Top-Tier Athletics and the Elite University: Considerations During a Time of Change

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This paper considers whether it is possible for universities to maintain elite performance in both academics and athletics at a critical juncture in time. But I begin with a story of a forest fire.

Norman Maclean's famous book on the 1949 Mann Gulch fire in Montana tells the story of a young team of 19 smokejumpers that landed to engage what appeared to be a routine blaze in dense forest. In less than two hours, 13 of the smokejumpers were killed by what ended up becoming a 4,500 acre fire that required 450 men to contain. Organizational scholar Karl Weick analyzed Maclean's findings and highlighted several factors that may have led to this disaster, including the group's lack of understanding of the fire's complexity in that particular forest, their insufficient trust in one another, and their underestimation of the scale of the fire.[1] Weick noted that the firefighters were unable to adapt when an unexpected series of events quickly unfolded. They viewed the fire as just another "10 a.m. fire" where their typical protocol could be followed and their work would be complete by mid-morning of the next day. Tragically, the smokejumpers barely had time to realize the gravity of their situation before their cause was failed.

Weick's analysis of Mann Gulch asked why organizations unravel and how they can be made more resilient. The case instructs leaders to appreciate the complexity of their changing contexts and encourages them to learn from—but also look beyond—their past experiences. The lessons are useful in the case of intercollegiate athletics, where a confluence of complex factors signal the arrival of an existential moment—where the very principles and foundations of athletic departments and the wider field of intercollegiate athletics will be called into question. In this time of change, I consider whether it will be possible for top-tier academic universities to field elite programs in athletics. Can they thrive while remaining true to their deepest institutional values and principles? And, if so, how?

This paper describes some evolving aspects of the dynamic Division I intercollegiate athletics environment. Focusing on the University of Wisconsin context, I note some specific factors that will challenge the University's capacity to sustain its run of success. I urge leaders to recognize the importance and complexity of the situation, to

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[1] Weick, K.E. (1993). The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: The Mann Gulch disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 38*(4), 628-652.

make sense of it in Wisconsin's context, and to take adequate time to diligently prepare for a new reality. In the world of intercollegiate athletics, this is no "10 a.m. fire."

Method and Background

I interviewed over sixty leaders and stakeholders in intercollegiate athletics and made site visits to five universities. About half of these individuals are (or were) affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison as faculty or administrators. The rest of the participants held similar roles at other universities. Additionally, I engaged in multiple conversations with a conference commissioner, a conference associate commissioner, a newspaper reporter, and other stakeholders with expertise on issues of interest. I asked participants about the shifting environment of higher education and intercollegiate athletics. What factors will shape the future? How can institutions best prepare? What factors unique to Wisconsin's context warrant closest attention?

This work was further enriched by my professional and personal background. First, I serve as a Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) for the University of Wisconsin. In this role I am deeply involved at campus, conference, and national level discussions on intercollegiate athletics. I have daily duties and responsibilities in ensuring that matters of academics, compliance, and student-athlete wellness are at the center of intercollegiate athletics. As FAR, I am also continually learning about contemporary policy issues in athletics.

Second, I serve as Chair of the Athletic Board at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In this capacity, I lead a group of 24 faculty, staff, alumni, and students who are charged with advising and collaborating with the athletics department and other campus partners on sustaining a respectable athletics program. I also meet with university faculty and administration on a regular basis to advise them on key developments within Wisconsin's program and, more broadly, across the Big Ten Conference and the NCAA.

Third, I am a Professor in the School of Education at Wisconsin, where I study complex organizations in crisis situations. I teach courses in the area of intercollegiate athletics. My students and I dedicate focused scholarly attention to subjects of coaching, leadership, social justice, and competitive excellence in the athletic arena. We learn with and from leaders from around the country, continually honing our understandings of athletics in public and educational settings.

Finally, I was a four-year student-athlete who participated in Division I men's basketball. The experiential knowledge that I gleaned from those four years set a solid

base for all of my future learning about matters of academics, compliance, student wellness, and competition. Having seen and lived through many ups and downs as a college athlete, I developed a nuanced perspective on the everyday grind of coaches, athletes, and staff as well as some of the life-long effects of participating at this level.

All together, these personal and professional experiences have provided a rich foundation for my inquiry into the current state and future development of college athletics in Wisconsin and beyond.

Photo 1: This picture provides an overhead view of the UCLA vs. Notre Dame game in February of 1994. I am standing on the foul lane across from UCLA's Ed O'Bannon, who would later be thrust into the middle of a famous lawsuit on the use of college athletes' name, image, and likeness. I have remained connected to collegiate athletics over these past 25 years and now serve as a faculty athletics representative at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Fragility in College Athletics

College athletics is awash with change and is likely to remain so in the years to come. The NCAA has undertaken major reform, most notably through the delegation of authority to the five major conferences. These "Autonomy 5" conferences[2] have, in turn, realigned and enacted significant legislation in several areas, including student-athletes' full cost of attendance, time demands, meals policies, academic fraud, and other compliance matters.

These reforms – and the many more that are soon to come in areas of compliance, governance, and finance – are unfolding in a time of broader uncertainty in higher education. Reduced financial support of state institutions, demands for greater accountability, and an influx of new technology, for example, are affecting universities in ways that have not yet been fully realized. Large public universities that broadly distribute governing responsibilities are particularly challenged. While shared governance structures are core to the values and functioning of many campuses, these structures have not shown themselves to be particularly nimble or flexible, particularly as institutions are feeling multiple stress points and facing a radically different future.

It has become especially clear that intercollegiate athletics is more fragile than most realize. Participants in this project articulated several main areas of vulnerability, where programs and even universities can be brought down from even the greatest of heights in short order. These vulnerabilities are interrelated and clustered around: 1) on-field success; 2) compliance and institutional control; 3) litigation; and 4) increasing social distances on campuses.

[2] These conferences are sometimes also referred to as the "Power 5." They include the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten Conference, Big 12 Conference, Pac-12 Conference, and Southeastern Athletic Conference

On-Field Success

A longstanding point of fragility facing university athletic departments relates to the success of their teams. Simply put, when teams win, fans attend games and support their programs in a variety of ways. But when teams experience rough stretches, fan support diminishes. Athletic department budgets are especially tied to the success of their football teams. Even though men's basketball provides revenue and other sports such as hockey can also finish in the black, football is the vehicle that supports broad-based programming at Autonomy 5 Schools. At Wisconsin, for example, more than two-thirds of the athletic department's overall ticket revenue comes from its football program. A few key player injuries, a change in coach, and a range of other factors can quickly undercut a team's success – even at the most storied of universities. The University of Southern California (USC) built what seemed to be an unstoppable football dynasty under coach Pete Carroll when, on seven occasions between 2001 and 2009, the Trojans won their conference and finished the season ranked in the top five nationally. USC sold out the L.A. Coliseum and averaged 91,000 fans per game during that stretch. Carroll left USC to coach the Seattle Seahawks in 2010 and since that time the football team has not won a conference title. Attendance plummeted each season – all the way down to an average crowd of only 68,000 during the 2016 season.

Football attendance in the Big Ten Conference is also closely linked with success. While it is not surprising to see Michigan and Ohio State at the top (refer to table 1), faltering teams reveal less dependable fan bases at other schools. Purdue filled merely 60% of the seats at Ross-Ade Stadium in 2016. The raucous crowds that flocked to West Lafayette from 1997-2008 when Coach Joe Tiller's teams qualified for ten postseason bowl games, including the 2001 Rose Bowl, quickly diminished as Purdue won merely 31 of 98 games under other coaches between 2009 and 2016 (refer to photos 1 & 2). Many Wisconsin fans cannot recall having gone through a similar plight, but prior to 1990, Camp Randall Stadium was itself often less than half full and there were less than 20,000 season ticket holders as Badger teams often struggled to win. The leaders I interviewed stressed how present this potential of attendance drop is. Just as Purdue's average attendance dropped by over 13,000 fans per game between the 2013 and 2014 seasons, Wisconsin and other schools are vulnerable to significant decreases in revenue

when their profit-generating teams lose. Even a 9% drop in attendance at football games at Camp Randall Stadium (which is what USC experienced between 2015 and 2016) would result in a loss of more than $2 million over the course of *one season*.[3]

Table 1: Big Ten Football attendance in 2016.

School	Average Attendance	Capacity
Michigan	110,468	103%
Ohio State	107,278	105%
Penn State	100,257	94%
Nebraska	90,200	104%
Wisconsin	79,357	99%
Michigan St.	74,667	100%
Iowa	69,656	99%
Illinois	45,644	75%
Rutgers	44,804	85%
Minnesota	43,814	83%
Indiana	43,027	82%
Maryland	39,615	76%
Northwestern	34,798	74%
Purdue	34,798	60%

[3] This is a conservative estimate. Consider the compounding effects of shrinking attendance. Illinois athletic director Josh Whitman explained to the Chicago Tribune, "Our biggest source of untapped revenue right now is you see 20,000 empty seats in our football stadium and 5,000 empty seats in the basketball arena and that represents ticket revenue, concessions, parking, private donations, merchandise. There's probably $10 to $15 million in revenue per year that we're leaving on the table by not having the success that we need in those two priority spots."

Photo 2: Wisconsin at Purdue, November 6, 1999. Attendance: 67,308

Photo 3: Wisconsin at Purdue, November 19, 2016. Attendance: 30,465.

Compliance and Institutional Control

A second area of significant fragility in intercollegiate athletics is tied to matters of compliance and institutional control. University athletic departments have devoted increased attention to rules compliance in recent years, with staffs whose sole focus is to ensure that their players, coaches, staff members, boosters, and other stakeholders understand and abide by NCAA rules. While most schools can expect to commit minor, unintentional violations of rules every year (for example, by making an unallowable posting on Twitter), compliance staffs work especially hard to avoid major violations. Larger scale "cheating" can bring harsh punishments and can tarnish the image of a coach, team, or entire department for years. Major violations are commonly associated with broad negligence or purposeful attempts to gain unfair advantage. Well-documented examples such as Southern Methodist University (SMU) in the 1980s – an extreme case where recruits were paid large sums of money to play football for the Mustangs – led to the shuttering of the football program. And in the fall of 2017, numerous men's basketball programs throughout the U.S. are anxiously hoping to avoid similar fates as their coaches are implicated in illegal money laundering cases. Fearful of such consequences, compliance personnel are rightfully on edge in trying to ensure that the hundreds of people in and around their programs do not commit violations.

The compliance challenge is exacerbated by not only the high stakes competitive environment of big-time college sports and the sheer volume of rules that are to be followed (the recent NCAA manual is 320 pages of small print), but also by the fact that so many rules have changed in the last two years—including when, where, and how long teams can practice, who can be involved in recruiting, what meals can be provided, what nutritional supplements can be offered, and many others. More changes are to come, including rules governing student-athlete transfers that could have profound impacts upon the competitive landscape both within and beyond conferences. Stringent transfer rules in basketball and football are increasingly called into question because not only are coaches, administrators and others associated with their programs allowed to move freely, but even their peer student-athletes in other sports are often able to change schools with little or no competitive penalty. In this context, schools that claim to be putting "students first"

are hard pressed to justify making basketball players and football players sit out a season just because they want to attend a different institution. Even more notably, the very nature of how investigative processes are carried out and who has authority to prosecute them may soon be altered.

While compliance matters are one "integrity" aspect of the discussion on intercollegiate athletics, many of the most troubling and highly publicized stories in recent years center around broader questions of institutional control on campuses. Sexual assault cases at Penn State and Baylor revealed fundamental, multilevel campus breakdowns. Rogue leaders and a general lack of accountability to basic moral and ethical principles allowed not only individual-level injury and heartbreak, but institution-level calamity. Big Ten institutions each drafted "standards of institutional control" in order to facilitate multiple departments and leaders on each campus having accountability for avoiding similar episodes. These standards are a meaningful structural advancement toward maintaining campus-level integrity around such matters as student discipline, recruiting, admissions, and academic honesty. But every athletic director and university president remains aware that sound structures and good intentions cannot always prevent big problems (refer to figure 1).

Figure 1: The Wall Street Journal (2017) places football teams on a chart that considers on-field success ("powerhouse/weakling" scale) and off-field behavior and image ("admirable/embarrassing" scale). Schools on the bottom of the chart experienced major compliance or institutional control issues in recent years.

All of this is not to say that college athletics are more riddled with problems than at other points in the past. Nor are athletic departments the only parts of campuses that experience such issues. Sexual assault, academic fraud, and corruption among leaders are unfortunately found throughout many units of universities. Athletics, however, is the most publicly visible unit of many institutions. A scandal of any sort that involves a professor, for instance, is far less likely to draw even remotely similar attention as one involving a football or basketball coach. This is associated with the public's longstanding obsession with sports and is amplified by the social media revolution, where just about any incident or opinion can spread in rapid fashion.

In 1993, I was a freshman when my Notre Dame basketball team took on the Indiana Hoosiers in Bloomington. Indiana was beating us soundly in the second half so I was surprised, as I walked back onto the court after a time-out to hear a small smattering of fans behind the bench booing their coach, Bobby Knight. I later learned that the crowd was reacting to Knight kicking one of his players—his son, Pat—because he was upset with Pat for some reason. The game resumed with Pat quickly making a jump shot and then directing some choice words at his father as he ran past the Indiana bench. The incident was mentioned in the papers the next day. Gene Wojchiechowski, then with the Los Angeles Times, summarized:

> "There were some (Indiana) warmups on the edge of the scorer's table," said a Notre Dame official, who asked not to be identified, "and (Knight) throws those up in the air. Then he calls a timeout. The kid (Pat Knight) sits down and (Bob Knight) kicks him in the shin. It's hard to say how hard he kicked him, but he definitely kicked him…The whole thing was kind of a horror show." Also in attendance Tuesday was Knight's ex-wife, Nancy, who was visibly upset after witnessing the incident. Shortly after the game, she was seen crying on the shoulder of Notre Dame coach John MacLeod. Knight and his players were unavailable for comment after the game.

Although Knight received some degree of public rebuke, there was not much more than word of mouth to document what had actually occurred. The game was played in front of nearly 20,000 fans and nationally televised, but no clear video documentation of the kicking existed. And as the news article mentioned, the players said nothing of the incident. I was standing only a few feet away from "the kick" and hardly knew what

happened. On other occasions Knight was known to verbally and physically accost his players and to repeatedly threaten and intimidate members of the campus community. But he still coached at Indiana for almost 30 years.

Compare the Knight incident of 1993 (and the many others that occurred during his long tenure) to a more recent one at Rutgers University. Basketball coach Mike Rice was suspended by athletic director Tom Pernetti in December, 2012 after Pernetti viewed video footage of Rice cursing at players and throwing basketballs at their heads during a practice. Pernetti ordered that Rice was to be fully removed from campus during his suspension, but that he would later be able to return to the sidelines. A few months later, on April 2, 2013, ESPN acquired and released the video, setting off a firestorm of criticism from the public and even the New Jersey governor. Rice was fired the next day and Pernetti was fired three days later. The University was sued by one of the players for assault and battery and a range of other claims. The lawsuit, which named Rice and Pernetti as well as an assistant coach, the CFO of athletics, and the university president, was ultimately settled for $300,000.

Rice's behaviors were indefensible and the athletic director's response was arguably softer than it should have been. But what's most noteworthy was how social media shaped the story. Posted to YouTube, the videos of Rice abusing players were quickly viewed several hundred thousand times. The story trended on Twitter and made headlines across the country. A *Saturday Night Live* skit that spoofed the story (and skewered college athletics) was viewed by millions. Rutgers was in the limelight for all the wrong reasons.

The Knight and Rice incidents were separated by twenty years and altogether different realities in college athletics. Imagine if, in 2018, the most famous coach in the country kicked his son in front of 20,000 fans, was booed by the home crowd, and his ex-wife was, as a result, crying on the shoulder of the opposing coach. Or imagine that similar episodes occurred regularly over the course of almost thirty years. It is almost inconceivable that in today's culture, which one of my interview participants described as being marked by "withering publicity[4]" of college sports, such a coach could survive. In

[4] Withering publicity was put forward as a phrase suggesting that the non-stop cycle of media attention can "wither away" the psyches of coaches and leaders in athletics.

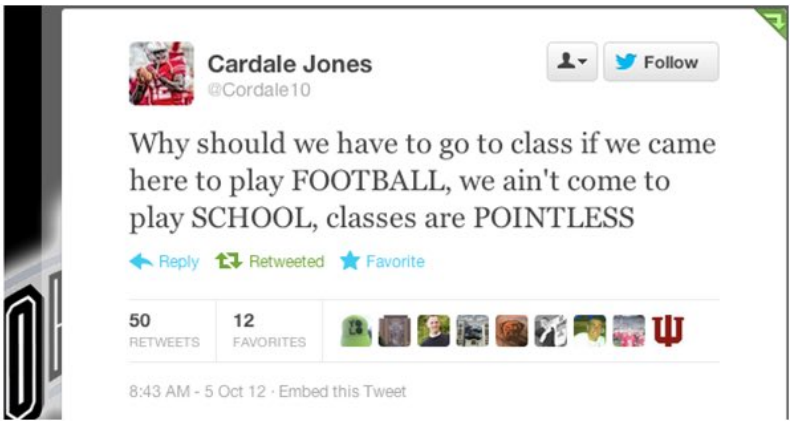
the Mike Rice instance, the video release had a positive result in facilitating the reinstatement of institutional control. Public outcry forced a just response.

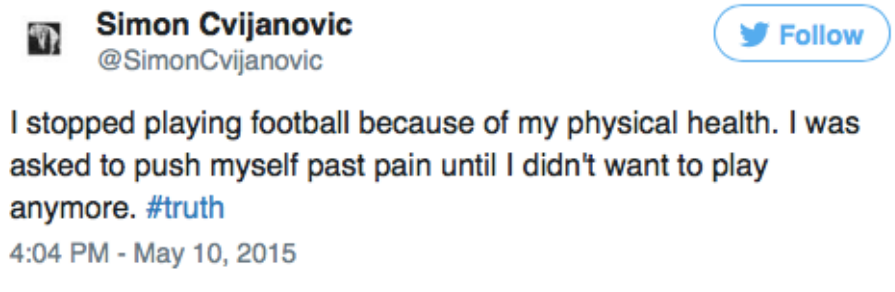
But even as coaches and leaders are held more accountable for their actions – a good thing – all who are associated with Autonomy 5 conference sports are coming to understand that social media contributes to a snowballing culture of critique and, in turn, the fragility of their enterprise. Any event, big or small, can be seen, heard and disseminated for mass consumption in only minutes. Foundational matters of game integrity can be called into question by players and coaches who criticize officiating. Trainers and staff members who make passing reference to a player's injury status can affect Las Vegas gambling lines on games. And pointed critique of the system can be levied swiftly. Former Ohio State quarterback Cardale Jones created national news by making a seemingly light-hearted jab on Twitter about his perspective on the balance of athletics and academics. And an Illinois football player posted a long string of tweets accusing his school of cold-heartedly disregarding his health (figure 2), leading to a feature story in Sports Illustrated and other major venues.

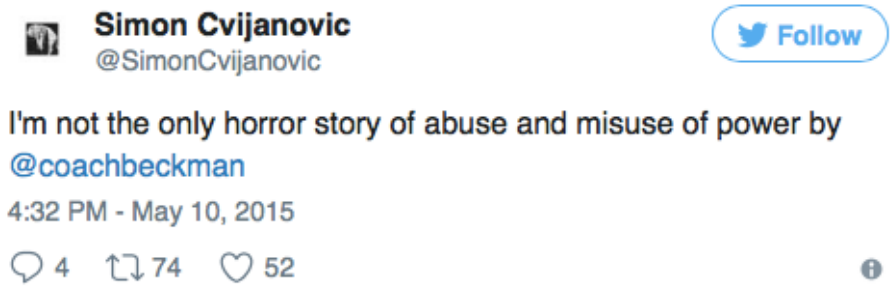
Such instances reveal a slightly different aspect of institutional control. Not only must leaders inform and guide the shaping and implementation of rules, but they must also understand how control has been dispersed via technology and generational shifts. Student-athletes (and others) possess powerful platforms[5] to express themselves and, according to several of my interview participants, a "general unwillingness to accept old-school ways." They hold sway in the public dialogue on sport as never before and with broad consequence. Even without formal positional authority, student-athletes are more likely than ever to be included in complex questions of "who's in charge" of college sports.

[5] It is difficult to overstate the influence of social media on everyday lives of student-athletes and, more broadly young people. Recent data indicate that teens spend *nine hours* per day on social media—more time than they spend sleeping, schooling, or exercising. Conversations that were once held in locker rooms and dorm rooms are now also held via social media, often in the broad public eye.

Figure 2: Widely publicized examples of student-athletes' tweets contradicting their university's positions. Some college athletes have social media followings that rival their formal institutions' followings.







Litigation

Litigation presents a third major area of change and fragility in college athletics. As revenues skyrocketed and writers like Taylor Branch and Joe Nocera drew parallels between big-time sports, slavery, and indentured servitude, a cadre of critics from within and outside of intercollegiate athletics have turned to litigation as a lever for reparation and reform. A number of cases (refer to table 3 for summaries of selected cases) claim(ed) that the NCAA and its member institutions violate federal antitrust laws by conspiring to limit what college athletes can earn. At the heart of these cases is the NCAA's longstanding claim of "amateurism" as a defining characteristic of college sports. Critics note that college football and basketball are big businesses. Coaches make millions of dollars and universities build luxurious facilities. But the student-athletes who fans pay to see are kept from receiving a fair portion. One of the most noteworthy cases that nudged forward the current avalanche of litigation was the antitrust class action lawsuit against the NCAA brought by former UCLA basketball player Ed O'Bannon. O'Bannon challenged the NCAA's commercial use of former athletes' names, images, and likenesses (NIL) and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision on this case set an important precedent for future Ninth Circuit cases.

Also under the umbrella of antitrust law, "pay for play" cases have emerged to target the very heart of the amateur model. *Jenkins v. NCAA* argues that the NCAA should not be able to limit student-athlete compensation. College athletes, the case contends, should be allowed to receive market value for their talents. For instance, if Florida State wants to pay a top rated quarterback a million dollars, they could do so if compensation limits were removed. While the judge is more likely to rule that compensation, though not limited, should be "tethered to education," the litigation appears well on the way to carving out possibilities for college-level pay for play in some shape or form. Such rulings would not mandate that all colleges pay student-athletes, but would allow them to do so. Clearly, such a ruling would rattle the foundations of intercollegiate athletics. And while the verdict of the *Jenkins* case (likely to be tried in 2018) will undoubtedly be appealed, possibly all the way to the United States Supreme Court, its prominence has already forced conferences and universities to ask themselves, "What will we do in this new world?"

Concussion-related lawsuits also have escalated in rapid fashion. Research linking football with brain trauma fuels a major public and legal dilemma for universities. Repeated major stories in newspapers, documentaries, and even a major motion picture starring Will Smith have shaped public dialogue on concussions and called into question the future of football.[6] This dialogue is of serious consequence at all levels of the game but, different from youth football (where parents make participation decisions for their children) and the NFL (where grown adults willingly sign multi-million dollar contracts to play), universities are placed in an especially challenging position where one wing of campus produces research documenting the unavoidable dangers of the game[7] while another part of campus fields a team to compete in it. Such apparent conflicts of interest are not lost on the plaintiffs who are suing universities, conferences, and the NCAA for concussion-related problems *in more than 60 current cases*.

NIL, pay for play, and concussion cases are critical fragility points in college athletics. And while each of the major cases in these areas has been exhaustively analyzed in other places, we should note a few collective takeaways here.

First, given the interconnectedness of antitrust cases and initial plaintiff success in *O'Bannon* and other cases, the chances of future plaintiff success are increased. Ninth circuit cases moving forward do so with precedent from *O'Bannon*. *All who previously supposed major reforms under the antitrust umbrella to be unlikely must now see that change is virtually inevitable*. With perceptions of winnability increased, pay for play and NIL advocates especially will continue flocking toward litigation as a lever for upheaving college sports.

We should note that the culture of litigation in the world of college sports is like a snowball rolling downhill: it's getting bigger and more powerful. The litigation culture has grown, in part, because research has taught us more about the concussion problem.[8] It has grown because student-athletes, their families, and others who care for them have

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[6] Most notably, a July 25, 2017 *New York Times* article: "110 N.F.L. Brains" described research on brain trauma associated with repeated blows to the head.

[7] University of Wisconsin researchers found that those who suffer from concussions face an array of challenges later in life. "Study: Students with concussions struggle more academically." *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 2, 2017.

[8] Along with concussion-related litigation, a number of other cases that broadly target student-athlete health and welfare are significant.

identified legitimate points of contention with an NCAA model that was designed during a different era. It has grown because, more than ever before, social media connects and amplifies critique into collective public narratives. But just as much as any of these reasons, the culture of litigation has exploded in concert with the skyrocketing money associated with college sports. One could argue that the lawyers and professional sports agents who are at the center of these cases have developed deep personal concerns for 18 and 19-year olds who are perceived to be taken advantage of (their social advocacy is less noticeable for most other young athletes – refer to appendix 3). But as ESPN, Fox, CBS, Nike, Under Armour, and a host of other major corporations have poured billions of dollars into college sports, we can assume that *the lucrative nature of this "social cause" is attractive to the legal community*. Major settlements (notably in the *Alston v. NCAA* case) between the NCAA, major conferences and those who have sued them have reaped large financial rewards for lawyers. In turn, whereas there was little college athletics-related litigation in the 20th century – what one prominent attorney estimated to be "one major case every ten years" – and only a handful of major cases during the early 2000s, an entire industry has emerged over the past several years. Today there are literally hundreds of cases – almost too many to track. My intent in highlighting the money factor is not to indict lawyers; they are hardly the only ones flocking to college sports for profit. Rather, we must recognize that unlike pure, altruistic pursuits of social causes that tend to wax and wane, the financial incentive for legal action in college sports will surely persist.

Along with the increased likelihood of legal success and the sheer volume of cases, a third and related factor that must be noticed relating to litigation is the shift in public sentiment that has occurred. Only a few years ago, many college sports insiders – athletic directors, coaches, commissioners – were openly dismissive of substantive change in areas of NIL and pay for play. And many were dubious about the seriousness of concussion claims. Today, behind the scenes conversations are much different, with many leaders recognizing a need for looking long and hard at these issues. Leaders' new openness is not occurring in a vacuum, but in a social context where information is ubiquitous. Stories detailing the brain damage of former NFL players are persuasive, as are accounts of youngsters like Ryan Trahan, a runner on Texas A&M's team whose eligibility to participate in events was jeopardized because of his personal entrepreneurial

success on YouTube (which he started pursuing when he was in high school). The NCAA prohibits him from making a profit on his sports-related image. Such stories are disseminated to a diverse audience across a range of platforms, molding and then reifying opinions that the current model is broken (refer to Figure 3).

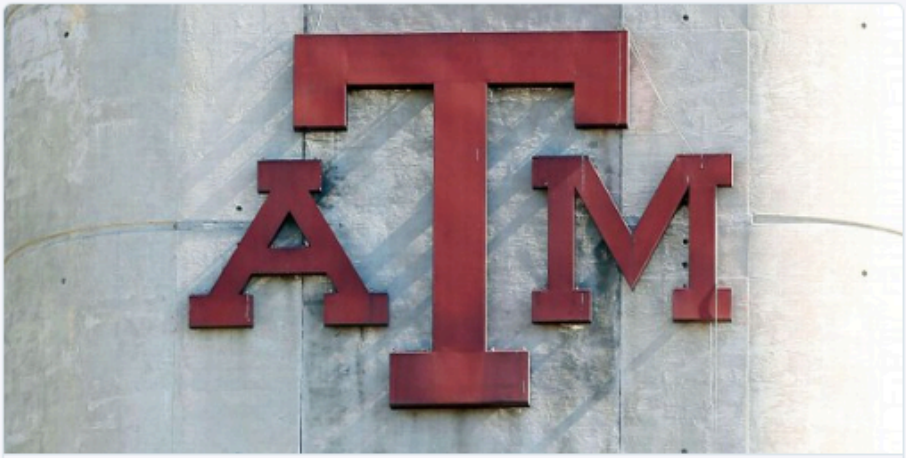
Figure 3: Ryan Trahan's eligibility was challenged by the NCAA because he started and runs his own company. Here are several tweets from the thousands that were posted over a few days. This is an example of how social media facilitates the quick compilation of reform narratives in college sports.

Steve Dalton @daltonsbriefs · Sep 21

An example of the foolishness of NCAA rules in an age when schools are encouraging start ups

Joshua Mills @joshmlls · Sep 21

@KEEMSTAR check this story about YouTuber @rytrahan. NCAA won't allow him to run & promote his business on YouTube.



NCAA puts A&M runner's YouTube aims in check

Texas A&M's Ryan Trahan, an online entrepreneur and cross country runner, has been told by the NCAA he must omit references to his athletics career

espn.com

Dyl & Kota Gonzalez @IIGonZ_ · Sep 21

Replying to @rytrahan

At least u can know u aren't alone. We had to give up college basketball because of the @NCAA and their rules. & here they strike again #sad

Ryan Trahan @rytrahan · Sep 21

I'm trying to live the life I've always dreamed of

We should also recognize some important cultural aspects to public opinion shifts. Pay for play and NIL arguments have been increasingly tied to broader discussions of racial injustice. At the same time that universities are pressed to address troubling institutional failures in serving students of color, their athletics programs are being critiqued for propping up "white" sports like tennis, golf, and soccer with revenue producing "black" sports: football and men's basketball. Why should African American student-athletes foot the bill for everyone else? Such questions likely undergird public opinion differences that can be seen along racial lines. *Whereas 66% of all Americans believe student-athletes should be paid for commercialized use of their NIL, 90% of African Americans are in favor of it. And, while only 31% of whites support pay for play (as articulated in the Jenkins case), 54% of African Americans are in favor of it.*[9]

With clear understanding of litigation trends – and the public opinion shifts that sit alongside and propel these trends – leaders of big-time college athletic departments look forward to a blurred horizon. Their deliberations on the future focus on specific policy solutions, but, increasingly, on broader philosophical questions like "Why are we doing this?" and "What side of history will we be on?"

Social Distance

Finally, a fourth point of fragility relates to rapidly increasing "social distances" in and around college sports. Sociologist Robert Putnam refers to social distance as the *relational space that separates people, organizations, and/or other entities from one*

[9] Waldron, T. (2017). "Black Americans Support Paying College Athletes. White People? Not So Much." *Huffington Post*, March 17.

another.[10] When people or groups do not know each other or interact with one another regularly, their mutual understanding, trust, and affection are challenged. At least three forces on and beyond campuses have stretched social distances between key stakeholders in college athletics:

1) a youth sports industry that separates athletics from academics, professionalizes teams, and incentivizes stakeholder profit;

2) campus-level differences in identity, proximity, and finances; and

3) instability in university leadership.

The Youth Sports Industry

We cannot fully understand some of the previously mentioned points of fragility – compliance, institutional control, pay for play, and NIL – without a basic sense of the system that feeds into Autonomy 5 conference athletics. *The organization of competitive sports for children has radically changed in recent years and these changes affect colleges in deep but under-noticed ways.*

Consider how the formative trajectories of young athletes used to look. I played on my first organized basketball team in a 5th grade Catholic Youth League. We played about 12-15 games between December and February. I also dabbled in tennis, golf and football. All of these sports took place right in my hometown, South Bend, and were relatively laid-back. When one season ended, I moved on to another sport. My parents supported me, but did not seem especially worried about the outcomes of games, nor did they view sports as my ticket to college. By the time I was in high school and getting some attention from colleges for basketball, I joined an AAU team that competed for a couple months in the spring. The team was made up of some of the top players in northern Indiana and we played in a few tournaments within our state. The team was sponsored by a local restaurant called "Tiffany's." I was thrilled that Tiffany's provided us with uniforms, paid our tournament and hotel fees, and, occasionally, even a free breakfast. But the most serious teams I played on were always school-based. My high school coach – a math teacher in the school – controlled all aspects of participation on the team. He checked to make sure our grades were up to par and that we were behaving in

[10] Putnam, R.D. (2015). *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

class. He oversaw our weightlifting and off-season conditioning. And he was the gatekeeper to college recruiters. He received our mail from colleges, fielded phone calls, and counseled us on which places to consider.

My early pathway through sports was very similar to those of most of my peers —and it was a pathway that smoothly bridged me to college, where academics and athletics continued to co-exist naturally, if more intensively.

Today's youth sports pathways are altogether different from mine. I would need to write a book to delineate all of the distinctions[11], but one of the biggest changes is that sports and school are now separated from each other at very early stages. Children begin club sports well before turning ten years old. Among current Division 1 student-athletes, over 95% of hockey, baseball/softball, and soccer players began competing before age nine.[12] The most talented young athletes travel nationally and compete in endless year-round games. Their teams have corporate sponsorships that pay their coaches and provide the kids with loads of fancy gear. The coaches often have little formal expertise and commonly prioritize winning over children's wellness and development. Many club coaches are "handled" by Nike or Adidas representatives who wish to direct young players to the colleges that their companies sponsor.[13] The coaches may have no sense whatsoever for how their young athletes are performing in school. As children advance to recruiting ages, these club coaches are often the primary gatekeepers through which college coaches must pass (as opposed to the high school coaches).

This club team movement operates within a $15.3 billion youth sports industry that has grown by 50% over the past five years.[14] Whereas my old Catholic Youth League games were played in cramped school gyms that smelled like popcorn, club games today are played in huge, beautiful facilities that are sprouting up to not only lure top young teams, but to build entire communities (refer to photos 4, 5, and 6).

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[11] Refer to George Dohrmann's powerful *Play Their Hearts Out* for revealing insights on how AAU basketball affected children, families, and schools.
[12] NCAA GOALS study, 2015.
[13] Refer to the scandal involving the University of Louisville and other programs during the fall of 2017.
[14] Gregory, S. (2017). "How Kids' Sports Became a $15 Billion Industry." *Time*, August 24.

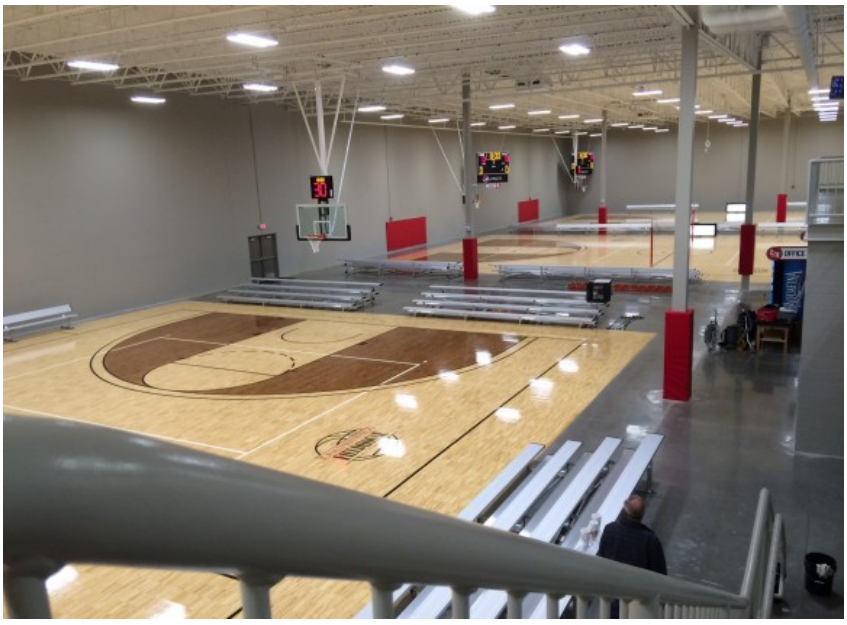
"Communities Bank on Mega Youth Sports Complexes," a recent article in *Sports and Business,* presents a telling example:

> Youth sports tourism is the name of the game in Westfield, Indiana, a community of 30,000 that opened a 400-acre, $49 million sports complex in 2014. The largest publicly funded complex of its kind at the time has exceeded revenue expectations: the facility brought in 1.5 million total visitors in 2016, which translated into some 60,000 hotel night stays and $162.6 million into the area's coffers.

The not so subtle shift from youth sports as an extracurricular school activity to youth sports as a standalone industry, with coaches and administrators who command six figure salaries[15] has dramatic impact on universities. Well over 90% of student-athletes arrive to their campuses having had most, and in some cases, all of their athletics experiences detached from the academic environment. In fact, academics are commonly sacrificed by jet-setting young athletes whose schedules hardly permit homework. Sports used to serve as a supportive factor for young people's schoolwork. Coaches and teachers worked together and, in many cases, coaches *were* the teachers. *So even as college athletic departments develop robust academic support services and compliance initiatives, they face a formidable challenge to decrease the increasingly extended and entrenched social distance between academics and athletics.* Before a young basketball player can be tutored in calculus, he must be counseled that success in calculus is both necessary and possible. And even though that same young basketball player was able to receive virtually unlimited perks from ages eight until 18, he must, upon arrival to college, be taught the myriad rules of what is and is not permitted by the NCAA.

[15] Many club basketball coaches receive six figure salaries from shoe companies. And the CEO of one 501(c)(4) non-profit youth sports association received a salary of $831,200.

Photos 4, 5, 6: Views of the Grand Park (youth) Sports Campus in Westfield, Indiana.



Many public commenters on sport and leaders on university campuses fail to appreciate the impact of the youth sports industry on the culture of intercollegiate athletics. They critique the ramping up of college athletics facilities and the high salaries of coaches while comparing them to other parts of campuses. But concurrent comparisons with (and understanding of) what is occurring in the broader public—from youth levels all the way through to professional leagues—are harder to find.

Campus Comparisons

While the broad social distance that youth sports has propagated between academics and athletics has only recently emerged, substantive campus-level social distances have long-separated individuals who operate in athletics and those who are in academics. Social distances between people are exacerbated by identity and proximity differences. If one shares little in common with another person and rarely interacts with him, he will be prone to misunderstand and distrust the other. Campus leaders and Division 1 athletics leaders, for example, operate in very different worlds of practice and often do not fully understand each other's work. A recent survey indicates that about two-thirds of college athletic administrators played college sports and one third of them coached.[16] But David Williams, athletic director at Vanderbilt, is the only athletic director or coach I could find who is also a tenured professor. (I spent time with David and asked him if he knew of others – he could not name any.) Many coaches and athletics leaders are not familiar with the daily work of faculty, especially the research-related components. The tenure process is even more difficult to grasp. Similarly, university faculty and academic leaders do not always understand – or have interest in[17] – the multi-level complexities and daily grind of athletics, nor appreciate the different ways coaches and athletic directors are held accountable. Most university presidents are former professors and have a range of expertise (refer to table 3). Often, they have had little substantive experience with athletics prior to assuming their roles. Differences in background and preparation certainly do not preclude campus leaders in academics and

[16] Smith, M. (2015). Who played and who coached. *Sports Business Journal, 18*(10), 25.
[17] A study in *New Directions for Institutional Research* (Lawrence, 2009) found that athletics is not highly prioritized as a campus issue for faculty. From a list of 13 campus governance issue areas, faculty ranked athletics as next to last in importance.

athletics from working productively alongside one another, but, collectively, they face larger hurdles in understanding each other's sphere of action than many other groups who emerge from similar fields.

Table 3: Big Ten university leaders' backgrounds.

Robert J. Jones, Chancellor, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign • Specialty: Plant Physiology
Michael McRobbie, President, Indiana University ● Specialty: Information Technology/Computer Science/Philosophy
Bruce Harreld, President, University of Iowa ● Specialty: Business Management
Wallace D. Loh, President, University of Maryland ● Specialty: Law and Social Change and Criminal Justice Reform
Mark S. Schlissel, President, University of Michigan ● Specialty: Development Biology of B lymphocytes (immune system cell)
Lou Anna K. Simon, President, Michigan State University ● Specialty: Economic Development and Educational Administration
Eric Kaler, President, University of Minnesota ● Specialty: Complex Fluids (drug delivery, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing) and Chemical Engineering
Ronnie Green, Chancellor, University of Nebraska ● Specialty: Animal Production Research and Animal Genetics
Michael V. Drake, President, Ohio State University • Specialty: Higher Education
Eric J. Barron, President, Penn State University ● Specialty: Atmospheric Science and Geosciences
Mitch Daniels, President, Purdue University ● Specialty: Public Service and Politics (49th Governor of Indiana)
Robert Barchi, President, Rutgers University ● Specialty: Neurology
Rebecca M. Blank, Chancellor, University of Wisconsin ● Specialty: Public Policy and Economics

Sociology teaches us that "birds of a feather flock together" (we spend time with those who are like us) and, at the same time, we are powerfully impacted by *proximity*.[18] A recurrent theme that has been reiterated in this project is that campus-level identity boundaries are commonly fortified by basic physical distances between buildings and offices. We interact with and come to know those who are near us. On most campuses, athletics facilities and operations are physically isolated. Big Ten athletic directors' offices are, for example, an average of one mile away – about a 20-minute walk – from their president/chancellor's offices (refer to table 4). This is, of course, a somewhat arbitrary measure of proximity, but it illustrates an actual substantive challenge facing campuses. Whereas other top campus leaders – presidents, provosts, vice presidents, etc. – tend to operate in relative proximity to one another and to interact frequently on matters of research and academics with which they are familiar, many athletic directors (and their vast staffs) only occasionally set foot on the "academic side." Often their interactions with other campus leaders only occur in formal, pre-planned ways – or else in response to crises. Relationships of trust and understanding are difficult to develop in such conditions. Is this a trivial matter? Both existing research and the participants I interviewed for this project suggested not. Collective leadership on athletics-related issues tends to require leaders with very different backgrounds, interests, and expertise to make high-stakes public decisions in concert with other leaders with whom they only irregularly interact and commonly do not fully understand. This is not an ideal arrangement for any group, let alone the most visible entity of a large, complex organization.

[18] Refer to James Spillane's (2017) article: "The Elephant in the Schoolhouse: The Role of Propinquity in School Staff Interactions about Teaching" in *Sociology of Education*.

Table 4: About how long would it take each Big Ten athletic director to walk to their president's office?

Josh Whitman, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 21 minutes, 1.1 miles

Fred Glass, Indiana University
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 24 minutes, 1.2 miles

Gary Barta, University of Iowa
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 3 minutes, 0.1 mile

Kevin Anderson, University of Maryland
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 14 minutes, 0.7 miles

Warde Manuel, University of Michigan
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 15 minutes, 0.7 miles

Mark Hollis, Michigan State University
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 12 minutes, 0.6 miles

Mark Coyle, University of Minnesota
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 9 minutes, 0.4 miles

Bill Moos, University of Nebraska
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 17 minutes, 0.8 miles

Jim Phillips, Northwestern University
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 32 minutes, 1.6 miles

Gene Smith, Ohio State University
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 24 minutes, 1.2 miles

Sandy Barbour, Penn State University
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 23 minutes, 1.2 miles

Mike Bobinski, Purdue University
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 7 minutes, 0.4 miles

Patrick Hobbs, Rutgers University
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 1 hour, 3.0 miles

Barry Alvarez, University of Wisconsin
- Distance from Chancellor's/President's Office: 17 minutes, 0.8 mile

Along with differences in identity and proximity, money also extends on-campus social distances. Several of the university-based leaders whom I interviewed described colleges' investments in athletics programs as "distasteful" and "out of whack" with what was happening on the rest of their campuses. They juxtaposed the shrinking public support of research and higher education with rapid acceleration of athletics. At the UW-Madison, for example, much has been written about decreases in state contributions to the university. And the academic side of campus has been especially hurt by federal research cuts. The university had one of the highest research budgets in the U.S., but recently dropped out of the top five in research funding. UW research expenditures grew by just 2% between 2005 and 2015, which is only half the rate of growth of the other top 25 universities in the U.S. In fact, UW's *overall* revenue grew by only 2.6% during this ten-year period, a slower growth rate than many peer institutions, including Indiana, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, Purdue, and Penn State. Between 2013 and 2015, UW's total revenue actually *dropped 2% per year*.

The athletics budget at UW experienced no such dips during this time period. Athletics revenue reached an all-time high of more than $130 million in 2016-17. Similar differences in revenue trends are, in fact, found at many large public universities in recent years. And, mirroring the youth sports industry, colleges' spending on sports has ramped up. Discrepancies between academic and athletics budgetary trends—whether real or perceived[19]—often leave faculty and administrators questioning their institutions' values.

Facilities and salaries are two of the most common factors that are compared on campuses. Whereas states have taken a cautious approach to taking on debt for general campus projects, most Autonomy 5 athletics programs have followed one another in initiating bold new developments. Some of these projects are easy targets for sports critics. Clemson built a football facility with a mini-golf course, barbershop, sand volleyball pit, and outdoor kitchen area. South Carolina's football building will include laser tag, a movie theater, and bowling lanes. Texas A&M's players have a $12M

[19] Some question whether athletics-related spending has in fact outpaced broader campus spending. Many universities have substantively invested in law, business, engineering, and a range of other academic programs in recent years.

nutrition center with their own executive chef. The University of Oregon's $138M football building includes individually ventilated lockers from Germany, teakwood flooring from Brazil, and barber chairs from Italy. Athletics facilities upgrades across the Big Ten may lack international materials, but are certainly not far behind their rivals in other conferences (refer to Table 5). A recent article[20] described:

> If you look around the Big Ten -- or really college football for that matter -- there's a race to renovate. Maryland is investing $155 million to revamp its old basketball facility, Cole Fieldhouse, and turn it into a flashy new football complex. Minnesota is building an athletes village for all of its programs that comes with a price tag of $190 million. Northwestern is pumping $260 million into a football complex that sits on the shore of Lake Michigan.

Such facilities upgrades and the skyrocketing salaries of many coaches were bound to be critiqued even before universities began experiencing the financial challenges of recent years. But when professors working in dated offices and teaching in the same plain classrooms for twenty years read about athletics developments on campuses, they question their schools' priorities.

[20] DeFabo, M. (August 27, 2017). "Purdue banks on $65 million football complex to pay dividends with recruits." *Goshen News*.

Table 5: Selected athletics-related projects at Big Ten institutions

Illinois: In 2015, replica of the Augusta National Golf Club practice range was unveiled on the campus. The State Farm Center also went under significant renovations in 2015, including increased seating and updated locker rooms. The university is currently raising funds for the new $79.2M football performance center.
Indiana: Enclosed the north end of the football stadium, opened a basketball practice facility, and replaced the baseball and softball stadiums since 2009. Completed a $45M renovation project to Assembly Hall in 2016 and approved a $53M renovation to the football stadium. Other projects on the horizon include renovations to the golf course and soccer stadium (Armstrong Stadium). In September of 2017, announced a $10M commitment to establish a new competitive volleyball and wresting arena
Iowa: The athletic department is currently renovating Kinnick Stadium (football) at an estimated cost of $89M.
Maryland: The athletic department is in the midst of a $155M renovation of Cole Field House, which will include a science/sports medicine area, orthopedic clinic, the Terrapin performance center (indoor football field and two outdoor football fields, strength and conditioning centers, and hydrotherapy centers), and an innovation and entrepreneurship academy.
Michigan: Started construction on the Stephen M. Ross Athletic Campus, a $168M project that includes an indoor track, outdoor track, throws area, indoor rowing center, and a lacrosse stadium. In September of 2017, the Board of Regents approved a $14.8M renovation to Schembechler Hall, a football facility that will include an athlete rehabilitation center, recovery pools, and new Football Performance Center. This is the second renovation to Schembechler Hall in the past five years, which included a $9M museum in 2014. In February of 2017, the Board of Regents also approved a $21M renovation project that includes a weight room and performance center for Oosterbaan Field House (football).
Michigan State: The athletic department is currently renovating the south gate of the football stadium to expand seating and bathroom areas at an estimated cost of $13M. The athletic department is also in the middle of a $50M renovation of the Breslin Center, which houses the school's basketball facilities. Currently raising funds to support the $18-20M addition to the Munn Ice Arena. This same arena underwent a $16M renovation in 2012.
Minnesota:

$190M the Land O'Lakes Center for Excellence, David and Janis Larson Football Performance Center, Charlie and Kathy Cunningham Basketball Development Center and the Indoor Practice Facility are to be completed by January of 2018.
Ohio State: The athletic department has since spent more than $300M in facility upgrades since 2001. In 2016, introduced a $42M project to improve the football stadium. Pursuing updates to the Covelli Center, the Schumaker Complex, and the Jennings Wrestling Facility ($50M) in what is being called the "New Ohio State Athletic District."
Northwestern: The athletic department broke ground in 2015 on the new Ryan Fieldhouse and Walter Athletics Center. The two projects, costing more than $270M, are expected to open in 2018.
Penn State: In March of 2017, the athletic department completed a 20-year plan with regard to its facilities and major capital projects. Some of the highlights or priority projects (next five years) included a Center for Excellence, indoor practice facility, natatorium, tennis facility, and updates to the men's and women's soccer facility. The athletic department is seeking a minimum amount of $120M in philanthropic gifts and hopes to begin construction in 2018.
Purdue: In August of 2017, the athletic department opened a new $65M football performance complex that includes meeting rooms, locker room, weight room, training rooms, nutrition stations and recovery areas.
Rutgers: In September of 2017, Rutgers approved the construction of a multisport training and practice facility ($115M).

Beyond consistently conflicting perceptions of whether or not the ramping up of college athletics is reasonable, the actual financial states of universities' athletics programs vary greatly. Relatively few athletic departments operate in the black. But differences in accounting complicate comparisons between campuses and cloud our understanding of which programs are subsidized and to what extents. The salaries of coaches draw widespread public critique. Jim Harbaugh, Nick Saban, and Mike Krzyzewski, for example, are each paid more than $10 million per year. Such numbers do not sit nicely with just about anyone and there is wide agreement that some sort of reigning-in should happen. Interestingly, however, media attention that is hyper-focused on football and basketball coach salaries may contribute to the public and campus-level (mis)understanding of most college coaches' situations. First, football coaches in Autonomy 5 conferences, especially at the traditional powerhouse schools, serve roles that are similar to CEOs. They organize and oversee vast staffs and player rosters and, along with traditional coaching responsibilities (recruiting, schematic development, etc.), must engage in year-round fundraising, alumni relations, and media obligations. Coaches' successes and failures reverberate throughout their campuses and communities. In the best of situations, successful programs can transform their universities.[21] Further, studies indicate that top-tier programs have economic impacts that go far beyond their campuses. Fueled by football, the University of Nebraska's athletic program, for example, had a $245.5 million impact on the greater Lincoln area in 2016 – a more than 81% increase over its impact ten years earlier. Most of the leaders whom I interviewed indeed stressed that few "outsiders" fully appreciate football coaches' impact and, while some of the highest salaries are not warranted, these positions are not comparable to others on campus. So, while faculty perceptions that athletics-related spending is "distasteful" and "out of whack" may ring true in comparison with other units of their

[21] Robert Witt, former president of the University of Alabama, identified the hiring of football coach Nick Saban as the best investment in the university's history. He credited Saban as a central pillar to the more than $500 million that the university raised shortly after the team won its first title under Saban. Alabama is an outlier in terms of the scale of its football success, but other universities similarly view athletics as a sound, even essential, area of aggressive investment.

campuses (in terms of both the *amounts spent* and the *messages sent*), it is less clear that such investments are fiscally irresponsible across the board.

A deeper look into college coaches' pay in fact reveals a top-heavy salary environment where the number of unreasonable salaries is relatively small. Consider that there are 347 Division I schools fielding thousands of teams. The less than 50 football coaches who are paid more than $3M annually constitute a minute fraction of the overall pool. Tenured faculty in medicine, business, and economics commonly draw guaranteed salaries of over $300K or $400K for as long as they wish to work, amounting to stable, lucrative careers that span thirty or more years. Given the short-term nature of coaching positions, where firings are an annual occurrence, these faculty situations sit quite favorably alongside those of the coaches on their campuses. For example, the mean salary of assistant Big Ten men's basketball coaches was $232,000 in 2016-17. These are seasoned coaches who average 15 years of experience. But most of them will be fired or forced to change jobs at some point. Theirs are among the most lucrative of coaching contracts on their campuses and are far less financially attractive than tenured faculty jobs.

Actually, in the larger scheme of things, taking on debt for ambitious facilities may present a bigger fiscal threat to many universities than even the highest of coach salaries. Different from many campus projects that heavily rely upon public funds, the athletics departments in some Autonomy 5 schools are able to pay for their projects through philanthropy and program revenue. Large projects, however, require long-term debt service payments. High debt payments at Alabama ($225M over the next 28 years) may not be altogether problematic because of current low interest rates and the Crimson Tide's history of revenue generation. But other programs are less equipped for such arrangements. Cal-Berkeley's athletic department, which receives an annual $5M check from the university, lost $22M in 2016 in no small part because of an $18M annual debt service payment for major facilities renovations. A recent Bloomberg analysis[22] suggests

[22] Novy-Williams, E. (2017, January 4). College football's top teams are built on crippling debt. *Bloomberg*. Retrieved from https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-01-04/college-football-s-top-teams-are-built-on-crippling-debt

that the financial buffer that programs like Cal, Georgia Tech, and Illinois derive from conference TV revenue may not be sufficient:

> A high-priced coach might earn $4 million to $5 million a year. Meanwhile, according to public records, athletic departments in at least 13 schools in the country have long-term debt obligations of more than $150 million as of 2014—money usually borrowed to build ever-nicer facilities for the football team…If that (TV) revenue stream fails to grow or starts to drop, as it already has for some programs in the top tier of college football, the results could be crippling.

Campus discourse on athletics-related spending, then, should be considered with a degree of clarity at local levels. Robust athletic departments can create vast opportunities on and beyond campuses – but the pursuit of these opportunities is a complex social, political, and financial endeavor that reveals perception gaps and expands campus-level social distances.[23]

Instability in University Governance

A final, and closely related social distance factor that challenges college athletics is instability in senior-level leadership. The average tenure of public research university presidents is less than seven years and, in any given year, as many as 50 Division I athletic director positions turn over.[24] As new campus leaders cycle through, they tend to arrive with talent and expertise, but they lack historical understanding of their institutions and shared histories with other top leaders. Leadership changes present risk in any organization. Leaders are "cultural transmitters" whose values and styles shape their organizations. I heard numerous stories – both positive and negative – about the interactions between athletic directors, presidents, and other high-level administrators. When aligned with one another and broader institutional principles, these leaders' interactions were described as critical elements to institutional progress and success.

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[23] Cal's Chancellor brought together a diverse group of faculty and administrators to examine the future of Cal Athletics. The widely publicized "Task Force on Intercollegiate Athletics" met 18 times in 2017 and ultimately failed to reach a consensus on a clear direction forward, including how to develop and use facilities and whether or not to trim its 30 team athletic program.

[24] Belzer, J. (2013, October 29): What the Big Ten Conference teaches us about making critical decisions. *Forbes*. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonbelzer/2013/10/29/what-the-big-ten-conference-teaches-us-about-making-critical-decisions/#3ba36cf62f19

Looking beyond presidents and athletic directors, faculty athletics representatives (FARs) and local campus governing boards also play key leadership roles – and can be sources of instability (refer to table 6). The FAR role was developed largely so that universities' athletic expertise and oversight would not be solely housed in athletic departments. Faculty who understand the cultures and operation of both athletics and academics serve as vital campus leaders in matters of institutional compliance and student welfare. But while faculty who assume such roles have gained tenure and possess deep understandings of faculty-related campus matters, they face a steep learning curve on the athletics side. They face a multi-year crash course in NCAA and conference-level rules and must learn about the differing cultures of each sport. To be effective, FARs also should develop working relationships with FARs and athletic directors at other institutions.

Table 6: Athletics Shared Governance at Big Ten Schools.

Institution	Governance Group	Details
Illinois	Athletic Board	19 members (9 faculty, 4 alumni, 3 students; 3 ex-oficio members without a vote)
Indiana	Athletics Committee	6 members (Elected faculty)
Iowa	Presidential Committee on Athletics	17 members (11 faculty, 2 alumni, 2 staff, 2 students,)
Maryland	Athletic Council	8 members (7 faculty, 1 staff; all elected)
Michigan	Advisory Board on Intercollegiate Athletics	13 members (6 faculty, 2 alumni, 2 student-athletes; 3 ex-oficio members without a vote)
Michigan State	Athletic Council	19 members (8 faculty, 3 alumni, 3 students, 4 ex-oficio, 1 academic liaison)
Minnesota	Faculty Academic Oversight for Intercollegiate Athletics Committee	14 members (10 faculty, 1 staff, 3 ex-oficio without a vote)

Nebraska	Intercollegiate Athletics Committee	13 members (8 faculty, 3 students, senior women's athletic administrator, AD)
Northwestern	Committee on Athletics and Recreation	8 members (mix of faculty, students, alumni, and administrators)
Ohio State	Athletic Council	15 members (8 faculty, 4 students, 2 alumni, 1 university staff)
Penn State	Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics	22 members
Purdue	Athletic Affairs Committee	17 members (8 faculty, 2 student, 3 alumni/community, 4 athletics reps)
Rutgers	Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics	Membership unclear
Wisconsin	Athletic Board	24 members (12 faculty, 2 academic staff, 2 classified staff, 4 alumni, 3 students, 1 ex-oficio from Rec Sports)

Some Big Ten schools have strategically developed their FAR roles as stabilizing factors in their university leadership structures. For example, Jo Potuto is a law professor at the University of Nebraska and has served as a FAR for over 20 years. Over this time, Nebraska has been through many changes, including entry into the Big Ten and multiple changes in chancellor, athletic director, football coach, and basketball coach. She has also seen most of her peer institutions' FARs come and go. She has written about NCAA reform, consulted other institutions, and developed a reputation as a national leader in intercollegiate athletics. Several other Big Ten FARs are similar sources of stability and credibility for their institutions.[25] However, the rapid turnover of FARs at other

[25] Seven Big Ten FARs have served in their roles for at least 12 years and four others for at least five years. Big Ten presidents/chancellors have been in their roles for, on average, less than five years.

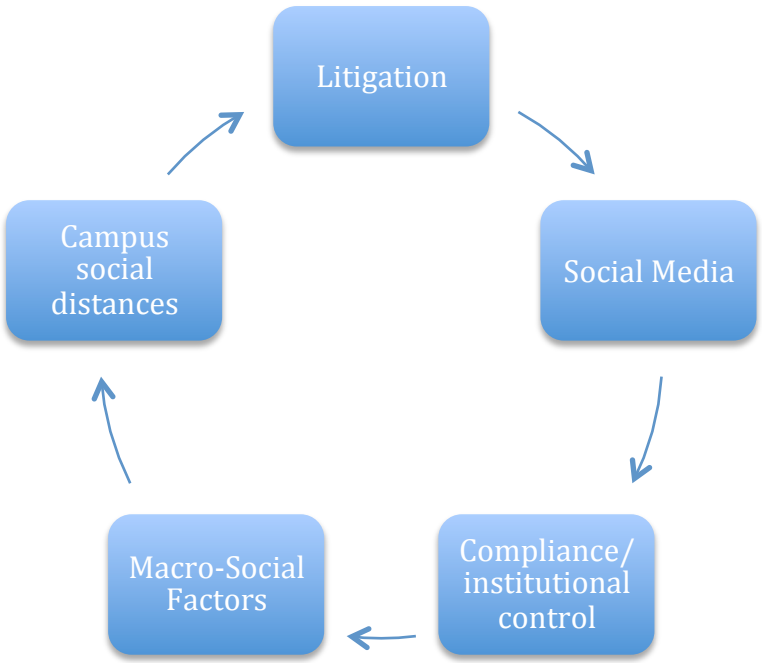
universities is yet another source of leadership instability that threatens to undermine their schools' capacities to draw from historical knowledge and topical expertise to shape future conditions (refer to appendix 4 for a description of my own initial experience of the FAR role).

Instability among university leaders – presidents, chancellors, athletic directors, FARs, and other leaders – may be an especially pronounced point of campus and conference-level fragility during this current era of uncertainty in intercollegiate athletics. The confluence of litigation, technology, and a turbulent social/economic environment signals a critical juncture in history where campus leaders are advantaged if they know and trust one another. Collaborating to make sense of their paths ahead can, as several leaders emphasized to me, bolster institutional adaptability and resilience.

The Fragility Swirl

The major fragility factors that I have described are not unfolding in linear or sequential ways. Nor is any one of these factors unrelated to others. Rather, a "swirl of fragility" underlies the landscape of intercollegiate athletics, where concurrent challenges arise in the shape of macro social factors (economy, natural disaster, war, terrorism, social media) and daily sector-specific ones (litigation, compliance, campus social distances). We do not know *how* these factors will intersect, but we do know that, in some fashion and in the very near future, *they will intersect* to affect a radically new college athletics environment.

Figure 5: The Fragility Swirl in Intercollegiate Athletics: These and other interdependent factors are shaping a new era.



The Wisconsin Context

With regard to the major fragility areas that I discussed, longtime University of Wisconsin fans and stakeholders can certainly understand some better than others. Those who were around Madison before the early 1990s likely recall an athletic department that struggled to consistently compete in the two largest revenue-producing sports. Between 1963 and 1993, the football team went through five coaches and had an overall record of 95 wins and 151 losses. The team failed to win a single Big Ten title during that time. Camp Randall Stadium crowds were small and often more interested in the UW Marching Band than the football team. The basketball program was arguably even worse (and for a longer period), failing to qualify for a single NCAA tournament between 1948 and 1995. The team finished with losing records for 15 of the 20 seasons spanning 1975-1995.

Were one to have predicted the run of success that was to follow this long stretch of futility in Wisconsin, he or she would have been called foolish. Wisconsin's athletic department went from futile to elite in less than twenty years. Its streak of qualifying for both a bowl game in football and the NCAA tournament in basketball sits at 15 years – the longest streak in NCAA history (second best was Texas' 11 year streak).[26] No other school in the country currently has a streak of more than four years. Only three teams in the entire country (Alabama, Clemson, and Ohio State) have won more football games than Wisconsin since 2013 and the Badger Men's basketball team has finished in the top four of the Big Ten Conference for 17 straight seasons. A Spring 2016 story by CBS Sports called Wisconsin's story "one of the overlooked and truly unexpected rises to prominence in the history of collegiate athletics." This rise to prominence includes more than football and basketball, as both men's and women's teams have thrived at Wisconsin. From track and field, cross country, and hockey to volleyball, soccer, and rowing, sustained conference and national success has become the norm in Madison.

[26] For comparison sake, the University of Minnesota has had back-to-back seasons of qualifying for both the NCAA Tournament and a bowl game only once in school history.

Some outside experts identify UW's broad-based athletic department as the best in the country.[27]

Indicators of the department's excellence have grown to include more than wins and losses on the field. UW student-athletes have achieved at elite academic levels. During the 2016-17 academic year, more than a third of them (331) were named to the Dean's List, Dean's Honor List, or Dean's High Honor List and 215 were named to the "All-Big Ten" academic team. Other schools are often critiqued for clustering athletes into a few areas of study, but UW student-athletes are spread across 92 different majors. Collectively, UW teams compare favorably with other institutions. The football team's academic progress rate (APR) has been among the top five in the country for five straight years. The only other schools in the country to join UW in this accomplishment are Duke, Northwestern, and Stanford. Along with football, UW soccer, tennis, volleyball, golf, and hockey teams all received recognition for academic achievement that is in the top ten percent in the nation in their sports over recent years.

The broad academic success of UW student-athletes is relatively well known. Media lists of programs that achieve at the highest levels on and off the field usually include Wisconsin. But several participants in this project noted that far fewer people recognize the extent to which the athletic department recruits, supports, and succeeds with students from traditionally marginalized backgrounds. Whereas the rest of campus struggles to recruit and support students of color and students from economically disadvantaged homes, the athletic department thrives. They provide students with a tailored array of academic and social services and rich team-based peer networks. As a result, 73% of student-athletes who are classified as "high-risk admits"[28] between 2009 and 2012 graduated. And from the pool of high-risk students, African Americans graduated at a rate of 75%.[29] Athletics is not only one of the most substantial levers for

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[27] Gonzalez, J. (2016, March 16) Is Wisconsin the best athletic program in the country? Badgers have results/streak to argue their case. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. Retrieved from http://www.startribune.com/is-wisconsin-the-best-athletic-program-in-the-country-badgers-have-results-streak-to-argue-their-case/372275801/

[28] Students who do not meet traditional standardized test score or grade-point average thresholds are given extensive review by admissions officials before being admitted.

[29] Refer to report by Tiedt, Groth, and Rickelman (2017) for more detail.

increasing diversity in the student body, it provides a model of student support and success from which other units on campus can learn.

The Wisconsin athletic department's 25-year span of thriving has fueled a parallel popularity growth within the state. Wisconsin has less than six million residents, which is a smaller population than all but three other Big Ten states. Its state economy is not among the 20 largest in the country. Much of the state is rural, composed of a patchwork of tight-knit, hard-working farming communities that are hours away from Madison. Yet Wisconsin fans turn out to support their teams at the highest of levels. During the 2016-17 academic year, Wisconsin averaged almost 80,000 fans per football game (16th in the country), more than 17,000 basketball fans (6th in the country and first in the Big Ten), and over 10,000 hockey fans (2nd in the country) per game. And, over the past two years, Wisconsin is one of only five programs in the country with multiple women's teams in the top five in total attendance. Its volleyball team was third nationally with an average attendance of nearly 6,000 per game (third in the country) and, along with playing to near capacity in many games, its women's hockey team drew an NCAA single-game record of over 15,000 fans to one game in January, 2017. One writer suggested that such attendance figure reveal a deeper truth that "Badgers sports are an integral part of not only the university and alumni communities but also the social fabric of the state."[30]

The popularity of Wisconsin sports can be sensed at any one of the venues I referenced above or by driving from border to border to see Badger signs and apparel. It can also be seen in *Public Policy Polling* where, as politicians and other public figures drew paltry approval ratings of less than 20%, UW athletic director Barry Alvarez was seen favorably by 71% of the population.[31] And a random survey of all Wisconsin voters

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[30] Beidelschies, J. (2017, January 19). Wisconsin is the Place for Women's Sports. *SB Nation: Bucky's 5th Quarter.* Retrieved from https://www.buckys5thquarter.com/2017/1/19/13993148/wisconsin-badgers-womens-sports-attendance-hockey-volleyball

[31] Among the very few current/past personalities or items with higher approval ratings in the poll than Alvarez in recent years are Abraham Lincoln, Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, and "cheese."

in 2015 found that 52% of voters in the entire state identify themselves as fans of Wisconsin athletics.[32]

More than just popularity, my project indeed revealed a deeper importance of Wisconsin athletics. I have been involved with athletics throughout the country and at a variety of levels over the years, but, with the possible exception of the Pittsburgh Steelers' influence in Western Pennsylvania, have not witnessed such a close intersection between an athletic program and the individual/collective identities of those around it. I conducted interviews with various universities' leaders and, although some of their schools have loyal fan bases, none of the other schools seemed close to Wisconsin in having near uniform support in their states across all boundaries of age, race, geography, and socioeconomic status. This is not to say that other universities do not have large bodies of support. But for alums and non-alums, the young and old, the rural and urban, Wisconsin emerges more clearly as *a primary source of social cohesion* in its state than any other place I learned about. Most university leaders have, at one time or another, referred to athletics as the "front porch" of their schools – the place that is most visible to outsiders. But we should consider something more – that for many residents in the state, athletics is not only the most familiar and favorable aspect of the university, it brings their communities together, providing profound meaning and contour to their shared lives.[33] Upon learning that I am not a native resident of Wisconsin, multiple people I spoke with emphasized that "you just can't understand how important this (Badger athletics) is here."

The daily newspapers in Wisconsin towns reveal the centrality of the University's athletics program. As I moved forward with the project, I found these papers (and not just the sports sections) to be an interesting supportive artifact. Wisconsin teams'

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[32] By way of contrast, 35% of Illinois voters said they "don't care about college sports" and 33% identified as University of Illinois fans. The same survey in Minnesota did not even include the University of Minnesota as an option. It only gave respondents an option to identify as Twins or Vikings fans.

[33] One could describe this as the "beneficent influence" associated with the Wisconsin Idea. The Wisconsin Idea was born when, in 1904, University President Van Hise declared: "I shall never be content until the beneficent influence of the University reaches every home in the state."

personalities and accomplishments permeate life rhythms throughout the state. The 2013 obituary of E.J. Plesko, a former Madison resident, described his love of the Badgers and described that E.J. "was never more proud or more excited than to be in attendance at the Rose Bowl in 1994, 1999, and 2000 to see Barry Alvarez take the Badger football program to new heights." At first it seemed unusual to me that an obituary – a brief accounting of what was most important in one's life – would mention Wisconsin Rose Bowl victories as a most cherished memory alongside those of loved ones. But a quick search of the *Wisconsin State Journal* database suggested otherwise, revealing that in 2016 alone, UW athletics were mentioned in 693 different obituaries. And in all other newspapers during that year, 2,968 obituaries identified Badger sports as a core aspect of a life lived.

My interviews and observations in this regard have empirical support. In her critically acclaimed book, *The Politics of Resentment*, Professor Katherine Cramer describes a "rural consciousness" around economics and elitism throughout the state. She found many residents in small Wisconsin towns to be skeptical, even resentful of the University. Faculty were widely perceived to be "lazy," "liberal," and "elitist." The researcher noted that residents typically suggested the best part of the University is football, basketball, and, more generally, "sports." Cramer reflected on these findings:

> Is it problematic that the first thing that typically comes to mind when thinking about what a state's flagship university does well is sports? Perhaps many employees on campus outside the athletic department would be more comforted if the most common response were research or teaching undergraduates. However, sports reach people in a visceral way that research is not likely to.[34]

Cramer's findings should be closely considered. UW is a premier land grant institution that immeasurably advances the good of the state in many ways. But large portions of its residents feel alienated from the campus. Even so, they hold tight to the University's athletics.

I should note an aspect of the "popularity and importance" findings that clearly emerged from my interviews: Wisconsin residents do not identify with their teams only *because they win*, but, nearly as importantly, because of *how* they win. I heard several

[34] Refer to Cramer, K (2012). The distance from public institutions of higher education: Public perceptions of UW-Madison. *Wiscape Working Paper,* 1-45.

common themes in this vein. First, Wisconsin teams consistently have large representation of in-state student-athletes, which heightens connection and shared-identity throughout the state. Second, a "humble, hard-working, respectable, Midwestern approach" to competing was consistently highlighted as "the Wisconsin Way." Wisconsin fans (and also their rivals – refer to figure 7) trust and admire their coaches and student-athletes. Third, Wisconsin's program is respected for its *developmental focus*. That is, rather than seeking to recruit just blue chip high school players with the highest ratings and statistics, Wisconsin coaches aim for the right fit. They seek student-athletes whose character attributes jive with the Wisconsin Way – and who, with quality teaching and support, become successful students and contributors to elite teams. Finally, the fiscal responsibility and contributions of the athletic department are clearly admired – especially by leaders who understand the economics of college sports. In a broader NCAA environment where programs commonly lose millions of dollars per year and/or develop in ways that are inconsistent with broader university and community values, Wisconsin's athletic department makes a significant financial contribution (over $10M in 2016-17) to other parts of campus and, even when it grows, manages to remain largely attuned to "Midwestern" mores.

Figure 7: CBSSports.com poll of college coaches (August, 2017).

Who is the high-major coach you genuinely believe does everything by the book and operates completely within the NCAA's rulebook?

Rank	Coach	School	Vote percentage
1.	John Beilein	Michigan	26.6 percent
2.	Mike Brey	Notre Dame	10.5 percent
T3.	Tony Bennett	Virginia	7.6 percent
T3.	Greg Gard	Wisconsin	7.6 percent
5.	Mark Few	Gonzaga	5.7 percent

Wisconsin's Fragility

One of the overarching questions I sought to answer with this project was whether elite universities can develop top-tier athletics programs while still adhering to deep-held institutional principles. Wisconsin emerges as a national exemplar of on and off-field excellence and, as a result, its athletics program is perhaps more woven into the fabric of state identity than ever before. I warn, however, that *Wisconsin is vulnerable to the large fragility factors – diminished football team success, litigation, compliance/institutional control, and campus-based social distances*. Related to these factors, I find that there are at least three specific areas to which Wisconsin leaders should be especially attuned in the immediate future (refer to Table 9).

Table 9: Pressing fragilities at Wisconsin

Factors	Questions
Leadership	How will Wisconsin sustain excellence on and off the field after Barry Alvarez retires? How will internal culture change? How will the institution's external position be affected?
Operational Challenges	Can Wisconsin athletics continue to thrive while being restricted by state policies on reserves, purchasing, hiring, and building? Can productive shared governance practices be developed and sustained?
Mission Integration	As the campus social distances expand around athletics, can the department structurally integrate with other elements of campus in new and meaningful ways?

Leadership

Just about every institution faces leadership-related fragilities in athletics. Even during the brief course of my work with other campus leaders on this project, one of the athletic directors I spoke with was fired, one took a leave of absence for health reasons, and four of the FAR positions turned over. But in Wisconsin, a specific leadership fragility area that was mentioned to me many times relates to Barry Alvarez. Numerous participants noted that when he decides to retire, a new era of uncertainty will arrive in Madison. Alvarez's wide-ranging influences as football coach are well-documented, but his presence as a bedrock of the institution goes beyond the wins his teams achieved on

the field. He is skilled at choosing and supporting coaches. He sets an unquestioned standard in the athletic department that is felt on each team and throughout campus. He understands and values the "Midwestern ethic" that prevails in the state. Interview participants also cited Alvarez's *presence* as a foundational element in his discussions with other campus leaders, with state and business leaders, donors, and key players in conference and national settings. Working as a FAR, I have witnessed the respect and deference that Alvarez is afforded in critical policy environments. He is clearly a leader among leaders in most rooms that he occupies. I had the chance to speak with former college football coach Lou Holtz, who described Alvarez as "a Hall of Fame football coach but an even better athletic director." Wisconsin's long ride under Alvarez has not been perfect, but through a challenging environment it has remained on a consistent, unprecedented, and highly unlikely positive trajectory. Chancellors, coaches, FARs and others have come and gone, but Alvarez has remained steady. The fragility that surrounds his inevitable departure in future years is not due to a lack of other skilled, highly capable individuals in the athletic department. I have, in fact been impressed with many of the staff leaders. Rather, when Alvarez leaves, internal relationships and culture will change. And Wisconsin's voice in external circles will be different. As the bigger "fragility swirl" intensifies, this local instability factor warrants close attention.

Operational Challenges

A second Wisconsin-specific fragility is structural in nature. At least twelve different leaders referred to "operational challenges" that, unless soon addressed, will inhibit Wisconsin's capacity to adapt and thrive as the intercollegiate athletics environment changes. Operational challenges were primarily described in areas of finances and shared governance. With regard to finances, the Wisconsin athletic department was characterized as being slowed by inflexible, multi-layered university and state processes. State policies on purchasing, hiring, and building can be onerous for any department on campus to wade through, but they appear to present unique challenges in the dynamic athletics environment. To hire a head football coach (or any coach with a salary of over $500K), for example, Wisconsin officials need to follow state rules on posting the position for at least two weeks. They also need to have the Athletic Board involved in interviews and signing off on the hiring. They also must get the Board of

Regents to approve the contract. This process can stretch to multiple weeks, which places Wisconsin at significant risk of not securing highly coveted coaches.[35] By comparison, many other schools are able to finalize most aspects of coach hiring in a matter of a few days. One professor and athletic board member mentioned to me that the deliberate Wisconsin hiring environment tends to work well when hiring faculty or administrators. Search committees are formed, multiple candidates are vetted, and consensus is ultimately reached. But when attempting to secure a top-flight coach, he described the policy as a "big problem." Schools that are able to act quickly and decisively are advantaged in these scenarios.[36] Operations challenges are similarly seen in athletic department attempts to purchase items and carry out construction projects. Wisconsin athletics needs to adhere to drawn-out state bidding processes and to work with preferred system vendors.

And Wisconsin's process for construction is even slower and less progressive. The athletic department has vast potential for self-funding its projects, but they go through the same state bonding process as all other campus units. Athletics must get on "the facilities wish list" that is approved and rank ordered by the chancellor. The list is forwarded to the state legislature where some projects are given the go ahead and others are not. This bonding process is inefficient and unpredictable. If state politicians ever decided to put a moratorium on bonding, athletic facilities development would screech to a halt. Such delays could raise a distinct competitive disadvantage for Wisconsin's teams. I agree with many of my interview participants who believed that Wisconsin should not engage in a frivolous facilities arms race with other schools. Nevertheless, the bonding issue emerges as especially concerning for at least two reasons. First, all other Big Ten

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[35] Early each December, in the few days immediately following the last regular season college football game, a feverish competition for top coaching prospects unfolds. The timeliness of hiring is exacerbated by the NCAA's recruiting calendar, which leaves January as one of the most critical time periods for securing high school recruits. Schools with cumbersome hiring processes not only risk losing coach candidates but also the best recruits.

[36] Granting head coaches significant raises is also a complex process at Wisconsin. Paul Chryst was viewed as one of the top coaches nationally in 2016 and, in order to get his salary adjusted upward to make him the 9th highest paid coach in the Big Ten, athletic department officials were required to provide a prolonged justification to the Board of Regents.

and peer institutions are aggressively improving their facilities, meaning that a stoppage of major construction and renovation would leave Wisconsin decidedly behind its competitors. Without pinpointing *how many* or *what types* of big projects the athletic department should take on, we should understand that the *option* to build is critical in the current environment. Second, and closely related, dated facilities (especially along with balky personnel policies) are not always far removed from recruiting downturns. As recruiting suffers, winning becomes more difficult. And *Wisconsin's current financial model requires winning*. State limits on cash reserves (how much a unit can have in reserves and how they can use the reserves) and restrictions on gifts (again, how large of gifts can be accepted and how the gifts are used) leave the athletic department operating on a razor thin margin. Wisconsin has a $130M+ annual budget and less than $40M in athletics reserves. Any moderate bump in the road – overextension in facilities, changes in the tax code, campus over-dependence on cash contributions from athletics, losing football seasons, bad coaching hires, scandals, etc. – could strain the enterprise considerably. And coupled with systemic changes that may soon occur through litigation and shifting market forces (for example, in television and consumer behavior), bumps in Wisconsin's road could create major problems.[37]

Also under the umbrella of operational challenges at Wisconsin, the athletic department appears vulnerable with regard to the university's shared governance system. Just about every Wisconsin-based leader who I interviewed identified shared governance as a valued central tenet of the university's operations. These leaders described an appreciation for the process of including multiple faculty, staff, and administrative voices in campus oversight and decision-making. At the same time, both faculty and administrators suggested that shared governance, in its current configuration with athletics, might not be optimized. Specifically, participants were referring here to the work that occurs between senior campus and athletics leaders as well as the University's Athletic Board.

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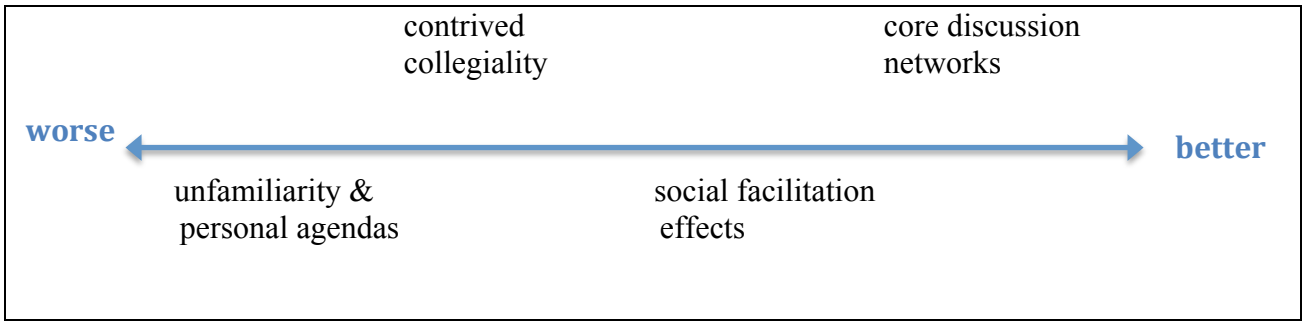
[37] Wisconsin's reserves limit may challenge the athletic department to commensurably persevere through financial strains in comparison with other top programs. Nebraska athletics, for example, has experienced multiple coach firings and unsuccessful football seasons recently but has benefited from $100M in reserves. Alabama athletics has $180M in reserves.

Conceptually, we can envision their comments on athletics-related shared governance on a continuum (refer to figure 8). Dysfunctional shared governance arrangements occupy the far left of the continuum and are commonly marked by leaders' *unfamiliarity* with each other, their *lack of domain knowledge*, and/or their *personal agendas*. These configurations are prone to unnecessary conflict.[38] Next along the continuum are instances of *contrived collegiality*, where leaders are forced to spend time with one another and, while not outwardly in conflict, they are neither authentic nor especially productive in their work.[39] Shared governance that has *social facilitation effects*[40] – where the presence of one group increases "alertness and motivation" in another – is yet farther to the right on the continuum. And to the far right, an optimal form of shared governance occurs when diverse leaders form *core discussion networks* with one another. In these situations, leaders understand each other and speak both freely and regularly. Joined with shared purpose, they come together with respect for each other's roles and expertise. Athletics-related shared governance at Wisconsin – in its varying forms – was described to me as unfolding at all but the farthest to the right points on this continuum. I was concerned to learn of what some perceived to be inadequate "communication loops" between athletics, administration, and other pertinent groups. In particular, if athletic department leaders and campus leaders operate only on the left half of the shared governance continuum, they heighten the university's susceptibility to faltering as the surrounding environment changes.

[38] Conflict can be good in shared governance settings if tied to differing but reasonable and informed perspectives.
[39] For a further reading on contrived congeniality, refer to James Spillane's (2017) discussion of forced teacher collaboration in public schools.
[40] For further reading, refer to the work of Harvard sociologist Mario Small (2013).

Figure 8: A conceptual continuum of shared governance. Dysfunctional shared governance environments can be marked by unfamiliarity and conflict, whereas optimal cases function more like core discussion networks, where expertise, trust, and transparency abound. Contrived collegiality and social facilitation lie somewhere in between.



Mission Integration

A third area of fragility for Wisconsin athletics relates to its integration into the larger campus mission. Schools in Autonomy 5 conferences possess more resources and independence than the other Division I schools, but are also prone to critique relating to their distances from institutional missions. And as further reforms shake out, external critiques of the collegiate model will surely intensify around matters of "professionalization." Universities will be forced to make difficult decisions about their own athletics programs. Wisconsin's athletic department will find itself occupying a challenging middle position between reform advocates who demand that football and men's basketball players get their "just due" and campus actors who claim that any step toward professionalization is yet another movement away from institutional values.

My findings suggest that Wisconsin's remarkable success over the past 20 years has had many positive effects. Its success has cultivated a massive fan base and Wisconsin athletics has become one of the top social cohesion levers on campus and across the state. For thousands of state residents, athletics are the most favorably viewed and accessible aspect of the university. Additionally, the University, Madison community, and entire state have reaped enormous financial gains from the athletic department's success. Athletics are even more important in Wisconsin than many campus stakeholders may realize. In this context, principled decisions to step back from the highest levels of intercollegiate competition due to changes in how revenue is distributed may have profound effects.[41] As much as many would like to hold tight to longstanding notions of amateurism, a rigid rejection of any sort of adaptation to the collegiate model along with at least some like-minded Autonomy 5 schools seems unlikely. So as changes are made in athletics, the University might see heightened on-campus tension around mission and values.

Eight of the leaders I spoke with noted that insufficient communication exists on athletics' contributions to and structural ties-in with the core work of the broader campus.

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[41] For example, if the University decided to compete with a tier of programs that were not considered top-level competition, team success may be at risk, lucrative media and commercial agreements could be challenged, and attendance might diminish.

As much as campus stakeholders know about Badger sports team success, they know surprisingly little about how the department actually operates. Most campus faculty do not know that the athletic department sends millions of dollars to the larger campus operations budget. Nor are they aware of the academic support services that student-athletes are afforded. The athletic department produces an annual report of student-athletes' academic accomplishments, such as their high graduation rates and their academic awards. These are largely "NCAA data[42]" that are impressive but difficult to connect to deeper campus discussions and dilemmas. For example, one of my hopes with this paper was to present a thorough analysis of the athletic department's recruitment and support of traditionally marginalized students. I cited some broad accomplishments of these students earlier in the paper. But even after numerous attempts, it remains unclear to me precisely how many students of color, first generation students, and students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds that the athletic department serves. I have not learned how subgroups of these students perform academically, what they major in, or what they go on to do after college. I am clearly responsible for not being able to find all these data. But if the University's FAR, an education professor who studies how schools can provide opportunity to traditionally marginalized students, does not understand these matters, who does?

I surmise that athletic department leaders have a grasp on the data and that they are actually doing quite well in supporting students, but I also see a golden opportunity for campus connection-making falling to the wayside. The broader campus struggles mightily in attracting and supporting African American undergraduate students – so the athletic department not only has a success story that needs to be understood by researchers, but they probably have lessons to share as well. My example is just one of many others that could be imagined in areas such as law, health sciences, and business.[43]

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[42] The NCAA requires institutions to track very specific outcomes around graduation, grade point averages, etc.

[43] UW does support a range of research projects in athletics, including cutting-edge work on concussions and athletic performance. But unlike Nebraska, Stanford, Virginia Commonwealth and many other universities, UW lacks an overarching athletics research center that organizes and articulates a broad, cohesive agenda.

Here is my bigger point: Athletics reform will bring even more critics of sport into the fray. Leaders will be called to articulate mission connections more clearly. If Wisconsin is not able to demonstrate deeper structural intersections between its athletic and academic entities, social distances will further expand.

Circling back to one of my primary purposes with this project, I have learned that it is possible to develop and maintain an elite athletic department at a first rate university. The principles of the institution do not need to be sacrificed. Wisconsin has provided ample proof of such over recent years. I suggest that the near days ahead will test Wisconsin's resilience. The University should prepare and adapt. In the final section of the paper, I present three broad areas where deliberation can occur and I offer examples of how other institutions have adapted.

Moving Forward

At the beginning of this paper, I described the Mann Gulch forest fire disaster of 1949. Smokejumpers perceived their situation to be a "10 a.m. fire" that would be wrapped up by the next morning. But a series of events conflated to create a massive, deadly fire. Karl Weick, the scholar who later analyzed the tragedy, noted that the smokejumpers were ultimately a failed organization that neglected to see the big picture of their situation. The smokejumpers did not know each other well, nor did they trust one another. Roles were not clearly understood among the group. They were accustomed to using their tools and routines in certain ways and were unable to adapt when these tools and routines were rendered ineffective. Weick reflected that although we can easily critique the smokejumpers in retrospect, we should realize that many modern day organizations are similarly vulnerable to failure.

The Mann Gulch case provides useful insight into the current intercollegiate athletics environment. It instructs us to recognize the breadth and magnitude of complex threats that will soon find confluence. Mann Gulch tells us that we should learn from our past, but not assume that we have seen everything before. Most importantly, the case challenges organizations to develop *sensemaking orientations that rationally assess and respond to fluid, nuanced contexts.* I conclude this paper by describing three large areas where concerted sensemaking should occur in Wisconsin.

1. **Wisconsin's state and university policies relating to athletic department governance and operation.**

Colleges and universities are in the early stages of re-examining their basic functioning. The internet has revolutionized the ways information is disseminated and, as a result, whole new pathways of learning have opened. Higher education was once the primary warehouse for knowledge, but it has been de-stabilized by technology. In this new reality, the very structures and purposes of universities are called into question. Teaching is changing through the emergence of online classes and individually tailored lessons. Faculty must also make their research relevant in new ways, lest they risk becoming obsolete. Universities are charged with innovating around new models of leadership and organization if they are to make it.

With athletics on a similar precipice of change, why would we expect that university rules and procedures from a prior era should remain untouched? Holding true to its values and its commitment to serving the state, Wisconsin may need to reconsider athletics-related governance and structure if is to remain elite. I noted earlier that restrictions around construction, purchasing, and personnel will limit the athletic department from acting quickly in a rapidly changing environment. And I described how governance can be ineffective when spread across people (some of whom lack expertise and legitimate authority) and campus units that are unfamiliar with one another. Should not an institution's operational and governance policies facilitate progress rather than inhibit it? The oversight rationale of shared governance – ensuring that the athletic department does not act irresponsibly or go rogue – can actually be strengthened[44] all while granting the athletic department greater flexibility to act decisively. Although my intent with this paper is not to prescribe specific models for change, it is generally illustrative to mull over some examples of how governance and operations have been changed in other settings.

Some universities establish their athletic departments as 501(c)(3) non-profit corporations. These arrangements grant operational and facilities flexibilities to departments while maintaining strategic university-level oversight. The University of Florida's "University Athletic Association, Inc." (UAA), for example, is led by a board of governors and reports to the University president. UAA operates with funds derived entirely from its own operations and fundraising.[45] It does not depend on state or student support, but in fact sends portions of its revenue to support the larger university. The University of Georgia's "UGAA" is quite similar in structure, as are the athletics non-profits associated with numerous other public universities.

Of the many non-profit athletic associations that I researched, one that stood out as especially interesting was the "Army West Point Athletic Association" (AWPAA).

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[44] Interview participants noted that governance is improved when people are purposefully chosen and given clear roles in governing. Some boards, for example, provide slots that are earmarked for those with specific backgrounds such as law, business, health sciences, etc. Shared governance in these settings is expert based.

[45] Several participants noted that not only does athletic department independence grant operational flexibility to the departments, it also can provide a degree of fiscal protection to universities in scenarios where athletic departments lose money.

Although Army is very different from Wisconsin, it is a noteworthy case because, like UW, it is academically elite and entrenched in a thick, historically bureaucratic system. Army is the ultimate "policy and procedures" place. But for years, Army has struggled to remain athletically competitive – especially with Navy and Air Force (both of which have long-enjoyed a large degree of athletic department flexibility within their institutions).

When I interviewed Army athletic director Boo Corrigan, he described a convoluted process that Army coaches had to follow when attempting to purchase items for their teams. The coaches needed to get three bids and see what the Army's preferred vendors were. Or when seeking a multimedia deal with Learfield Communications, Army policy required one-year renewable contracts, leaving the department subject to market forces on an annual basis.[46] They faced similar limitations working with other major corporate partners. Corrigan worked to make operational changes for years, but little progress could be made until he and other leaders were able to forge a common vision. Corrigan described to me how Army faces similar leadership challenges as many large public institutions, where regular turnover in key positions challenges capacity to make meaningful collective reform. He ultimately forged trusted relationships with the U.S. Military Academy Superintendent, the Secretary of the Army, and others. These leaders were able to craft a new model of athletic department operation that is set to take full effect in 2018 (refer to appendix 5 for Army's press release on the new AWPAA). Corrigan says that the new arrangement will have dramatically positive everyday effects for his program while not diminishing its association with the Academy.

Alongside the development of college athletics nonprofit associations, academic health centers – hospitals that are associated with universities – have been steadily re-organizing in parallel fashion. The 110 academic health centers in the U.S. are much larger enterprises than athletic departments, but some of the challenges they face are similar, including increases in external competition and reductions in public funding.[47]

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[46] Once Corrigan and Army leaders finalized the Army Athletic Association agreement, Army signed a lucrative ten-year deal with Learfield and multi-year contracts with Nike and Anthony Travel.

[47] Kim, C. & York, R. (2014, October 13). *Strategic Choices for Academic Health Centers*. Kaufman, Hall & Associates.

Similar to Wisconsin's hospital independence, those at Harvard, Minnesota, Vanderbilt, and at least 30 other university sites have developed more nimble models, each slightly different from the other. In that they are still closely interwoven with their universities, the operational separation of academic health centers tends to require a complex process of negotiation. Most describe their rationale for separating in a similar way that Minnesota did in 1997:

> The rigors of the health care market demand a flexible organization that can respond rapidly to market alterations. In general, academic medical centers are complex, inefficient organizations that are often resistant to change. The organization of AHCs is not conducive to making decisions rapidly. There is a need for a more responsive governance structure rather than the quasi-independent organization of departments. Nevertheless, tenure and representational governance must be respected while accommodating the new environment.

What is noteworthy about hospitals' situations is how similar their broad challenges are to those of athletics. Also, their governance transitions are ultimately less disruptive than many people anticipated they would be. Vanderbilt Hospital's reconfiguration with the University reveals some of their promises and expected results. Chancellor Nicholas Zeppos said: "This is a remarkable moment in Vanderbilt's history, and one that I believe will be marked as a time when Vanderbilt made a strategic and prescient choice that positioned both the university and the medical center for dramatic and sustained success." And Provost Susan Wente explained: "With the reconfiguration, there will be no changes in staffing, medical research, employee benefits or salaries. Medical school students continue to learn alongside Vanderbilt professors who will continue to staff VUMC."

Whether or not it would ever be feasible for Wisconsin's athletic department to achieve such formal operative independence, the larger point is that the University should ensure that its athletic program can act nimbly while still maintaining valuable connections to and oversight from administrators and faculty. At the very least, Wisconsin should examine and learn from other models.[48]

[48] Including, for example, 501(c)(3) and public authority models

2. **The Wisconsin athletic department's growth mindset.**

Discussions of change and reform leave many leaders stuck interpreting rules and balancing budgets. Can we afford a new facility? Will paying football players mean we need to cut other sports programs? Are students' social media presences threatening their athletic eligibility? The matter to which leaders *should* remain especially attuned in these next couple years, however, is the potential for *losing their foundational senses of meaning*. Athletic departments must have crystal clear understandings of their current and aspirational identities. *Who are we, why do we field an athletics program, and what do we hope to become?* Sensemaking in a time of swirling fragilities requires ongoing reflection upon these identity questions, for today's campus-level existential threat is less deja vu ("we're back to what we used to be") than vu jade ("we have never been here before and we've got no idea where we're going!").

So, "who" is Wisconsin Athletics? It is a department that works above the line – embracing the Midwestern work ethic and competing with integrity. It is a program that prioritizes a holistic student experience at its world-renowned university, including high-level academics and meaningful community engagement. The program catalyzes life opportunities for hundreds of young people from diverse backgrounds each year. Wisconsin Athletics is a beloved instrument of social cohesion throughout the state. And, make no mistake, Wisconsin Athletics is a powerhouse in the big-time college sports scene – a winner of historical proportions and a nine figure financial enterprise. Wisconsin is also a program that, like other athletic departments around the country, must continually monitor and cultivate its intersections with the broader campus.

And who does Wisconsin Athletics aspire to be? This, of course, is the question of the day – and one that needs to be answered collectively by a number of leaders. At this critical juncture, neither stagnation nor retreat are viable options. While addressing the aforementioned macro-level governance and operational matters, leaders can make sense of how the department's development should unfold. I suggest a notion of *"connective growth"* that can inform Wisconsin's development.

I refer to connective growth as a structural development perspective in intercollegiate athletics that promotes elite athletic performance while at the same time tethering to and advancing broader University ideals. Connective growth centers

institutional identity, bridging the social distances that threaten to isolate athletics. This perspective can include various types of advancement, including facilities, personnel, and programs. For example, Notre Dame's football stadium enhancement included redesigned seating areas, a new video board, and a renovated concourse – all of which were needed to keep pace with other top stadiums. However, in order to draw athletics closer to the school's academic, religious, and student life identity, the project also included three new buildings that are adjacent to the stadium. These house a new student recreation center (for all students), a home for the Sacred Music Program, and a campus media facility. Additionally, the University's Psychology and Anthropology Departments as well as a campus hospitality area are housed in the new complex. This was the largest facilities project in the University's history and it is sure to impress football recruits and fans for years to come. It is also a clear example of connective growth because it unifies the campus community and advances institutional ideals. In fact, the Notre Dame project is not only connective in its *outcome*, but was connective in *process*, as 84 University faculty and staff experts from units such as architecture, engineering, technology, food services, and student life collaborated on the project design.[49] The project utilized campus expertise and cultivated strong social bonds among groups that otherwise might not have interacted with one another.

[49] The interdisciplinary team collectively invested over 3,000 hours in the planning process.

Photo 7: Notre Dame's stadium project, which houses multiple campus entities.

I also visited Vanderbilt, which competes in the SEC but, as an elite private school, has a much different institutional identity than its conference rivals. Athletic Director David Williams is one of the most interesting elements of Vanderbilt's athletic department. He is a tenured law professor with senior university administration experience.[50] He carries out many of the same duties as other athletic directors and has led a campaign to improve the department's facilities. At the same time, Williams strategically enmeshes his department with other parts campus and the greater Nashville community in a multitude of ways. For instance, Williams compared student-athletes' experiences with those of the broader student body and noticed that "his kids" were missing out on a number of learning and career development opportunities. As a result, he partnered with others on campus to create summer internship and study abroad opportunities for students. On the day I visited campus, 65 Vanderbilt student-athletes were partaking in "capstone day," where they presented on what they learned over the summer.

Williams also substantively integrates notions of equity and justice into the athletic department. He sets an early tone for his student-athletes. Soon after arriving to

[50] Williams was previously in senior administration at Ohio State.

campus, Vanderbilt freshmen are given tours of Nashville's historic sites. They are introduced to local leaders and learn about and become engaged in their local community. And last year during Black History Month, Williams worked with Nike to develop special basketball jerseys that replaced players' names with the names of local civil rights leaders. Each student-athlete learned about these leaders and represented them on the court as part of the athletic department's "Equality Weekend." In a press release, Williams explained:

> Who were the people in our history and society that allowed the basketball games we watch today to have the diversity we see among the young people playing the game and attending our universities? Who were those folks who worked hard to make the city of Nashville and Vanderbilt University an open and welcoming place for all of us? I am honored to be a part of this great university as we take the time to recognize these icons, for they are truly heroes. I am humbled to stand on their shoulders for it is their leadership and courage that paved the way for all of us.

Yet another noteworthy indicator of Williams' commitment to developing student-athletes' civic awareness was seen in the special Martin Luther King, Jr. Day experience that he coordinated. Williams, along with several coaches and staff members, brought 28 student-athletes for a private tour of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. The trip was described as "one of the greatest experiences of their lives."

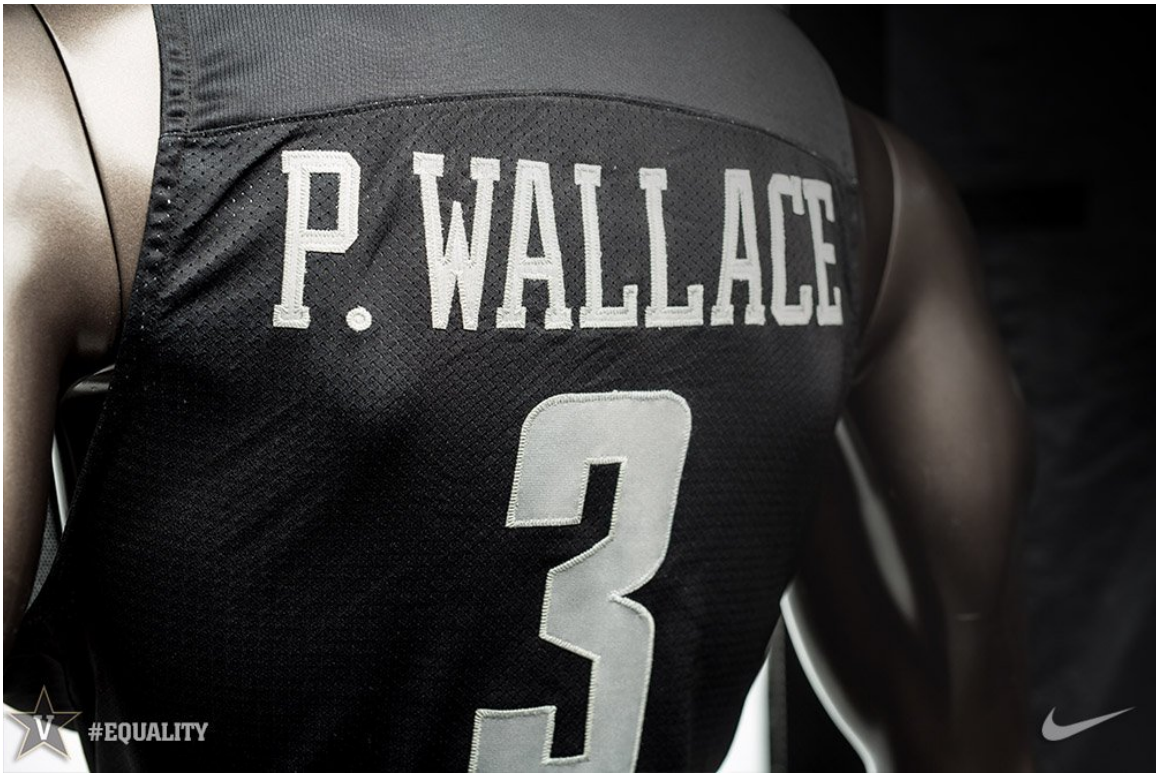
A final area where I am most impressed by Williams was in his orientation to research and data. He acknowledged that Vanderbilt is like many other elite institutions in that fractures can easily arise between athletics and academics. He views active engagement of festering campus-athletics tensions as one of his key athletic director responsibilities. He explained to me, "The onus is on us. We are very, very assertive with data. I will not let those critiques sit. I address them head on, right away." Williams articulated how he analyzes every aspect of student data and regularly presents robust findings – far more than just "NCAA data" – to faculty groups and administrators. He exclaimed, "By the time I get done, it's like a mic drop moment. There is no criticism."

Williams cultivates a rich array of academic and social programming for his student-athletes all while aggressively ramping up facilities and paying big coach

salaries. Nonetheless, he faces little push back on campus because the outcomes of his efforts are unmistakable. He lives out the University's mission of "promoting inquiry, equality, compassion, and excellence in all endeavors" as well as anyone on campus.

Photos 8 & 9: Vanderbilt Athletics leaders took student-athletes on a private tour of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.

Photos 10 & 11: Vanderbilt Athletics partnered with Nike to host "Equality Weekend." Special jerseys were made with the names of local civil rights leaders on the back. Student-athletes and coaches interacted with the honorees throughout the weekend.

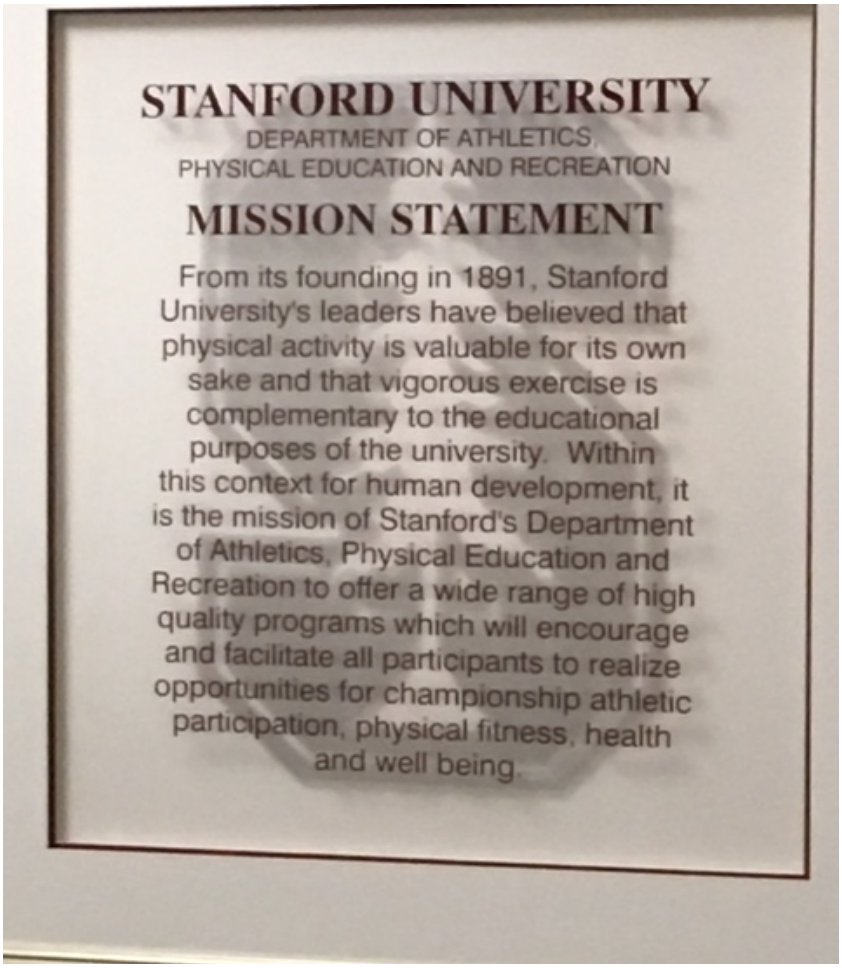


The Notre Dame and Vanderbilt examples reveal their leaders' understandings of institutional values. Their athletic departments operate well within what Big Ten Commissioner Jim Delany would refer to as their "organizational DNA." Their investments in athletics are on par with those of other major universities and, at the same time, are clearly connected to the deeper meanings of the schools. Perhaps the best example of connective growth that I learned about was at Stanford.

Stanford is one of the top universities in the world and has won the Director's Cup, which honors the most successful athletic department in NCAA Division 1, *for 23 consecutive years*. Stanford fields one of the broadest programs in the nation – 36 varsity teams – and has won at least one national team championship for 41 consecutive years. I visited Palo Alto to learn about this remarkable success and "the Stanford Way" – an articulation of how athletics has thrived while embracing the university's highest ideals.

Driving onto the campus early on my first day, I noticed a large billboard offering a congratulatory message from Stanford Medicine to the athletic department for winning its latest Directors Cup.

I parked and then made a short walk past Maples Pavilion (the basketball arena) and over to the Arrillaga Family Sports Center, where the offices of coaches and administrators, as well as the sports performance facilities are located. Inside the front door, I saw the department's mission statement hung on the wall. The building was under renovation and I watched a worker down the hall creating a display of what looked to be the department's values.

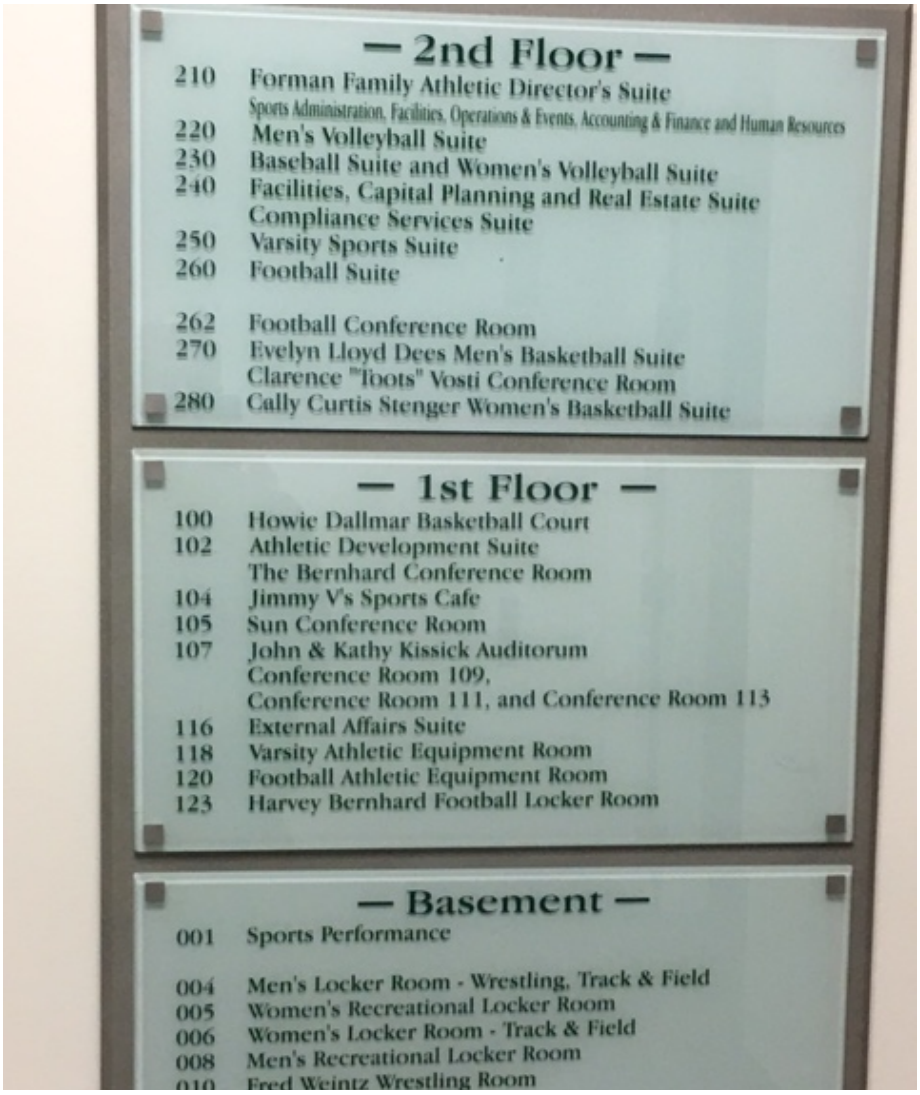


I spent the first part of the day in the weight room with Shannon Turley, the director of sports performance. Shannon told me about his background (degrees in chemistry and social psychology) and his philosophy of student-athlete development. He

only half-jokingly referred to himself as a “nerd” three different times. He juxtaposed his relatively small physical stature with that of large, muscle-bound strength coaches at other institutions. I was impressed with Shannon’s ideas, which he justified with research evidence. I was intrigued by his method of linking current Stanford football players with past ones. He described how players can each choose someone from the past to model themselves after. Shannon has required every player from recent years to track their workouts and post-workout reflections. He organizes and keeps hold of a binder for every player, past and present. So, each day current players are able to review their model’s handwritten notes from when he was at the same phase of his career.

That day was filled with a series of other meetings with coaches and administrators. I learned from each of them. Matt Doyle, Senior Associate Athletic Director and Head of Football Operations told me about his weekly routine of walking across campus to visit with faculty. He discussed the “faculty program” that allows each recruit to connect with the school’s world-renowned researchers and teachers during their

visits. Matt introduced me to football coach David Shaw, who was visiting with other staffers in the common area. I noticed that the offices of administrators and various sports were integrated together throughout the building, so casual interactions like the one I had with Coach Shaw were normal. I watched as female and male coaches joked together and as student-athletes from different sports mingled on their ways in or out of the building.



More meetings followed, including one with Deputy Athletic Director Patrick Dunkley, who, like Vanderbilt's David Williams, used to hold a position as general counsel. Patrick shared fascinating insights about the current climate of NCAA litigation.

I then took some down time in the building's "Jimmy V Café," a great little eatery where four student-athletes ate together at one table and some senior citizens drank coffee at another. The café is open to the public. Toward the end of the afternoon, after a short time in the library archives, I walked to the football practice field, which is positioned right in the midst of campus. I observed practice for a bit and chatted briefly with one of the current players' mother.

I provide all this specific description of my time at Stanford in hopes of illustrating what struck me most about the place: its innovation and interconnectedness. I witnessed a university where faculty and entire academic departments openly support, embrace, and participate in the athletics enterprise. I saw a department that employed strategies of structural design to encourage interaction among different people. I visited with coaches who embraced university expertise and, in some cases, even looked and talked like scientists. The organization impressed me as being composed of thoughtful, imaginative, individuals who were intricately linked to one another and their university.

Wisconsin Athletics will need to grow and adapt and it can do so knowing that the highest levels of academic and athletic performance can exist together. Like Notre Dame, Vanderbilt, and Stanford, Wisconsin's growth in athletics can be ambitious and

connective, holding true to its identity (refer to Figure 9 for description of *The Wisconsin Sports Institute*).[51] But if the athletic department's revenue and expenditures continue to escalate without parallel consideration of how more meaningful university connections can be forged, the program risks further tension and critique from its own campus .[52]

[51] Wisconsin athletics should be attuned to its gaps as it grows – not just competitive gaps relating to facilities, but programmatic gaps that inform larger University aims. For example, Wisconsin is the only Big Ten university that lacks both a degree program and research center in the area of athletics (refer to appendix 5 for examples of programs at other universities.

[52] The athletic department should also remain cognizant of how symbolism affects outside perception. Whereas Notre Dame has academic departments literally attached with the football stadium and Stanford's facilities are in the heart of its campus, Wisconsin's athletic department sits on a high floor behind an iron fence.

Figure 9: The Wisconsin Sports Institute

Wisconsin can make substantive connective growth by developing a sports institute that both informs its own program and also leads national dialogue on sports reform. The institute would also provide a range of practical contributions to the state. The institute would be tethered to three action areas:

3. **Wisconsin's role in shaping the future of intercollegiate athletics.**

Shortly after the smokejumpers landed in Mann Gulch, their foreman, Wag Dodge, realized his crew was in danger and called for them to adapt in ways they had not anticipated:

> They were moving through bunch grass that was two and a half feet tall and were quickly losing ground to the 30-foot-high flames that were soon moving toward them at 610 feet per minute. Dodge yelled at the crew to drop their tools, and then, to everyone's astonishment, he lit a fire in front of them and ordered them to lie down in the area it had burned. No one did, and they all ran for the ridge.

Similar to Dodge's crew's fateful attempt to outpace the flames, it almost seems to me as if many stakeholders are running from change. I have been struck by how many leaders in the field of intercollegiate athletics and, more broadly, higher education, *can articulate why things are flawed* or *unworkable*. *And at the same time, very few of these leaders can imagine new realities.* We have a field of narrow decision-makers and are bereft of visionary leadership that is, as Jane Addams would say, "moored in wider moral and social purpose." Wisconsin, learning with like-minded institutional partners[53] and a fair degree of urgency, should take a nod not from Foreman Dodge's followers who scampered away from the heat, but from Dodge himself. He assessed the conditions then acted smartly and swiftly. Dodge never wavered and was the only smokejumper to survive.

The University of Wisconsin has a long history of prominent action during times of change and uncertainty. Wisconsin is a bastion of innovation where the best of minds come to promote a better future. In athletics, Wisconsin is experiencing among the more remarkable runs of academic and athletic success in the history of the NCAA. And while society seems to be as fractured as ever, Wisconsin athletics is a unifying force. So, rather than sitting back and reacting to the tides of change, Wisconsin should make sense of how it can lead creatively and courageously, becoming a shaper of that change on

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[53] Wisconsin can learn with and from universities with similar ideals. As Weick notes, "A partner makes social construction easier. A partner is a second source of ideas. A partner strengthens independent judgment in the face of a majority."

conference and national stages. This leadership will require diligent research, reflection, coordination, and, in the moment of action, resoluteness heading into the fire.

Appendix 1: Shared Governance in Athletics in the Big Ten

-Key players: Campus executives, athletics administration, campus committees/boards, faculty athletics representatives

Institution	CoPC Rep (year started)	Governance Group	Details
Illinois	Robert Jones (2016)	Athletic Board	19 members (9 faculty, 4 alumni, 3 students; 3 ex-officio members without a vote)
Indiana	Michael McRobbie (2007)	Athletics Committee	6 members (Elected faculty)
Iowa	Bruce Herreld (2015)	Presidential Committee on Athletics	17 members (11 faculty, 2 alumni, 2 staff, 2 students,)
Maryland	Wallace Loh (2010)	Athletic Council	8 members (7 faculty, 1 staff; all elected)
Michigan	Mark Schlissel (2014)	Advisory Board on Intercollegiate Athletics	13 members (6 faculty, 2 alumni, 2 student-athletes; 3 ex-officio members without a vote)
Michigan State	Lou Anna Simon (2005)	Athletic Council	19 members (8 faculty, 3 alumni, 3 students, 4 ex-officio, 1 academic liaison)
Minnesota	Eric Kaler (2011)	Faculty Academic Oversight for Intercollegiate Athletics Committee	14 members (10 faculty, 1 staff, 3 ex-officio without a vote)
Nebraska	Ronnie Green (2016)	Intercollegiate Athletics Committee	13 members (8 faculty, 3 students, senior women's athletic administrator, athletic director)

Northwestern	Morton Schapiro (2009)	Committee on Athletics and Recreation	8 members (mix of faculty, students, alumni, and administrators)
Ohio State	Michael Drake (2014)	Athletic Council	15 members (8 faculty, 4 students, 2 alumni, 1 university staff)
Penn State	Eric Barron (2014)	Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics	22 members
Purdue	Mitch Daniels (2013)	Athletic Affairs Committee	17 members (8 faculty, 2 student, 3 alumni/community, 4 athletics reps)
Rutgers	Robert Barchi (2012)	Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics	Membership unclear
Wisconsin	Rebecca Blank (2013)	Athletic Board	24 members (12 faculty, 2 academic staff, 2 classified staff, 4 alumni, 3 students, 1 ex-officio from Rec Sports)

Of note:

- Wisconsin has the largest athletic board
- COPC members' time in roles for on average less five years
- Big Ten FARs: seven for 12+ years, four others for 5+ years

Appendix 2: "Rankings and Readiness in College Football"
(fall, 2015)

With the release of the college football playoff rankings, we begin a month of rampant speculation about which teams deserve to play for the national championship. These rankings offer fans and media fodder for heated debate (Why is Alabama ranked higher than Florida?) and expert predictions (Two Big Ten teams will make the playoff!), but, with more than five weeks of the season left to be played, they likely will bear little resemblance to the final rankings that will be released on December 6.

In fact, regardless of how small their actual implications often are, college football fans love rankings. We rank teams, conferences, coaches, Heisman Trophy candidates, and even mascots (*what about Bucky?!).* Among, forward-looking fans, perhaps no rankings are more closely monitored than recruiting rankings. A multi-million dollar industry has arisen to measure and compare teenagers on not only hard criteria like size, speed, and game statistics, but also subjective ones like body type, attitude, and "readiness" for the college game.

With regard to readiness criteria, the recruiting industry closely examines the *contexts* from which the high school players emerge. Those who come, for instance, from football hotbeds throughout the South, are commonly portrayed as most ready to immediately step on the field and contribute. In fact, some high school recruits are touted as being more than just ready to contribute – they are promoted as builders of programs.

Consider, Ed Oliver, a senior at Westfield High School outside of Houston and one of the highest ranked players in the country. On May 21, the six-foot two inch nearly three hundred pound Oliver shocked college fans by spurning offers from traditional powerhouse teams like Alabama, Texas, and LSU to verbally commit to his hometown team, the University of Houston Cougars. Oliver became the centerpiece of Coach Tom Harmon's "H-Town Takeover"—a concerted effort to keep Houston's best high school talent home with the Cougars—and he inspired other elite players to commit to Houston. By most accounts, Oliver's locally-flavored Houston-bound class of 2016 is shaping up to be the highest-ranked group of recruits the school has ever had.

As Cougar football makes strides up the recruiting rankings (while also holding a surprising place in the College Football playoff poll), however, the breadth of readiness of the student-athletes that Houston and other top-level programs recruit is not uniformly evident. Playing football in Texas, like Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida—some of the biggest hotbeds in high school football—gives young athletes a leg up in preparing for big time college football, but when it comes to readiness to succeed in other parts of college? Not so much.

Across a range of non-football rankings, many of the very same places that score so highly on the field, do not stack up well against the competition. For example, among ESPN's current top 50 football prospects in the high school graduating class of 2016, five attend IMG Academy, which has been broadly critiqued as being more of a "finishing

school for football" than a true high school. Thirty-two other top prospects attend public schools—28 of which are located in the South. On a scale of 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest), *the average college readiness score for these schools is a 22*. Further, in states with some of the lowest testing standards—where most students pass as proficient, the public schools that these top recruits attend have an average of less than 50% math proficiency.

Many of these coveted high school athletes are coming from broader academic systems that, in fact, lag behind in academic readiness across a range of ages and spaces. For instance, not only do these states have the lowest ACT scores among all high school students, but in Texas, 82% of African American 4th graders score below proficient on their state reading tests. And there are similar percentages of non-proficiency in the other popular recruiting spaces of Alabama (85%), Arkansas (85%), Florida (80%), Georgia (80%), Louisiana (89%), North Carolina (80%), and South Carolina (87%).

Although test scores, AP exams, and college readiness scales can give only partial insight into top recruits' contexts, other indicators reveal broader weaknesses in their communities' education infrastructures. The football states have robust pee-wee sports programs, but their child poverty rates are among the highest in the country and, in these states, far less than half of all four-year olds from poor families attend pre-school. Such conditions significantly detract from academic readiness and college success.

Many schools and communities in football hotbed regions struggle to promote college readiness in even remotely comparable ways as they do readiness for sports. For instance, when Ed Oliver enrolls at the University of Houston next fall, he can hope to find an academic support system that exceeds what he experienced at Westfield, which has a 3.4 score on the 0-100 college readiness scale and was not ranked among the top 1000 high schools in Texas. The school has eagerly promoted Oliver's football accomplishments, while, at the same time struggled to provide a safe, stable environment for its students. Troublingly, some of Oliver's friends in the Spring School District experienced profound systemic failure this past spring when school counselors' advising errors led to 60 students not accumulating enough credits to get their degrees.

While local leaders cannot be blamed for promoting their schools' nationally televised games on ESPN, for celebrating players' selections as "Under Armour All-American," and for anticipating their bright futures as defensive tackles in college, we must ask whether comparable support and expectations are found outside of football? Just as growing up in and around great systems of youth and high school football helps young football players get ready for the big-time, so too does exposure to high quality education environments—marked by thriving schools, high academic expectations, and healthy communities—foster academic readiness.

If our most talented young student-athletes are disadvantaged by poverty, unstable neighborhoods, inadequate public services, and struggling schools from the time they are born, are we to expect they will be college-ready as 18 year olds? They deserve better. The reality is that many student-athletes' chances to succeed in the classroom and attain degrees are often undermined before they first set foot on their campuses. And while key

leaders are rightly stepping up to spur college-level reform on such matters, the most important actors in getting young student-athletes ready, are the ones from their home states, communities, and schools.

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Appendix 3: Faculty Athletics Representatives and the Stability Advantage

Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs) are designated by their institutions to serve as liaisons between their campuses and their athletics departments to ensure that appropriate balance is maintained between academic and athletic excellence. FARs also represent their institution at conference and NCAA levels, lending voice to important matters of policy and practice in intercollegiate athletics. In these regards, FARs operate as critical boundary spanning leaders on and beyond their campuses. A recent national survey indicated that 83% of FARs in Division 1 schools report feeling "empowered" by their institution's President/Chancellor to carry out their roles and 89% of FARs report being empowered by their athletics departments.

One of the key factors in FARs' capacity to have influence is the length of time that they spend in their roles. Nationally, the typical FAR has been in his or her role for seven years. Only 11% of Division 1 FARs reported having specific term limitations. Big Ten Conference FARs are especially stable: Seven of the current Big Ten institution's FARs have been in their roles for more than twelve years and four others have been in their roles for at least five years.

Case Study: Relationships and Change at a FAR Meeting

I attended my first Big Ten meetings as a FAR for the University of Wisconsin on May 15-17, 2016. The two and a half day session began with a social mixer in the basement dining room of Morton's Steakhouse. I walked to the restaurant from my hotel a few blocks away. I arrived to find a group of more than 50 athletic administrators, faculty, head basketball coaches, and Big Ten conference leaders engaged in friendly conversation over drinks with one another. I did not know any of them and stood alone by the bar until I was approached by Chad Hawley, an associate commissioner of the conference. Chad knew that I was Wisconsin's new FAR and welcomed me to the group. He noted that many of the FARs and administrators from conference schools had grown to know each other quite well over years of working together. Over the course of the next couple hours, it was

indeed evident that this joint group was comfortable together, as they shared laughs and commemorated the departure of one longtime administrator. As I reflected upon my first Big Ten meetings, in fact, the time-enriched social fabric of relationships among the Big Ten's key players struck me as being critical in that substantive work among the institutions and the conference leaders flowed through these relationships

One clear example of relationships facilitating work occurred during the morning session of the second day of meetings, when FARs met with Chad to discuss issues related to game scheduling and student-athlete time demands. One of the FARs mentioned that the conference's proposed schedule for women's soccer called for his school's team to play three Wednesday evening games away from home over the course of the season. The FAR was joined by others in referencing past conference meetings at which officials agreed that no team should play more than two mid-week away games due to concerns that student-athletes would be forced to miss too much class. Chad acknowledged the past agreement, but also noted that Wednesday evening games are televised on the Big Ten Network (BTN) and presented women's soccer players with one of their few opportunities for broader exposure. Teams that played three Wednesday games were getting more games televised than other teams. A 15-minute conversation on the challenges and affordances of the schedule then flowed among the group, much of which referred back to as far as nine years ago at the founding of the BTN. Conference schools had each benefited over the years from having their own television network (in money and exposure), but also needed to ensure that these benefits did not conflict with student-athlete wellbeing. In this particular instance, FARs collectively perceived too much mid-week travel for sport competition as a threat to student-athletes' chances to thrive academically. I remained quiet throughout the conversation because I did not understand the history of this group's work together on the issue, but all of the FARs from other schools actively contributed. Three of the FARs – the chair of the FAR committee and two others who had served in their roles for more than ten years – were particularly influential in discussing how and whether the schedule could be changed. As we adjourned for lunch, a clear consensus emerged

among the FARs that, notwithstanding the benefits of exposure, no women's soccer team should play more than two mid-week games on the road. Chad responded by saying that he would look into what could be done to address this concern.

We re-convened as a group a couple hours later and Chad reported that he spent time over the break with other conference leaders and that they had found a way to fix the schedule. No team would be forced to travel more than twice in the middle of the academic week. I was impressed with Chad's responsiveness and surprised that the issue had been resolved so quickly. I saw this relatively minor event – the changing of a fall soccer schedule – as an important example of how stable, collaborative relationships could facilitate positive change. Big Ten FARs and administrators came to their meetings familiar with one another and fluent on the issues. I left the meetings encouraged by the group's functionality and committed to increase my own understanding of the people and issues at the table.

Reflection question:

What structures and conditions underlie FARs' "empowerment" to best represent and advocate for their institution's student-athletes in broader conference and NCAA settings?

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Appendix 4: Summaries of key NCAA-related legislation.

Peter Deppe v. NCAA
Filed: April 6, 2017
Court: Appellate (7th Circuit)

In March, a federal judge in Indiana dismissed a proposed class action lawsuit filed by Peter Deppe, a former punter from the Northern Illinois football team. The lawsuit sought to challenge the "year in residence rule" requiring student-athletes who transfer to sit out for one year on grounds that it is an unreasonable restraint on trade. The Court ruled in favor of the NCAA citing a previous decision in *Pugh*, which differentiated the transfer rule as an eligibility rule associated with education and thus, not a violation of antitrust law. Deppe and his counsel seek to appeal this ruling in the 7th Circuit; however, this was not permitted in the *Pugh* case, which was before the same judge.

Donald Gobert v. The University of Tulsa
Filed: June 8, 2017

This matter closely aligns with the multidistrict litigation related to student-athletes who have suffered from concussions. This lawsuit was filed to certify a class of former players at Tulsa, claiming the university, NCAA, and Conference USA failed to put protocols in place to prevent and treat concussions.

Langston et al v. Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association et al
Filed: June 2, 2017
Court: Kansas
Personal Injury

The estate of Zachary Langston alleges the NCAA and Mid-America conference failed to warn Pitt State football players about the long-term effects of repeated concussions despite knowing the dangers.

Dawson v. National Collegiate Athletic Association et al (9th Circuit)

Former University of Southern California student athlete appeals a lawsuit to revive his putative minimum wage and overtime pay class action against the NCAA and Pac-12 Conference. Dawson asserts the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and California labor laws by failing to pay college athletes.

Bradley v. National Collegiate Athletic Association
Filed: February 24, 2016
Court: District of Colombia

An American University student athlete is pursuing negligence and medical malpractice claims against the NCAA, the university, the federal government, and her medical providers for improperly handling concussion suffered during a game.

Jenkins v. NCAA

Following the O'Bannon ruling in the 9th Circuit, and the Supreme Court's denial of certiorari, this case claims that the NCAA's eligibility rules are subject to antitrust law, specifically Section I of the Sherman Act, as it pertains to student athletes receiving compensation for the use of their names, images and likeness. Attorneys Jeff Kessler and David Greenspan represent the plaintiffs, who seek an injunction preventing the NCAA and conferences from setting financial aid restrictions (Cost of Attendance). Judge Claudia Wilken, who also presided over the O'Bannon matter at the district court level, is hearing this matter.

O'Bannon v. NCAA

This antitrust class action lawsuit involved former basketball star, Ed O'Bannon, on behalf of NCAA football and basketball players, seeking financial compensation for the use of student athlete's names, images, and likenesses. Judge Claudia Wilken found for O'Bannon, citing the NCAA bylaws as a violation of antitrust law (unreasonable restraint of trade). This ruling resulted in the bylaw being modified to include compensation for student athletes up to the full cost of attendance. On appeal, the Ninth Circuit rejected more substantial remedies in finding that the NCAA would cure the antitrust violations by permitting colleges to pay student athletes up to the full cost of attendance. The optional $5,000 to be held in trust for each year of eligibility was struck down by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. It is worth noting, however, as the Judge who imposed the optional trust is now presiding over the Jenkins case referenced above.

Spielman v. Ohio State (2017)

This case follows the line of thought in O'Bannon, however, it seeks retribution for players that are unable to benefit from an increase in full cost of attendance (ex. historic players whose images and likeness are used by the University). The complaint contends that OSU collaborated with Honda and IMG to negotiate terms of an agreement, without discussing the matter with OSU football players, a relationship that they believe to be marketable. This matter was recently filed, so this will likely be pending for the next several months/years.

Alston v. NCAA (Settled in 2017)

This lawsuit sought to compensate student athletes for the full cost of attendance. It included the NCAA and major conferences. The NCAA has agreed to settle the matter for approximately $208 million. The NCAA has agreed to pay this amount from its reserve fund, not requiring the member schools to contribute to the payments. The

NCAA has now settled the *White* and *Alston* cases for more than $400 million settlements. It is interesting to note that the class in this action consists of Men's and Women's basketball players, as well as FBS football players.

Important Background

The 94 federal judicial districts are organized into 12 regional circuits, each of which has a court of appeals. The appellate court's task is to determine whether or not the law was applied correctly in the trial (district) court. Appellate courts consist of three judges and do not use a jury. Appellate court decisions are persuasive to other appellate courts, but not binding. Their decisions are binding upon any federal district courts within that circuit. Therefore, to get a consistent ruling on this issue, it will likely require a decision from the Supreme Court or legislative action. It is also likely that individuals will bring cases similar to *O'Bannon* and *Jenkins* in other districts/circuits to seek a result that affords a more substantial remedy for current and former student-athletes.

NCAA Litigation Costs

According to a recent Forbes article, the NCAA has incurred more than $70 million in outside legal fees over the past four years. It has also invested in insurance polices to protect against the large settlements that it has recently reached, costing the NCAA more than $20 million.

Appendix 5: The Army West Point Athletics Association announcement

Athletic Association Improves Function Under New Agreement

By USMA Public Affairs Office February 9, 2017

The Department of the Army and the Army West Point Athletics Association have officially entered into a cooperative agreement that allows the AWPAA to provide support to the intercollegiate athletics program at the U.S. Military Academy.

The result of this agreement will be a more agile athletics program that fully supports the mission of the U.S. Military Academy and more than 1,000 cadet athletes competing across 30 intercollegiate sports.

"We're thankful to Congress and the Secretary of the Army for making this possible," said U.S. Military Academy Superintendent Lt. Gen. Robert L. Caslen. "This change will result in an even greater opportunity to develop our cadet athletes into leaders of character for the defense of our nation."

The AWPAA is a non-profit organization approved under IRS Code 501(c)(3).

"The AWPAA allows us to manage our program similar to other Division I institutions, including our sister academies. This agreement will provide our cadet-athletes the support and facilities required to succeed both as cadets and elite intercollegiate athletes," said Boo Corrigan, director of athletics. "We still have a great deal of work to complete as we move through this transition, but we are excited about the challenges that lie ahead. The AWPAA will help us to foster an environment in which our cadet-athletes routinely achieve the upper-most limits of their potential both in the Corps and on the 'friendly fields of strife.'"

The AWPAA, as a 501(c)(3) organization, has the ability to manage personnel actions, negotiate contracts, engage in sponsorship opportunities and oversee the athletic facilities. Additionally, the agreement ensures the AWPAA remains compliant with auditing and accountability requirements, NCAA rules and regulations and, most importantly, academy standards and mission.

The process will appear transparent to most, but will provide a level of flexibility that will provide an extraordinary Division I athletics experience that develops leaders of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country.

Appendix 6: Academic Programs at Other Major Universities. Former NCAA student-athlete Maria McLeod assembled a list of Big Ten Conference programs.

Institution	Degrees	Of Note
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	• PhD in Sport Management • Masters in Sport Management • M.S. in Recreation, Sport and Tourism with a specialization in Sport Management • Bachelor's in Sport Management	• Masters program is available online and on campus; • Illini Scholars Program: partnership with Campus Recreation and the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics for various assistantships in Athletic Administration or Campus Recreation; • Has an Alumni Advisory Board to support the Department
Indiana University	• Ph.D. in Human Performance - Sport Management • M. S. in Kinesiology - Emphasis in Sport Management • B.S. in Sport Marketing & Management	• The Sports Marketing Alliance at Indiana University: increase students knowledge of the sports industry through networking tips and insightful speakers http://www.iusma.com; • Program emphasis on introducing students to guest speakers in the sports industry
University of Iowa	• MA in Leisure Studies - Leisure and Recreational Sport Management Specialization • B.S. in Sport & Recreation Management	• Online B.S. degree in Sport & Recreation Management available • Opportunities to participate in a field experience (either guided or independent). Previous partners include, but are not limited to: Iowa Athletics, Chicago Blackhawks, John Deere Classic (PGA Tournament)
University of Maryland	• Bachelor's in Golf Course Management • Bachelor's in Sports Turf Management	• Internships available
University of Michigan	• Doctoral in Sport Management • M.A. in Kinesiology -	• "#BestNetworkinSports"; • Has an advisory board;

	Sport Management • B.A. in Kinesiology - Sport Management	• Michigan Sport Management Partners Program; • University of Michigan Sporting Event Bid Competition: "student teams prepare a bid to host a major sporting event." http://www.kines.umich.edu/SEBC
Michigan State University	• M.S. concentration in Sport Administration	• Students create an individual program plan, which is approved by guidance committee
University of Minnesota	• Ph.D. in Kinesiology-Emphasis area: Sport Management • M.A. in Sport Management • M. of Ed.-in Applied Kinesiology - Emphasis in Sport Management • B.S. in Sport Management	• Master of Science/Master of Arts (research based) • Master of Education (professional based): students apply education to their current or future work responsibilities
University of Nebraska	• Master of Arts in Business with a Specialization in Intercollegiate Athletics Administration (MAIAA)	• Guaranteed paid one-year internship with the Husker Athletic Department • Emphasis on the combination and collaboration of business and athletics (they acknowledge that these two aspects of campus rarely have anything to do with each other)
Northwestern University	• M.A. in Sports Administration	• Classes available both online and on campus; • Area of Specialization: Sports Analytics – technical and leadership training; • Has a MSA Student Leadership Council
Ohio State University	• Doctor in Philosophy in Sport Management (PhD) • M.A. in Sport Management	• Required Internship for Master's degree; • Students have direct access to Ohio State's athletic department and six other

	• B.S. in Sport Industry	universities in Central Ohio
Penn State University	• PhD in Recreation, Park and Tourism Management • M.S. in Recreation, Park and Tourism Management • Bachelor's in Golf Management • Bachelor's in Commercial and Community Recreation Management	• Recreation, Park, & Tourism Management (RPTM) focuses on collaborative global issues and partnerships associated with human and environmental health and well-being; • Central focus on benefitting humans and the environment from "leisure" time; • 300-hour real-world internship program; • Full-time job for 12-weeks with professionals of your choice; • Service and Outreach Program: Shaver's Creek Environmental Education Center
Purdue University	N/A	
Rutgers University	• M.S. in Global Sport Business • B.S. in Kinesiology and Health - emphasis in Sport Management	• B.S. degree requires an internship during their senior year; • GBS partners with Deans and leaders in the Rutgers academic community; • Mentorship Program: every master's student will be mentored by accomplished executives in the sports industry; • Executive Training Program: full-time training program and residency for master's students with corporate partners (M.S. capstone project)
University of Wisconsin	N/A	

Appendix 7: Example of Nebraska's research partnership with athletics

At Nebraska: The Center for Brain, Biology, and Behavior (CB3) is strongly tied to a unique partnership between UNL research and Nebraska Athletics that promises to expand understanding of links between the brain and human behavior. No other university in the nation is conducting research in this way.

Thanks to this athletics-research collaboration, a major expansion of East Memorial Stadium, completed in 2013, features more than 50,000 square-feet of research space. CB3 occupies 28,000 square-feet in the south half of the East Memorial Stadium addition. The north half is home to a companion research center, the Nebraska Athletic Performance Lab. A bridge connects the facilities, encouraging collaborations.

Their groups share data gathered from CB3's brain-imaging equipment and the performance lab's sophisticated motion-tracking sensors, creating a more complete picture of what influences behavior and performance. This work could lead to discoveries about brain function, head injury, human performance and psychology that benefit athletes, the health care community and broader society.