

Required Readings

The Institutionalization and Regulation of College Sports in Historical Perspective

Mission Statements & Rationalizing Support

Q: How do athletic programs affect a school's mission?

A: it impacts the composition of the school and in turn the education that they chose to pursue

- Athletics establish a more balanced life
- encourages leadership, excellence & success
- justification for college sports programs emphasizes their impact on building a sense of community
 - creating a campus ethos
 - Public ritual
 - Banners in dorm rooms
 - stories on the back page of the student paper
 - Alumni loyalty and financial backing
 - Positive reputation
- potential revenue-generating capacity
 - Merchandise

Institutionalization of Athletics (Origins)

- 1852: Harvard vs. Yale boat race
 - Sponsored by a real estate promoter (commercial ties)

Football

Historical context: campuses were divided b/c of changes in curriculum (students were free to choose courses)

- Football reignited a “national character” and foreshadowed the future of college sports
- Outlet for energy & passion for students
 - 1905: 18 players died playing football (school pride taken to next level!)
- Shift from student-run clubs to institutional ventures
 - President Theodore Roosevelt summons schools to discuss football related deaths
 - Universities took control under the presumption that they would provide oversight
- Resistance to institutionalization
 - Robert Maynard Hutchins (1939) - UChicago would drop its football program
 - Sports influence a school's mission (took away from academic goals)

Regulation & Rules

- Rules encourage escalation & legitimizes competition
- Allows athletics directors to acquire more \$
- Payment of student athletes

- 1950s: not allowed to pay for their tuition but common practice (later legitimized)
- 1970s: coaches could “re-up” or rescind scholarships
 - Original agreements seemed too much like an employee relationship
 - American dream (merit)
 - Systematic professionalization of sports
 - Regulation that institutions solidified control of
- Academic standards
 - Ivy league devised an Academic Index
 - Bands for SAT scores
- **Title IX amendment** to 1972 Omnibus Education Act
 - Gender equity legislation (can’t discriminate)
 - The crossover between athletics and colleges open to regulation
 - Senator Paul Wellstone amended Higher Education Act in 1998 - you can’t reduce \$ for sports without public justification
 - Large attention from government

Collective Institutionalization (NCAA & Conferences)

NCAA

- Walter Byres - the Title IX debates resulted in NCAA forming a presidents’ commission
- NCAA derives strength from uniting a large breadth of schools
- Controls massive amounts of \$
- Adjusts rules for their benefit (regulation has solidified their role in sports management)

Conferences

- Have powers that extend beyond the NCAA

Societal Forces

- Entertainment industry & commercialization
 - Technological advancements have made winning a large \$ prize
- Need for college degrees
 - Increased competition for universities
 - New applicants from larger pools
 - More information accessible to match students with selective schools
 - Perception that there are tangible benefits from highly ranked schools
 - Switch from “well-rounded” students to “well-rounded” class philosophy
 - Looking for more specialized students
- Specialization of athletic talent
 - Social reinforcement of “winners” versus “losers”
 - Standard of performance has dramatically improved (higher expectations)

Overview

- Examining relationship between a college’s athletic and academic department
 - Athletics effect on college mission:

- Impacts the composition of the student body
- Colleges relationship with athletics
 - Large stream of revenue
 - Establishes a campus ethos & sense of community
- Institutionalization of athletics
 - Rules and regulations gave universities power
 - Issues regarding student payment and academic standing up for debate
 - Systematic professionalization of sports
 - Rules and regulations is what led to the formation of the NCAA
 - Rules made the intersection between athletics & colleges open to regulation
- Societal forces that impacted college sports
 - Commercialization of collegiate sports
 - Increased demand for college education
 - Specialization of athletic talents
 - Related to shift from “well-rounded” individuals to “well-rounded” team

Chapter 3 - Athletics

- The oldest form of commercialization in higher ed
- Popularity grew after civil war

Historical Background

- President Theodore Roosevelt called a meeting of college presidents to address the violence and football-related deaths
 - Resulted in the formation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
- Harvard President Charles Eliot attempted to abolish football
 - Overruled b/c it generated publicity and gave colleges the advantages in attracting students

Revenue

- Universities building bigger stadiums (larger audience = more \$)
- Luxury boxes for corporate sponsors & rich patrons
- Radio & television brought lucrative contracts for the colleges
- Universities did brand collaborations (Nike, Adidas, Reebok)
- March Madness produced \$6B contract between NCAA and CBS
- Some coaches were making several times the amount that college presidents were
 - A shift in focus from academics to sports
 - Most of athletes time is devoted to the athletic program
 - They don't as frequently engage in challenging courses or other extracurricular activities
 - Their majors (i.e. sports management) are not as academically rigorous as the other classes/offerings of the college

- Athletes are not maturing, growing, and exploring new experiences at the same rate as their peers
- Schools had difficulty making money from sports (very expensive for them to maintain)

Corruption

- Athletic directors have to win > fill the stands and attract TV coverage for \$ to support the program
- Admissions officers accept students with subpar academic credentials
 - “Everyone involved must do their part to enroll the outstanding athletes so essential to success on the field and at the box office”
 - Schools bend their standards and admit students “on the recommendation of the coaches”
 - SAT scores for these athletes are well below the mean for the overall class
 - Athletes perform worse academically than their peers
 - Lower graduation rates for male athletes
- Coaches secretly offer players money
 - Changing grades
 - Cheating on exams
 - Altering transcripts
- NCAA does not really have that much power in terms of regulation
- The cost of these athletic programs takes away from other enriching extracurriculars

Debates & Justifications

- Athletes make a choice to dedicate so much time and effort and in return receive glory and rewards from playing on prestigious teams
 - COUNTER: these students are young & not capable of making informed decisions about their futures or careers
- Colleges are exploiting their players financially (they bring so much revenue and only receive a tuition waiver)
 - COUNTER: NCAA prohibits players from receiving more than a tuition waiver
 - Way of putting everyone on equal footing
 - REBUTTAL: this rule prevents athletes from being properly compensated for their services and efforts
- Athletics have tainted admissions standards and impacted academic rigor
 - Denial from programs
 - Justification: sports builds character
 - REBUTTAL: little evidence pointing it to actually impact growth and education
- Athletics provide pathway for poor minority youth to attain higher ed
 - COUNTER: D1 schools do not graduate many of their minority athletes
 - Instead schools should offer academic scholarships
- Publicity attracts more students and applicants
 - COUNTER: studies have found that athletic success does not result in “better” applicants (doesn’t raise SAT scores)
 - Athletics not a major deciding factor

- Winning teams establish college ethos and raises school spirit
 - COUNTER: Surveys show that alumni wish sports were de-emphasized
 - Promotes academic dishonesty & loss of individual ideas
- Sports wins inspire alumni donations
 - Study found that record does not impact donations
 - No evidence that supports that athletic achievement correlates to fundraising success

University Presidents

- Presidents feel trapped and powerless in the current system
 - Cannot reform without drops in revenue
- Under pressure to raise money

Takeaways

- Commercialization - universities are willing to sacrifice values to make \$
- Illusion of profits - few institutions have actually made consistent profit
 - Lure of money can alter practices for the worse
- Limit of the power of university presidents

Additional Readings

https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/31/magazine/new-college-desantis-florida.html?unlocked_article_code=1.TU0.eQ-M.xT4ceUhmVYDu&bgrp=a&smid=url-share

- Introduction of varsity sports at New College of Florida led to unintended consequences
 - Athletes recruited for talents found themselves involved in a culture war against the school's perceived left-leaning ethos
 - Governor Ron DeSantis criticized the school as a "Marxist commune" and targeted it for political reasons
- Existing student body perceived athletes as insensitive, academically deficient, and politically misaligned
 - Interactions between athletes and returning students gradually improved as both groups sought understanding and acceptance
- Highlights complexities of cultural integration and ideological clashes within college campuses and how the emphasis on athletics has propelled these students to become the face of a cultural war