far as grades are concerned, he makes us meet with the advisor but that's about it. Oh, we do turn in progress reports sometimes. (Interest Group Two)

Given the variety of comments, both positive and negative, regarding the mentoring role played by coaches, it is clear that a successful student-athlete often requires a coach who is an active mentor. Beyond any concerns about

wins and losses, a coach should impress the importance of academics and graduation upon the student-athlete (Underwood, 1984).

THEME THREE: CONSISTENCY AND EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC-SUPPORT SERVICES

A major issue identified by the interviewees was a lack of consistency in academic services. Such inconsistency is exacerbated by the weak evaluation procedures used to determine the effectiveness of academic support. As asserted by Elazar (1984), while conflict is inevitable where interest groups hold diverse opinions, leaders in charge of policy should be aware of this and promote constructive dialogue and ensure that all voices have an equal chance to be heard. The experiences of the interviewees supports Elazar's tenet:

"When you have a Board of Trustees and a President deciding on which athletic programs have to be cut from the school, it's only fair to give all of the stakeholders a chance to voice their opinions and give evidence to support their claims. Us (coaches), parents, student-athletes and any other interested party should be a part of the decision and evaluation process, not included after the decision is made. Many times the 'academics' don't understand the academic requirements for student-athletes. One of our teams was cut and they honestly had one of the highest grade point averages of all of the teams, but because of

the relationship of one of our coaches with one of the Board of Trustee members, the way they did the evaluation and selection of who was to be cut was more political than substantive. I didn't like it and my team wasn't cut. I don't believe we were evaluated on academics at all. If you're going to have an evaluation process, it should be fair to everybody." (Interest Group Two)

"We don't have any kind of evaluation process for our academic services. It is pretty much do as you can. We are small so everybody tries to get involved, but the main help comes from one advisor assigned to 'advise' the athletes and usually that is all that happens. There are academic services at the college but they usually don't fit around our athletic schedules. My coaches attempt to run study halls and keep up with the academic side of things, but we have a compliance person who makes sure everybody is eligible to play at the beginning of each semester." (Interest Group Two)

"I have never been asked about whether the academic-support services program is helping me—this is the first time. I think 'Coach' asked me to do this because I always try to take advantage of what is here for us. To be honest with you, I think the program kind of helps, but when you have a study hall and you can't study because it is too loud and unorganized I don't think that is good and I know I read in the student-athlete news letter about the 'great' study hall. Like I said, no one ever asked me about it and I go all of the time." (Interest Group One)

“What are academic-support services? The only thing we do for our grades is a progress report and go to the labs if we need extra help. My school is a little school out in the sticks and we don’t have a lot of stuff like the big schools. I think a lot of us do good in our grades because we don’t have a lot of other stuff to do“. (Interest GroupOne)

“The program that we have is not mandatory for athletes to participate in. I find that some of my student-athletes need more help than others so I make them spend more time in the study center. It is awful to find out that my athletes are about to be put on the bench because they didn’t pass their classes“. (Interest Group Two)

There does seem to be some concern about this issue. However, when asked what they (coaches) thought should be done to improve services, all three coaches had no suggestions. They did feel that should be the role of another department but weren’t quite sure which department. Most suggested academic advising.

THEME FOUR: ELIGIBILITY AND THE STANDARDIZATION OF ACADEMIC-SUPPORT SERVICES

The NCAA and the NCJAA govern intercollegiate athletics, creating rules, hiring officials, and developing eligibility requirements for student-athletes. Most

of the rules are obvious and benign. One requires a student to be enrolled in the school for which they compete. Another prohibits professional athletes from competing at the college level. Other rules, however, are much more controversial, especially those that attempt to standardize academic requirements. These rules create minimum standards that a student-athlete must meet in order to play. At face value such standards appear innocuous, but they sometimes conflict with those of the college, particularly in the community-college setting. For example, the NCAA and the NCJAA, the governing bodies of intercollegiate athletics for community colleges permit student-athletes to carry a 1.75 grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale. Most community colleges, however, set a 2.0 GPA as their baseline for satisfactory academic standards

Athletic-eligibility standards are thus at the center of an ongoing debate about collegiate athletics. Eligibility does not simply affect whether a student-athlete is allowed to play, it may also affect a student's transfer strategy and even his or her chances for graduation. The relationship between academics and athletics is neither easy to describe nor something that coaches, instructors or administrators agree upon. Reform efforts are well underway. One conference, for example, now requires all student-athletes to meet NCAA freshman-eligibility standards. Similarly, some states require all students in publicly-supported institutions to maintain a "C" average in order to participate in extracurricular activities, including intercollegiate sports. Judging by the tone of recent NCAA conventions, concern for the reputations of colleges and the welfare of student-

athletes—irrespective of gender, race or sport—will be the centerpiece of athletics administration as we approach a new century. “We do not want to interfere with that agenda. We hope to advance it” (Knight Commission, 2004). The stakeholders thus agree that eligibility requirements are important issues that need to be sorted out between conferences, the governing bodies of intercollegiate athletics, and individual colleges and universities.

The interviewees also demonstrated a keen interest in eligibility requirements: “I believe that very strict eligibility standards could put some would-be student-athletes out on the street if they don’t get in to an athletic program with the built in academic-support services programs. I believe the academic eligibility rules, however lenient they are at community colleges do cause some student-athletes to drop out of college. All schools are not equal so they can in no way offer equally adequate academic-support services at all of the schools. So at the very least there should be some kind of requirements for the standardization of academic help so that the student-athletes with poor basic skills can get a good start at least, regardless of which community college they attend”. (Interest Group Two)

“As a coach, eligibility has to be number one on the list. My players can’t play if they are not eligible. I know there is a major change that has been put into place last April (2004) that’s going to affect eligibility. We have a compliance officer on my campus who double checks grades and gives us a report on who is eligible at

the beginning of each semester. I have my coaches checking during the semester and have them okay any classes that are dropped so that nobody goes below 12 credit hours.” (Interest Group Two)

“All I know about eligibility is that I have to be in at least 12 credits for the semester and I have to get a 1.75 average. Coach told us that at the beginning of the semester. We can’t drop a class without checking with them first. In the semester that our sport is not in, we can take more than 12 credit hours, and we still have to get a 1.75 average.” (Interest Group One)

“I don’t worry about that. Coach takes care of us.” (Interest Group One)

The opinions from the coaches suggest that more strict eligibility requirements will actually cause more harm than good. Most of these community college coaches believe that the eligibility requirements aren’t really appropriate for community college student-athletes.

THEME FIVE: NCAA PRESSURE REGARDING COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics was formed by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in October 1989 in response to more than a decade of highly-visible scandals in college sports. The Commission was charged with creating a reform agenda that emphasized academic values in

an arena where commercialization of college sports often overshadowed the underlying goals of higher education. The Commission believes strongly that college presidents are the key to successful reform of intercollegiate athletics. College presidents must exercise clear authority on campuses, in conferences, and in the decision-making councils of the NCAA, according to the Knight Commission. Presidents of course, are responsible and accountable for the long term vision and short-term operation of their institutions. A president cannot be a figurehead leader of the athletic department; his or her authority must extend into the gym and onto the playing field. Only then can athletic programs be reformed.

The consensus of the coaches was that, “yes, in a general sense, it would be great if the president took a more active role in the athletics programs at the colleges”. However, they all raised the same issue of the president possibly overstepping his “bounds” and thinking that he is the coach.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OVERVIEW

This study assessed the academic-support services at community colleges in the state of Texas. Both the NCAA and the Texas Legislature (House Bill 1678) initiated educational reforms in Texas' community colleges by requiring that all colleges provide academic-support services to student-athletes.

The purpose of the study was twofold: First, to determine if the initiative has been implemented at all community colleges in Texas with athletic programs. Second, was to assess whether students use these services. The interest groups and their relationship to these processes were examined.

The research examined only the opinions of coaches and student-athletes of three Texas community colleges. No comparable data exists within Texas and no effort was made to research data from other states. Therefore, results may only be relevant to Texas. Second, the study was not intended to address four-year colleges and universities, but to characterize the academic services of community college standards. In sum, the investigation examined only the "if" and "why" of academic-support services at community colleges in the state of Texas. The questionnaire for the interviews contained qualitative research questions for the coaches and qualitative research questions for student-athletes that focused on the availability and use of academic -support services. The questionnaire for the institution included qualitative questions that assessed

statewide provision of academic-support services for student-athletes. The data was analyzed and it yielded five topics or themes, which were addressed in Chapter Four.

POLITICAL CLIMATE

As asserted by Mazzoni (1994), the age of accountability has left no stone unturned. Therefore, it is no surprise that athletic organizations such as the NCAA and the NCJAA have proposed a bold new approach to academics for student-athletes at all institutions of higher education, including rule changes and more stringent academic requirements. For many student-athletes, such changes increase the importance of academic assistance, especially in community colleges.

Siberman (1970) asserted that rules emphasize standardization and routinization of all actions. The coaches who took part in this study commented extensively about the influence of rules on student-athlete academic performance, especially the difficulty of transforming a deeply-embedded institutional culture:

“The NCAA and NCJAA have imposed new rules and requirements on student-athletes not being able to use as many developmental classes in calculating their grade point averages for eligibility purposes. Now, remember, we are still at the community college and many of my athletes are coming in needing developmental classes just to get ready for the college-level stuff. Somehow we

need to get those rule changes going before the athletes get here and are behind before they ever get going. There seems to be a logical inconsistency with that“!

(Interest Group Two)

“What we have here is a mixed bag of nuts. As a coach I understand the need to get our athletes educated, but sometimes the rules don’t match the reality of the situation. We have non-qualifiers who haven’t done that well in high school and now they have to do even better when they get to college“. (Interest GroupTwo)

“My worry is that some of the new requirements may not be an accurate reality in the sense that student-athletes already have a lot on their plates“. (Interest

Group Two)

As these comments illustrate, in order for rules as an expression of policy to be effective, they must incorporate several factors. Mitchell and Iannacone (1990)

describe the conditions for rule enforcement as follows:

1. They must apply to behavior, not to intention, desires, or attitudes.
2. They must provide for specific rewards or penalties.
3. Rules must be consistent.
4. Enforceable rules must be understandable and appear sensible to those expected to comply. Enforcement is also impossible when there are too many rules (p.87).

RESPONSE TO RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

While colleges require certain academic standards from their students, some have tried to help the struggling student-athlete to improve academically. The services offered in these support systems vary: most offer tutoring and study hall programs, but the common denominator, it seems, is a desire to make the athlete a better student.

Out of 47 institutions which offer intercollegiate athletics, only 23 offer any type of academic support specifically targeted towards student-athletes. Seven institutions do not provide any academic support specifically targeted towards student-athletes.

The interview participants in all interest groups indicated some type of dissatisfaction with student-athletes not receiving needed help in all academic areas. There is a widespread perception that schools with intercollegiate athletics have academic-support services that compliment these programs. In fact, such programs are rare.

RESPONSE TO RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

When examining the specific factors that affected student-athlete (Interest Group One) use of academic-support services programs, it became clear that many participants did not know what academic support services are, who provides these services, or what they are intended to do. Moreover, the availability of such programs does not mean they are widely used.

There is a clear concern in Interest Group One about the services they perceive as being “automatic”:

“Before I came to school here, my coach told my mom that I would have all kinds of help with classes. So, I figured it would be a piece of cake. You know, play ball, have my tutors, go to study hall and call it a day! Well, it don’t work like that. I asked for a tutor the first week of class. Three weeks later I still didn’t have a tutor. Guess what, I got behind. I had to drop a class, but I was okay because the academic advisor made me sign up for 15 hours instead of 12 hours like coach told me to take“. (Interest Group One)

“When we go on the road and come back, I have tests and exams to do. I need some help right then. I had been concentrating on the game and stuff, so English and Math fell by the wayside. I go to the labs, but they are usually crowded and you only get 15 minutes of help in there anyway. What can I say, I guess I know about ‘em but it don’t help a lot if you know about ‘em but can’t get to ‘em to use ‘em when you need ‘em“. (Interest Group One)

“I don’t use the services because I don’t have time. I know about them, but sometimes it’s a lot easier to get with someone in my class“. (Interest Group One)

“Our coach and an academic advisor told us about the academic services in the student-athlete orientation before classes started and the assistant coaches make sure we use everything.” (Interest Group One)

Student-athletes do not use the services simply because many of them are not aware of the existence of the academic support services. In some instances, if they have been informed of the availability of the support services, the expectation of using the services is not there.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To ensure that the mandates of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the National Junior College Athletic Association and the Texas Legislature are followed, policy makers must consult with community college personnel responsible for providing academic support services to student-athletes. Like general academic standards for colleges and universities, the rules governing intercollegiate athletics are based on general precepts and are not tailor-made for community colleges. The “open door” admissions policy of community colleges must be taken into consideration. Preparation must begin well before college, to ensure that anyone who chooses to participate in intercollegiate athletics during their freshman year of college is fully prepared to go into college-level courses. This is especially important given the new standards that do not allow as many developmental courses to be used when computing grade point averages or course loads for eligibility purposes as in the past.
2. Participants in intercollegiate athletics should receive more financial support than the general student populace, since they are required to attend classes, turn in assignments, make presentations and pass exams like everyone else, but also represent the college in competitions and use valuable time to practice for their sport. This raises an old argument: Should we pay student-athletes to play? On the positive side, fiscal incentives might be used to make coaches and presidents more accountable for the academic

performance of student-athletes. A formula could be devised that includes a minimum grade point average for student athletes for all schools who choose to participate in intercollegiate athletics at the community-college level. This grade point average should be no lower than the minimum standard for satisfactory academic progress at the institution. Requiring a minimum grade point average for student-athletes, and one that is tied to athletic funding, would motivate coaches to make academics a higher priority. Using fiscal incentives to secure compliance also stimulates efficient management (Innaconne, Mitchell, Morgan, Wirt, and Astin, 1990). Under such a regime, academic support services for student-athletes would become a priority .

3. When attempting major reform efforts, such as the IDP of the NCAA, policy makers should understand that entrenched constituencies often lead to plan failure. Many reform efforts have also failed because some interest groups have found ways around new policies, rules, and regulations. Consult with the constituencies!
4. The conceptual model for performance-based funding could rely on extant performance-based systems in some states. These funding plans could be articulated by the legislature and the higher-education agency charged with implementing the plan. Scholars of educational reform and public policy (Wirt, and Kirst, Stone, 1988), assert that too often the legislature focuses on creating plans without first developing ideological consensus among those who must implement it.

5. All community colleges in Texas should have a standardized, comprehensive academic-support services program that meets all the academic needs of each student-athlete. Currently, programs are institutionally fragmented and under publicized among students.

Such a standardized system requires more funding and greater participation and accountability from head coaches and college presidents. It is the colleges' obligation to educate all student-athletes, especially because student-athletes commit so much of themselves to the college. Real reform must begin here.

6. Once promises are made to student-athletes and parents, these promises must be kept. Promises of "full rides" and academic services for all academic needs are the most critical. Students turn down offers from other institutions to attend a particular college. That college should be made to live up to all promises made and put it in writing and notarize it. Some coaches need that type of enforcement. The formal process of "signing letters of intent" in place at this time is not working as it should.

7. Academic support services should be taken completely out of the hands of the coaches. They know not what they are doing.

APPENDICES

A. Survey Questions

B. Participation Letter

C. Components of a Comprehensive academic Support Services Program

D. List of Texas Community Colleges

APPENDIX- A.

Sample Questionnaire Provided to Study Participants

The purpose of this survey is to determine if community colleges in Texas are providing academic support services to student-athletes, what these services are and to elicit responses concerning the creation of a state organization for academic support services providers in the state of Texas.

Institutional Questions:

Does your college provide academic support services targeted specifically toward student-athletes? ____ yes ____no.

If yes, what are the specific services? Please select from the list below.

____A comprehensive academic-support services program

____Tutoring

____Advising

____Study Hall

____Study-skills class

____Other, please describe_____

If no, what best describes the reason for not providing these services?

Financial constraints_____

Facility limitations_____

Staff limitations_____

No model for comprehensive program_____

Other reason_____

Who is responsible for the academic support services at your institution?

Head coach and coaching staff

Academic advising staff

Other, please identify

Would you, as the support services provider for student-athletes at your institution, be interested in learning about the components of a comprehensive academic-support services program and joining a state organization that attempts to standardize these types of programs at community colleges in the state of Texas?

Yes No

4. Research Question #2

Student-Athlete Interview Questions

Do you use the academic support services that are provided for you?

yes no. If no, why not? _____

What services do you use most frequently?

Advising

Tutoring

Study Hall

Study-skills class

Other, please list _____

Do you feel these services help you?

Why or why not? _____

Who has the most influence over your academic program?

____ Coach and coaching staff

____ Academic advisor

____ Myself

____ Other, please explain

What major issues do you face when trying to balance your academic program with athletic participation?

5. Research Question #2

Coaches Interview Questions

Please describe how you are responsible for student-athletes' academic preparation.

What do you believe are the responsibilities of the College President to the student-athlete?

APPENDIX- B

PARTICIPANT LETTER

Dear Colleague:

As a doctoral candidate in the University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program, I, Audrey Newsome, request your participation in a research study entitled "An Assessment of Academic Support Services for Student-Athletes at Texas Community Colleges". The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the use of academic support services by student-athletes at community colleges in the state of Texas.

There are no feasible risks or benefits from your participation because this is simply an assessment study. The survey should take no longer than one hour of your time. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or my committee chairperson at either of the following numbers:

Audrey Newsome

11239 Park Central Place

Dallas, Texas 75230

Phone--214-363-6503

Dr. William E. Moore, Jr.

Community College Leadership Program

University of Texas at Austin

Committee Chairperson

Phone--512-471-7545

APPENDIX-C

Components of Comprehensive Academic Support Services Programs

- Full-time counselors devoted to athletics, typical ratio 150 student-athletes: 1 counselor.
- Structured partnerships between academic advisor(s) and coaches to promote and encourage academic excellence.
- Academic Policy Statement read and signed by student-athlete, coach and advisor at the beginning of matriculation.
- High school transcripts required of all new freshmen by mid-July. Analysis of transcripts by coaches and advisors to determine special needs.
- Collaboration between advisor and coaches to recommend placement in specific support services for learning disabled or other at-risk students.
- Orientation to college for student-athletes prior to start of semester. Academic requirements for major, degree and transfer should be covered. Educational plans should be generated at this time. Parents must be included.
- Mandatory advising sessions required prior to next term registration.
- Curriculum of remedial courses for at-risk students who come with insufficient academic preparation.
- All new freshmen student-athletes required to take study skills or college survival class.

- Mandatory study hall and tutoring for all freshmen and continuing student-athletes, who fall below 2.5 grade point average, in any given semester.
- Study hall attendance reported to coaches.
- Consequences set by coaches for failure to attend study hall, failure to return progress reports and for missed classes and tutoring sessions.
- Sign-in and sign-out procedure for study hall.
- Structured group tutoring and one-on-one tutoring during study hall.
- Individual advising appointments for each student-athlete on a regular basis and active educational plan on file for each student-athlete.
- Standardized progress reports distributed and collected four predetermined times during the semester.
- Intervention meeting with coach, advisor and student-athlete when athlete is failing to meet academic requirements or to submit progress reports. Options are discussed.
- Structured system of warnings and consequences in place.
- Student-athlete advisory board made up of team captains or elected reps from each team.
- Service-learning requirement.
- Academic excellence encouraged, promoted and rewarded; newsletter for athletics highlighting student-athlete academic accomplishments.
- Philosophy and mission statement in place that ties back to college mission and philosophy.

Adapted from the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics' (N4A) Guide for Student-Athletes.

APPENDIX D

Texas Community Colleges

Institution	Administrative Officer	Main Telephone	Fall 2004 Preliminary Headcount
<u>Alamo Community College District</u> 201 West Sheridan San Antonio, TX 78204-1429	J. Terence Kelly Chancellor	(210) 208-8020	49,123
<u>Alvin Community College</u> 3110 Mustang Road Alvin, TX 77511	Rodney Allbright President	(281) 756-3500	4,079
<u>Amarillo College</u> P.O. Box 447 Amarillo, TX 79178	Steven W. Jones President	(806) 371-5000	11,673
<u>Angelina College</u> PO Box 1768 Lufkin, TX 75902-1768	Larry Phillips President	(936) 639-1301	4,940
<u>Austin Community College</u> 5930 Middle Fiskville Road Austin, TX 78752	Robert Aguero President	(512) 223-7000	29,084
<u>Blinn College</u> 902 College Avenue Brenham, TX 77833	Donald E. Voelter President	(979) 830-4000	14,049
<u>Brazosport College</u> 500 College Drive Lake Jackson, TX 77566	Millicent Valek President	(979) 230-3000	3,507
<u>Brookhaven College</u> (Part of Dallas County Community College District) 3939 Valley View Lane Dallas, TX 75244-4906	Alice Villadsen President	(972) 860-4700	9,878
<u>Cedar Valley College</u> (Part of Dallas County Community College District) 3030 North Dallas Avenue Lancaster, TX 75134	Jennifer B. Wimbish President	(972) 860-8200	4,377
<u>Central Campus</u> (Part of San Jacinto College District)	Monte Blue President	(281) 476-1501	11,991

8060 Spencer Highway Pasadena, TX 77505			
<u>Central Texas College</u> Box 1800 Killeen, TX 76540-9990	James Anderson Chancellor	(254) 526-7161	7,930
<u>Cisco Junior College</u> 101 College Heights Cisco, TX 76437	John Muller President	(254) 442-5000	3,580
<u>Clarendon College</u> P.O. Box 968 Clarendon, TX 79226	Myles Shelton President	(806) 874-3571	1,018
<u>Coastal Bend College</u> 3800 Charco Road Beeville, TX 78102	John Brockman President	(361) 358-2838	3,821
<u>College of the Mainland Community College District</u> 1200 Amburn Road Texas City, TX 77591	Homer Hayes President	(409) 938-1211	3,961
<u>Collin County Community College District</u> 2800 East Spring Creek Parkway Plano, TX 75074	Cary Israel President	(972) 548-6790	17,702
<u>Cy Fair College</u> (Part of North Harris Montgomery Community College District) 9191 Barker Cypress Road Houston, TX 77433	Diane K. Troyer President	(281) 290-3200	8,510
<u>Dallas County Community College District</u> 701 Elm Street Dallas, TX 75202-3299	Jesus Carreon Chancellor	(214) 860-2125	58,140
<u>Del Mar College</u> 101 Baldwin Boulevard Corpus Christi, TX 78404	Carlos Garcia President	(361) 698-1200	11,382
<u>Eastfield College</u> (Part of Dallas County Community College District) 3737 Motley Drive Mesquite, TX 75150	Rodger A. Pool President	(972) 860-7001	9,574
<u>El Centro College</u>	Wright Lassiter	(972) 860-2010	6,104

(Part of Dallas County Community College District) Main and Lamar Dallas, TX 75202	President		
<u>El Paso Community College District</u> P.O. Box 20500 El Paso, TX 79998	Richard Rhodes President	(915) 831-2000	26,435
<u>Frank Phillips College</u> P.O. Box 5118 Borger, TX 79008-5118	Herb Swender President	(806) 457-4200	1,398
<u>Galveston College</u> 4015 Avenue Q Galveston, TX 77550	Elva Concha LeBlanc President	(409) 944-4242	2,353
<u>Grayson County College</u> 6101 Highway 691 Denison, TX 75020	Alan Scheibmeir President	(903) 465-6030	3,941
<u>Hill College</u> 112 Lamar Drive Hillsboro, TX 76645	William Auvenshine President	(254) 582-2555	3,173
<u>Houston Community College System</u> (Part of Houston Community College System) P.O. Box 667517 Houston, TX 77266-7517	Bruce Leslie Chancellor	(713) 718-2000	36,205
<u>Howard College</u> 1001 Birdwell Lane Big Spring, TX 79720	Cheryl T. Sparks President	(915) 264-5000	2,643
<u>Howard County Junior College District</u> 1001 Birdwell Lane Big Spring, TX 79720	Cheryl T. Sparks President	(915) 267-6311	2,812
<u>Kilgore College</u> 1100 Broadway Kilgore, TX 75662	William M. Holda President	(903) 984-8531	4,937
<u>Kingwood College</u> (Part of North Harris Montgomery Community College District) 20000 Kingwood Drive Humble, TX 77339	Linda Stegall President	(281) 312-0440	6,421

<u>Laredo Community College</u> West End Washington Street Laredo, TX 78040-4395	Ramon Dovalina President	(956) 722-0521	9,030
<u>Lee College</u> 511 South Whiting Street Baytown, TX 77520-4703	Martha Ellis President	(281) 427-5611	5,854
<u>McLennan Community College</u> 1400 College Drive Waco, TX 76708	Dennis Michaelis President	(254) 299-8000	7,527
<u>Midland College</u> 3600 North Garfield Midland, TX 79705	David Daniel President	(432) 685-4500	5,535
<u>Montgomery College</u> (Part of North Harris Montgomery Community College District) 3200 Highway 242 West Conroe, TX 77384	Thomas Butler President	(936) 273-7000	7,219
<u>Mountain View College</u> (Part of Dallas County Community College District) 4849 West Illinois Avenue Dallas, TX 75211-6599	Monique Amerman President	(972) 860-8700	6,227
<u>Navarro College</u> 3200 West 7th Avenue Corsicana, TX 75110	Richard Sanchez President	(903) 874-6501	6,029
<u>North Campus</u> (Part of San Jacinto College District) 5800 Uvalde Road Houston, TX 77049	Charles Grant President	(281) 458-4050	5,497
<u>North Central Texas College</u> 1525 West California Gainesville, TX 76240	Ronnie Glasscock President	(940) 668-7731	6,458
<u>North Harris College</u> (Part of North Harris Montgomery Community College District) 2700 West West Thorne Drive Houston, TX 77073	David Sam President	(281) 312-1660	10,114
<u>North Harris Montgomery Community College District</u> 5000 Research Forest Drive	John Pickelman Chancellor	(832) 813-6515	39,670

The Woodlands, TX 77381-4399			
<u>North Lake College</u> (Part of Dallas County Community College District) 5001 North MacArthur Boulevard Irving, TX 75038-3899	Herlinda M. Glassock President	(972) 273-3010	8,382
<u>Northeast Campus</u> (Part of Tarrant County College District) 828 Harwood Road Hurst, TX 76054	Larry Darlage President	(817) 515-6200	12,835
<u>Northeast Texas Community College</u> P.O. Box 1307 Mount Pleasant, TX 75456-1307	Charles Florio President	(903) 572-1911	2,474
<u>Northwest Campus</u> (Part of Tarrant County College District) 4801 Marine Creek Parkway Fort Worth, TX 76179-3599	Michael Saenz President	(817) 515-7750	7,473
<u>Northwest Vista College</u> (Part of Alamo Community College District) 3535 North Ellison Drive San Antonio, TX 78251	Jacqueline Claunch President	(210) 348-2020	8,703
<u>Odessa College</u> 201 West University Odessa, TX 79764	Vance Gipson President	(432) 335-6400	4,578
<u>Palo Alto College</u> (Part of Alamo Community College District) 1400 West Villaret Boulevard San Antonio, TX 78224	Ana M. Guzman President	(210) 921-5260	7,988
<u>Panola College</u> 1109 West Panola Street Carthage, TX 75633	Gregory Powell President	(903) 693-2000	1,780
<u>Paris Junior College</u> 2400 Clarksville Street Paris, TX 75460	Pamela Anglin President	(903) 785-7661	4,204

<u>Ranger College</u> College Circle Ranger, TX 76470	Joe Mills President	(254) 647-3234	916
<u>Richland College</u> (Part of Dallas County Community College District) 12800 Abrams Road Dallas, TX 75243-2199	Stephen Mittelstet President	(972) 238-6106	13,598
<u>San Antonio College</u> (Part of Alamo Community College District) 1300 San Pedro Avenue San Antonio, TX 78212	Robert E. Zeigler President	(210) 733-2000	22,010
<u>San Jacinto College District</u> 4624 Fairmont Parkway Suite 200 Pasadena, TX 77504	Bill Lindemann Chancellor	(281) 998-6100	25,486
<u>South Campus</u> (Part of San Jacinto College District) 13735 Beamer Road Houston, TX 77089	Linda Watkins Interim President	(713) 484-1900	7,998
<u>South Campus</u> (Part of Tarrant County College District) 5301 Campus Drive Fort Worth, TX 76119	Ernest L. Thomas President	(817) 515-4861	10,189
<u>South Plains College</u> 1401 College Avenue Levelland, TX 79336	Gary McDaniel President	(806) 894-9611	9,561
<u>South Texas College</u> P.O. Box 9701 McAllen, TX 78502-9701	Shirley Reed President	(956) 872-8311	17,132
<u>Southeast Campus</u> (Part of Tarrant County College District) 2100 Southeast Parkway Arlington, TX 76018-2907	Judith Carrier President	(817) 515-3100	9,029
<u>Southwest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf</u> 3200 Avenue C Big Spring, TX 79720	Ron Brazel Provost	(915) 264-3700	169
<u>Southwest Texas Junior</u>	Ismael Sosa, Jr.	(830) 278-4401	5,202

<u>College</u> Garner Field Road Uvalde, TX 78801	President		
<u>St. Philip's College</u> (Part of Alamo Community College District) 1801 Martin Luther King Boulevard San Antonio, TX 78203	Angie Runnels President	(210) 531-3591	10,422
<u>Tarrant County College District</u> 1500 Houston Street Fort Worth, TX 76102	Leonardo de la Garza Chancellor	(817) 515-5201	39,526
<u>Temple College</u> 2600 South First Street Temple, TX 76504-7435	Marc A. Nigliazzo President	(254) 298-8282	4,085
<u>Texarkana College</u> 2500 North Robison Road Texarkana, TX 75501	Frank Coleman President	(903) 838-4541	4,216
<u>Texas Southmost College District</u> 80 Fort Brown Brownsville, TX 78520	Juliet Garcia President	(956) 544-8200	9,204
<u>Tomball College</u> (Part of North Harris Montgomery Community College District) 30555 Tomball Parkway Tomball, TX 77375-1969	Raymond Hawkins President	(281) 351-3300	7,406
<u>Trinity Valley Community College</u> 100 Cardinal Drive Athens, TX 75751	Ronald Baugh President	(903) 677-8822	5,575
<u>Tyler Junior College</u> P.O. Box 9020 Tyler, TX 75711	William Crowe President	(903) 510-2200	9,457
<u>Vernon College</u> 4400 College Drive Vernon, TX 76384	Steve Thomas President	(940) 552-6291	2,691
<u>Victoria College</u> 2200 East Red River Victoria, TX 77901	Jimmy Goodson President	(361) 573-3291	4,037

<u>Weatherford College</u> 225 College Park Drive Weatherford, TX 76086	Don Huff President	(817) 594-5471	4,297
<u>Western Texas College</u> 6200 College Avenue Snyder, TX 79549	Gregory Williams President	(325) 573-8511	1,698
<u>Wharton County Junior College</u> 911 Boling Highway Wharton, TX 77488	Betty A. McCrohan President	(979) 532-4560	6,106

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VITA

Audrey L. Newsome was born in Goldsboro, North Carolina, the daughter of Alease and Mordecai Oates. She graduated from Howard Senior High School in Wilmington, Delaware in 1975, and shortly thereafter was accepted to Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland.

Audrey attended Morgan State University from 1975-1976, upon which time she enlisted and served in the United States Marine Corps. Upon receiving an honorable discharge from the "Corps", she attended and received a Bachelor of Science Degree from Winston Salem State University in Winston Salem, North Carolina. With honors, she completed a Masters of Education in 1992 from the University of North Texas located in Denton, Texas.

Ms. Newsome's professional career in higher education spans over 16 years. She has taught study skills classes, served as a counselor/advisor, Director of Student Services, Director of Student Support Services and Assistant Director of Academic Advising.

Prior to her enrollment at the University of Texas at Austin in August 1996 she served as Assistant Director of Academic Advising for Collin County Community College District. In this role, Audrey had various responsibilities including hiring, training and supervision of all academic advisors. She also served as the administrator in charge of academic support services for student athletes, which

prompted her to examine the academic support services programs available to student-athletes at community colleges in the state of Texas.

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