

## **Case Studies in Athletic-Academic Integration: A Closer Look at Schools that Implement COIA's Best Practices**

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This research follows a 2009 survey jointly conducted by the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) and the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism at Penn State to assess the “best practices” of FBS institutions in regard to the integration of athletics into academics. Case studies of the six highest-scoring institutions—the University of Houston, University of Illinois, University of Maryland, Oklahoma State University, University of South Carolina, and Southern Methodist University—were conducted. The aim of these case studies was to highlight those institutions that implement more of COIA's best practices than other surveyed schools. Further, the aim was to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between COIA's suggested practices, the “Athletics Integration into Academics” survey, and the local conditions of FBS institutions.

The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics is an alliance of Division IA university faculty senates designed to provide faculty input to the national debate over the direction of college sports (Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics [COIA], n.d., ¶ 1). The Coalition, or COIA, is made up of 57 faculty senates whose athletic programs play at intercollegiate sports' most competitive, “big time” level—the NCAA's Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). Since its founding in 2002, COIA has produced policy papers and reports addressing academic integrity and related issues in college sports, such as governance, admissions, and scholarships (COIA, n.d., ¶ 3). In these efforts, COIA has worked with other key organizations related to intercollegiate athletics reform, including the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA), the Association of Governing Bodies, the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, and the Division IA Faculty Athletics Representatives.

In 2007, COIA released “Framing the Future: Reforming Intercollegiate Athletics,” a white paper which “elucidated a comprehensive set of reforms to remedy the current problems facing intercollegiate athletics” (COIA, n.d., ¶ 8). The next spring, COIA began work with Penn State's John Curley Center for Sports Journalism (Curley Center) aimed at evaluating the degree to which FBS institutions were

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implementing COIA's proposals. Over several months, the Curley Center took 20 "best practices" selected by COIA's steering committee (largely from the "Framing the Future" text) and operationalized them as a survey. The product was COIA and the Curley Center's (2009) "Athletic Integration into Academics" survey. The stated goals of the survey were: "1) to offer a means of self-evaluation for institutions; and 2) highlight schools doing a good job of integrating athletics into their academic missions using established best practices" (COIA and Curley Center, 2009, p. 1). This issue's companion article provides a more thorough discussion of the creation and distribution of this survey.

Sixty-one of the 115 FBS institutions with faculty governance bodies completed and returned the survey for a 53% response rate. The Curley Center weighted responses to each item (or subitem) equally. Surveys were scored based on both the total number of "YES" responses (correcting for "not applicable" responses) and using a scoring system that reassembled each item or subitem back into its original "best practice." Each of these scoring schemes generated the same top-6 institutions highlighted in the following case studies (though not necessarily in the same order).<sup>1</sup>

## Methods and Rationale

While the "Athletic Integration into Academics" survey provides data across the FBS population, COIA has repeatedly acknowledged that institutional practices and policies must account for an individual institution's needs and goals. COIA's *Framing the Future* document explains that

... not all local proposals will be appropriate for all institutions because each school has its own unique atmosphere, faculty governance system and athletics department. We hope each institution will carefully review the proposals in this paper and initiate a campus wide dialog resulting in the adoption of those proposals that fit local needs and strengthen the academic mission (COIA, 2007, p. 2).

In this light, our survey alone cannot purport to capture the degree to which any one institution successfully integrates athletics into academics. Indeed, what "integration" looks like may vary from institution to institution. Practices and policies, then, must also be understood in context. To this end, the Curley Center produced the following case studies of the six highest-scoring institutions from the "Athletic Integration into Academics" survey: the University of Houston, University of Illinois, University of Maryland, Oklahoma State University, University of South Carolina, and Southern Methodist University.<sup>2</sup> Case studies seemed appropriate in that, as a research strategy, such an approach aims to "[understand] the dynamics present within single settings," including the comparison of rich, contextual data within and across the cases examined (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 534).

The aim of these case studies, then, is not only to highlight those institutions that implement more of COIA's best practices than other surveyed schools; the aim is also to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between COIA's suggested practices, the "Athletic Integration into Academics" survey, and—most importantly—the local conditions of FBS institutions. Why did *these*

schools perform well on the survey? How can we characterize the relationship between athletics and academics in these local environments? What historical factors have shaped that relationship? What structures (e.g., policies, organizations, institutions) do individuals close to the athletic-academic nexus of these schools consider crucial to the pursuit of integration, and why? These were the broad questions we developed and refined in constructing our case studies.

Case studies can draw upon a variety of data collection methods, including archival analysis, interviews, questionnaires, and field notes, and they can incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data (Eisenhardt, 1989). These case studies were constructed primarily from interview and documentary data, with attention to each school's responses on the "Athletics Integration into Academics" survey where relevant.

We conducted a total of 17 interviews with individuals either directly involved with completing the previous fall's survey or those close to the athletic-academic nexus at each university (e.g., faculty governance leaders, FARs, chairs of Campus Athletics Boards, COIA representatives, and student-athlete academic services administrators). Acknowledging, again, COIA's make-up as a network of faculty senates, we first contacted faculty governance leaders by letter to explain our goals. E-mails requesting a scheduled phone interview were then sent to the positions above.<sup>3</sup>

The phone interviews began with a description of the project, including goals for the interviews and case studies. We informed the interviewees that we would record the conversation for further clarification, but we would not produce full transcriptions. Discussions were based on a loose guide of questions aimed at keeping conversation open to avenues and insights not specifically addressed in the "Athletics Integration into Academics" survey. That said, each interview explicitly addressed the following: the institution's process for completing the previous fall's survey; what each individual saw as particularly important athletic-academic policies and practices at their institution; key historical moments in each institution's athletic-academic relationship; and, finally, structural (e.g., organizations, reporting) and cultural (e.g., atmosphere) dimensions of the relationship between faculty, athletics, and administration. For individuals not directly involved in completing the previous fall's survey, we also asked a few survey questions as a validity check on questionnaire responses. Most interviews lasted 25–40 min.

The case studies also rely upon relevant data from documentary and database searches, including: faculty senate and CAB minutes, athletics department press releases, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and local newspaper archives, NCAA certification self-studies, Federal Graduation Rates (FGR), the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate (APR) and Graduation Success Rate (GSR) reports<sup>4</sup>, the NCAA major infractions database, and *USA Today's* "NCAA college finances" database. The relationship between these documentary sources and our interviews was iterative; our database searches influenced some of the questions we probed in interviews, while our interview data influenced subsequent database searches.

For each case study we provide brief overviews of the institution's recent athletic accomplishments, its performance on the NCAA's academic reform metrics (APR & GSR), the athletic-academic policies and practices highlighted in our interviews, and recent athletic financial developments at the institution. For summary detail on each school in some of these areas, see Table 1. Financial developments

seemed important given the Knight Commission's (2010) recent report, *Restoring the Balance*, on the "intractable problem" of cost containment in big time intercollegiate athletics (see "Introduction").

Case studies can satisfy a range of epistemic interests from description to theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989). Our case studies stay close to the descriptive level, although we do offer some explanatory (though not necessarily generalizable) suggestions in the discussion. Given COIA's emphasis on the role of *faculty governance bodies* in comprehensive intercollegiate athletics reform (COIA, 2007), we emphasize policies and practices specifically incorporating faculty oversight at our case study institutions.

## Findings: Institutional Case Studies

### The University of Houston

Under President Renu Khator, the University of Houston (Houston/UH) began a push for recognition as a Tier 1 research university in the late 2000s. To that end, Houston assembled a Strategic Action Group in 2008–2009 that formulated six sets of goals. Among those goals was a set of strategies for achieving excellence in "athletic competitiveness"—both academically and on the field of play. As Khator explained, "I want it to be nationally competitive athletically, academically, in research and in teaching" (Kever, 2010, ¶ 26). The University of Houston Strategic Action Group (2009) likened athletics to a university's "front porch"—the first impression most of the public will have of the university.

Most of Houston's historic athletic success came when the school was a member of the old Southwest Conference (Campbell, 2010b).<sup>5</sup> Since 1996, the Cougars have played in Conference USA (C-USA), a midmajor conference with a lower profile and revenue potential than the six major BCS conferences. UH teams were particularly successful in 2008–2009, especially in revenue sports. The football team won its first bowl game since 1980, and men's basketball posted its fifth straight season with 18 or more wins (University of Houston Department of Intercollegiate Athletics [DIA], 2010). A year later, men's basketball reached the NCAA tournament for the first time in 18 seasons (Campbell, 2010a). Men's track has had the greatest recent success, winning several indoor and outdoor C-USA championships (Conference USA, 2010). Houston averaged a Director's Cup<sup>6</sup> final standing of 104 between 2007 and 2009 (National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics [NACDA], 2010).

Houston, which has not had a major NCAA infraction since 1988, sponsors 16 intercollegiate athletics teams at the NCAA Division 1 (D-1) level—7 men's teams and 9 women's. Cougar softball registered a four-year APR score in the top half of the nation's D-1 softball teams on the NCAA's 2010 APR report (see Table 1); however, eleven teams, including men's basketball, ranked in the bottom 20th percentile of teams for their respective sports. The Cougar men's and women's basketball teams both made the NCAA's APR penalty lists between 2008 and 2010. The women's team lost a scholarship for its APR scores in both 2008 and 2009 (NCAA, 2010d, under "data archive").

While Houston's APR figures may lag behind some of our other case study schools, UH points out that student-athlete Federal Graduation Rates (FGR) jumped

**Table 1 Highest Scoring Institutions on “Athletic Integration into Academics” Survey**

Institution	Houston	Illinois	Maryland*	Okla. State	S. Carolina	SMU
Public/private/und. enrollment	Pub./28,800	Pub./31,417	Pub./26,432	Pub./17,986	Pub./19,765	Priv./6,240
Athletics conference	C-USA	Big Ten	ACC	Big 12	SEC	C-USA
# of NCAA D-1 sports (m/w) <sup>b</sup>	7/9	10/11	12/14	8/9	9/10	6/10
# of teams with 4-year APR in top 50th percentile of D-1 for that sport vs. # in bottom 20th <sup>bc</sup>	1 vs. 11	17j vs. 0	15 vs. 1	8i vs. 3	9 vs. 2j	8ij vs. 4
4-class FGR.: student-athletes vs. all students <sup>d</sup>	52% vs. 42%	69% vs. 82%	70% vs. 79%	55% vs. 59%	54% vs. 64%	77% vs. 73%
GSR (4-report avg./2009) <sup>df</sup>	67%/71%	87%/84%	77%/76%	74%/76%	76%/74%	89%/89%
Director’s Cup rank (3-year avg./2009) <sup>g</sup>	104/128	32/20	40/28	36/45	40/39	74/87
Most recent NCAA infraction/ <sup>h</sup> probation length <sup>h</sup>	1988/3 yrs.	2005/1 yr.	2003/1 yr.	1992/3 yrs.	2005/3 yrs.	2000/2 yrs.

\* not a COIA member institution. a (“Best colleges 2010,” 2010). b (NCAA, 2010a) c Based on four-year averages from 2005 to 2006 through 2008–2009 data. d (NCAA, 2010b). e Includes 1999–2000 through 2002–2003 freshmen cohorts. f Based on 2006–2009 FGR reports, which include program-wide GSR scores. g (NACDA, 2010). h (NCAA, 2010c). i including football. j including men’s basketball.

from 27% to an all-time high of 58% between 2003 and 2008 (Campbell, 2009). Further, UH's 52% four-class student-athlete FGR is ten percent higher than the student body (see Table 1). Still, our interviews suggest that student-athlete *retention* is a particular concern at UH. Transfers are not uncommon, and Associate Director of Athletics for Academic Services Maria Peden explained that Athletics has developed processes for assessing the case-by-case impact of transfers on the APR and GSR metrics and relaying those implications to coaches.

Houston is placing particular emphasis on the academic profiles of high-risk recruits to address academic progress figures. For instance, the Strategic Action Group's Committee on Athletic Competitiveness proposed a goal that 75% of each sport's recruits have a 3.0 GPA or better; Houston's data suggests that high school GPA is the single best indicator of academic success (University of Houston Strategic Action Group, 2009). Peden also shared a program that Athletics is seeking to implement (based on NCAA suggestions) for assessing the graduation risk some recruits pose. The assessment takes several factors into account, including the recruit's high school academic profile, whether the recruit is transferring from another school, and—importantly—the APR figures for the team recruiting that player (University of Houston DIA, n.d.). Peden explained that the last factor places accountability on coaches for the academic progress of their teams.

Houston's admissions structure also changed recently for student-athlete "special admits"<sup>77</sup>—those students who fall below standard admissions requirements. Houston's 2006 NCAA self-study indicates that applications for student-athlete special admits *had* been evaluated by a committee separate from the structure for other special admits (University of Houston, 2006); however, the NCAA disapproved of this separate structure. Each of our interviewees stressed that student-athlete special admits are now subject to the same steps and processes as other special admits. An Admission Review Committee of 12 faculty and administrators blind-review the files of students who wish to appeal regular admissions standards. Those files that require more discussion are forwarded to a Faculty Review Committee, which has final say on admission. UH's COIA representative Joe Kotarba provided the admissions process as an example of Houston's desire to "mainstream" student-athletes—providing the same services and processes to student-athletes as the student body. Interviewees noted other areas of mainstreaming, such as advising responsibilities. Advising and program planning, rather than falling to the Athletics Department, rests with each student's department and college advisors.

In 2009–2010, Houston's campus athletics board<sup>8</sup>—the Athletic Advisory Committee—formally strengthened its ties to the Faculty Senate. Where the Senate and the Senior VP for Academic Affairs previously recommended four faculty members each to the President (University of Houston, 2006), Houston's Faculty Senate now recommends all eight of the committee's faculty members. Kotarba indicated that in its advisory role to the President and the AD, the Committee benefits from administrator involvement; still, it has been important for the committee to assert its role as a faculty-run advisory body with a faculty-oriented agenda. He says that Houston's last two athletic directors have worked cooperatively with the committee in fulfilling this function.

Through the Athletic Advisory Committee, Kotarba says the faculty has increased their oversight of Houston's Athletics budgeting process. Historically,

university subsidies have been an area of concern at UH. In 1995, the Board of Regents seriously considered alternatives to D-1 athletics in light of a \$4.5 million deficit. Over the next decade low attendance in football and men's basketball and limited broadcast revenues contributed to continued subsidies. By 2003, the Department introduced a plan to cut subsidies from \$10.4 to \$6 million (University of Houston, 2006). However, *USA Today* reports that over the last five years "the university has covered \$43 million in athletic expenses while student fees have covered \$21 million" (Upton, Gillum, & Berkowitz, 2010, ¶ 28).

Like the other institutions highlighted in these case studies, Houston is embarking on a major facilities construction and renovations for its revenue sports. In June 2010, new Athletics Director Mack Rhoades unveiled plans for a \$140 million football facility and \$20 million in renovations for its basketball arena. Rhoades also announced a 12-month fund-raising drive for construction. Naming rights will play an important role in the feasibility of the plans. The school sees the potential for \$30 million in stadium naming rights and another \$55 million in ancillary naming rights (Campbell, 2010b).

Houston has aspirations that extend beyond facilities, though. As noted above, President Khator sees athletics and academics as mutually reinforcing for a Tier 1 university. During 2010's conference realignment frenzy, university administration actively sought Houston's membership in a BCS conference, specifically the Big 12. As President Khator said, "You compare your progress against the schools in your league. Being associated with the highest group is always a good thing" (Kever, 2010, ¶ 3). Kotarba explained that BCS conference membership includes the attractive administrative and scholarly relationships formalized by many of these conferences, the classic example being the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) among Big Ten schools. If anything is certain, Houston is no longer considering "alternatives" to D-1; for better or for worse, the university's big athletics plans appear interwoven with academic and research ambitions.

## The University of Illinois

2010 saw the University of Illinois in the midst of a major administrative transition following *The Chicago Tribune's* 2009 revelations of a preferential admissions system for politically connected applicants. The damning findings of a State Admissions Commission led to the resignations of the President, Chancellor, and several trustees (Cohen, Malone, & St. Clair, 2009; State of Illinois Admissions Review Commission, 2009). When Michael Hogan took over as President in June 2010, he faced not only the admissions scandal's fallout, but also a budget crisis that had put the state more than \$375 million behind in payments to the university (Babwin, 2010).

Recent years have been more upbeat for the school's 10 men's and 11 women's D-1 athletic teams, including a trip to the Rose Bowl for the football team in 2008. Though Illini football fell off the next season, the university's Division of Intercollegiate Athletics (DIA) as a whole had one of its most successful years of competition in 2008–2009. Illinois finished 20th in the Director's Cup—its highest finish ever—with 15 teams qualifying for postseason play. Further, the Illini men's golf and men's gymnastics teams both took home Big Ten titles (University of Illinois, Division of Intercollegiate Athletics [DIA], 2009).

Illinois' 2010 APR report shows 17 of 21 teams with four-year APR scores in the top half of the nation's D-1 teams for their respective sports, including football (see Table 1). Six of those teams, including men's basketball, were in the top 20th percentile. No Illinois teams were in the bottom 20th percentile for their sport. Between 2008 and 2010, the NCAA recognized Illini men's baseball, women's indoor track, men's basketball (twice), and women's golf (three times) for APR scores in the top 10% in their sport. No Illinois teams made the NCAA's APR penalty lists during that period (NCAA, 2010d, under "data archive"). Though Illinois' student-athlete Federal Graduation Rate falls below that of the student body, its 2009 Graduation Success Rate exceeded the NCAA's 80% benchmark (see Table 1).

Illinois received its last major infraction in 2005 for violations that occurred in 2003–2004. The violations involved a booster who provided inducements and extra benefits to a football prospect ("Infractions case," 2005). The university's most serious previous infraction was in 1990, when the NCAA handed the program three years of probation for repeat offenses in men's basketball and a lack of institutional control ("Illinois put on probation for recruiting violations," 1990).

The 1990 infraction is more noteworthy for its timing than for violations and penalties; it occurred during a key period of transition and transformation for Illinois intercollegiate athletics. In 1989, the university moved its previously independent Athletics Association within the university structure following a slew of "embarrassing scandals" and "financial improprieties" (Young, 1990). As Ron Guenther took over as Athletics Director in 1992, there was—according to current Illinois FAR, Matt Wheeler—a desire and opportunity for faculty and administration to assume a greater role in Athletics operations. Wheeler described the period to us as "a time when you could start from scratch."

Wheeler, also a COIA steering committee member and Vice-Chair of Illinois' Academic Senate, says that during the early 1990s the university addressed many of the concerns outlined in COIA's principles. When the Athletics Association was reconstituted in 1989 as the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics (DIA), so, too, was the university's campus athletics board reconstituted as an Academic Senate committee ("Division of Intercollegiate Athletics: Historical note," n.d.). The Athletics Board's composition, athletic-academic reporting structures, missed class time rules, and other policy components were all codified in the Academic Senate's bylaws and student code. (University of Illinois, 2009; University of Illinois Academic Senate, 2010). According to Wheeler, codified policies made responding to the "Athletics Integration into Academics" survey straightforward.

One of the key structures Illinois relies on for athletic-academic integration is its Committee for the Admission of Student-Athletes (CASA). Composed of deans and admissions officers from Illinois' colleges, CASA has been in place since 1983. It reviews the academic records of student-athletes that fall below one of several criteria, including high school core curriculum, rank-in-class, and standardized test scores. The committee "determine(s) whether the student's objective academic record and demonstrated academic motivation, plus the special support services available, will combine to give him or her a reasonable chance for academic success" ("Report of the Associate Provost," 2005, under "5"). CASA has the authority to issue binding admissions denials for prospective student-athletes, and every student requires approval from a college dean.<sup>9</sup>



Interviewees also noted that CASA reviews applications for prospective student-athletes when recruiting windows and signing deadlines fall outside the university's application deadline, as they do for baseball and track. Since the admissions officers for each college have the final say on CASA admissions and because the university practices a "holistic" review process—rather than specifying objective admissions standards—the University of Illinois does not consider the CASA program a "special admissions" process. According to Wheeler, the NCAA has disagreed with this assessment.

The second program highlighted by interviewees was the Academic Review System, introduced in 1992. Academic Review falls under the purview of Illinois' Academic Progress and Eligibility Committee. It includes a semesterly evaluation of any teams failing to meet one or more of three GPA performance standards:

- 1) An overall team (GPA) of 2.25 or above;
- 2) An overall (GPA) of 2.25 or above for grant-in-aid students;
- 3) A minimum of 80% of the team members obtaining a (GPA) equal to, or greater than a 2.0 ("Eligibility," n.d., under "Academic Progress and Eligibility Committee").

In an evaluation, APEC collects written statements from the underperforming team's head coach, academic counselors, and student-athletes. The committee then produces a report with recommendations and/or actions that is discussed at a meeting of the APEC Chair, the FAR, university and DIA administrators, the head coach, and student-athletes. Wheeler explains that the system presents coaches with the expectation of accountability.

Financially, Wheeler says that DIA's books are open to Senate leaders. In the Division's 2009 Annual Report, it boasts 17 straight balanced budgets. Further, the DIA says it "receives no state tax dollars" (University of Illinois, DIA, 2009, p. 50). *USA Today's* "NCAA college athletics finance database" also shows revenues that exceed expenditures at Illinois<sup>10</sup>; however, Illinois did report to the NCAA \$2.93 million in revenue from student fees and \$1.59 million in "direct institutional support" (Upton & Gillum, 2009).

In 2008, Illinois completed a \$121 million football facility renovation. As the website for the "Illinois Renaissance" renovations says, "Every other Big Ten school has either completed or is undergoing a stadium renovation. To stay competitive in attracting top talent to Champaign-Urbana, Illinois must respond" (University of Illinois Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, n.d.). Illinois Athletics says the debt service on 30-year bonds for Memorial Stadium renovations will be financed through luxury seating sales and a private capital campaign, and that the renovation project will not use "state money" or "tuition assessments." Plans to renovate or replace the Assembly Hall basketball arena were put on hold in January 2009 as a result of the broader economic climate ("Economy woes delay Assembly Hall decision," 2009).

## The University of Maryland

Like Illinois, the University of Maryland (Maryland/UMD) is in the midst of a leadership transition. Deborah Yow, UMD's Athletics Director of 16 years, made the decision in June 2010 to take the AD position at another Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) institution—North Carolina State University. The decision came on the heels of Maryland President C.D. Mote's August 2010 retirement (Yanda, 2010).

Outside a disappointing 2–10 football season in 2009, Maryland’s 12 men’s and 14 women’s D-1 teams have enjoyed considerable success of late. The *NCAA News* named UMD one of the top-10 athletic programs for the 2008–2009 season. In addition to national championships in field hockey and men’s soccer, 18 Terrapin teams qualified for postseason play, and five took home ACC championships (Scheitrum, 2009). During Yow’s 16 years as Maryland AD, the Terrapins won 20 NCAA national championships—16 of those NCAA sanctioned<sup>11</sup>—including men’s and women’s basketball titles in 2002 and 2006. Women’s lacrosse captured its 11th national championship in 2010 (“Deborah A. Yow,” n.d.; Terrapin team titles,” 2010). Maryland’s average Director’s Cup final standing between 2007 and 2009 was 40th, finishing as high as 28th in 2009 (NACDA, 2010).

Maryland’s 2010 APR report shows 15 of 26 teams with four-year APR scores in the top half of the nation’s D-1 teams for their respective sports (see Table 1). Only wrestling fell in the bottom 20th percentile. Between 2008 and 2010, the NCAA recognized Maryland women’s indoor track, women’s gymnastics, and women’s lacrosse (twice) for APR scores in the top 10% in their sport, nationally. No Maryland teams made the NCAA’s APR penalty lists during that period (NCAA, 2010d, under “data archive”).

Maryland’s Federal Graduation Rate of 70% is nine points below the student body, and its Graduation Success Rate falls just below the NCAA’s 80% benchmark (see Table 1). Much of the attention to Maryland’s student-athlete graduation rates and academic progress, however, has focused on the men’s basketball team. National champions in 2002, Gary Williams’ squad has regularly grabbed unflattering coverage upon the release of NCAA GSR and APR figures (Prisbell, 2007; Sander, 2009). Following criticism of the team’s graduation rates by some members of the State’s General Assembly, Maryland’s Athletic Council (the school’s Campus Athletics Board) developed a 17-step action plan for improving the team’s academic success, including increased interaction between players and support staff. With each step now implemented, Maryland FAR and Athletic Council Chair Charles Wellford told us he expected higher graduation rate figures over the next three to four years. Further, Wellford said men’s basketball players have improved their academic culture; players look to have six to nine credit hours remaining by senior year.

Maryland’s Athletic Council plays an advisory role for the President and is the faculty’s main oversight body for intercollegiate athletics. Perhaps more so than other athletics boards examined in these case studies, UMD’s Athletic Council plays a particularly important role in *both* oversight Maryland intercollegiate athletics *and* the formulation and recommendation of policy. While the Athletic Council is not a University Senate committee, the Senate and University administration jointly sponsor it. Eleven of the Athletics Council’s 21 members are faculty; the Faculty Senate elects seven. In addition, Wellford noted that the Senate’s outgoing chair stands for election to the Athletics Council. That said, UMD Faculty Senate minutes reflect little discussion of Athletics. Wellford said he has offered to report to the Senate or its Executive Committee but has rarely been asked to do so.

Wellford stressed the Athletic Council’s transparency, its open meetings, and readily available minutes. Indeed, Maryland’s athletic-academic integration policies and practices are among the most transparent of our case study institutions. The Athletics Council publishes its charter, an 80-page policy manual, member

names and contact information, committee descriptions, and meeting minutes all to its website (University of Maryland Athletic Council, n.d.). Maryland's Athletic Council Policy Manual is extensive, addressing a diverse set of concerns, including those more common to our case studies (like admissions policies and attendance), and others not addressed in COIA's proposals (like drug testing, overseas participation, and hazing). Between the Athletic Council's policy manual and minutes, answers to the "Athletics Integration into Academics" survey items appear readily available at Maryland.

Wellford noted the success of Maryland's attendance policy for student-athletes, approved by the Athletic Council in 2006. The policy attaches unexcused absences to a student-athlete's opportunity to participate in competition. Student-athletes with GPAs below 2.3 on teams with four-year GSRs below 50% are subject to the policy. After two unexcused absences, each subsequent unexcused absence results in a loss of competition equal to 5% of regular season NCAA contests (UMD Athletic Council, 2009). Wellford says that men's basketball players' academic performance has improved as a result. Further, he explained that the policy was important in that it showed faculty and the campus that the athletic department and the Athletic Council could be responsive to academic concerns.

Financially, when Yow took over the AD position in 1994, Maryland faced an \$8 million operating deficit, a \$43 million facilities debt, and a budget that had not been balanced in ten years. Under her tenure, the budget was balanced for 15 consecutive years and the debt reduced to \$5.5 million. The Athletics Department reported transfers to campus of between \$4.5 million and \$6.6 million per year for 2003–2009. Further, the Department also reported paying more than \$8.5 million per year to the university for scholarships ("Deborah A. Yow," n.d.; Results of the Maryland athletics program," 2010).

That said, Maryland's balanced budget of 2008–2009 includes \$8.9 million in student fees, and *USA Today* financial reports show \$8.2 million in "direct institutional support"—up from \$2.7 million in 2007–2008 (Upton & Gillum, 2009). It is unclear from available documents what, exactly, constitutes this support, and e-mail correspondence with Department of Intercollegiate Athletics officials did not provide greater clarity. Maryland Athletics administrators, including Yow, have argued that the reporting categories used by the NCAA for its "dashboard indicators" financial reports (acquired by *USA Today* for its database) do not accurately reflect some sources of Athletics revenues. Athletic Department officials have also argued that describing Maryland's student fee as a subsidy is not accurate because the student body receives "free" athletic event tickets in exchange (UMD Athletic Council, 2008; Leckonby, 2007).

Heading into 2009–2010, Maryland was faced with recessionary revenue difficulties and an 8% drop in football season ticket sales. Budgets were reduced in various areas of the department. Football and men's basketball budgets shrank by 3.1% and women's basketball by 2.6%; Olympic sports saw 9% reductions (Barker, 2009). On the other hand, Maryland is in the middle of a major fund-raising drive aiming to raise \$68.5 million for scholarships and coaching positions and \$58.5 million for facilities improvements. Maryland is looking to premium seating plans—including more than 50 new football suites—as a key to generating new revenues (University of Maryland, n.d.; University of Maryland Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 2009).

UMD is the only institution among our case study schools that is not a member of COIA; however, the university has connections to COIA and the intercollegiate athletics reform movement. Joel Cohen, a former University Senate Chair and Athletic Council member at UMD, was also a founding member of COIA. Though Cohen has requested several times that the Athletic Council recommend COIA membership to the University Senate, Maryland's Athletic Council has never done so. Britt Kirwan, Chancellor of the UMD system, is also the cochair of the Knight Commission and spoke at COIA's national meeting at Athens, GA, in 2008.

## Oklahoma State University

In 2010, Oklahoma State was among several Big 12 Conference schools that almost moved to the Pac-10 during the massive D-1 conference realignment that never fully materialized. Oklahoma State, nicknamed the "Campus of Champions," ended up staying in the Big 12, where its 49 national championships—34 in wrestling alone—are the most of any school in the conference. In 2006–2007, OSU athletics had 10 teams reach the top-10 in their respective sports. The school's average Director's Cup final standing between 2007 and 2009 was 36 and the program has finished in the top-30 seven times since 1994 (NACDA, 2010; "Welcome to Oklahoma State Athletics," n.d.).

OSU sponsors 9 men's and 8 women's D-1 teams. The program's 2010 APR report shows 8 teams with four-year APR scores in the top half of the nation's D-1 teams for their respective sports, including football (see Table 1). Three teams fell in the bottom 20th percentile. Between 2008 and 2010, the NCAA recognized Oklahoma State women's indoor track, women's outdoor track (twice), and men's golf (three times) for APR scores in the top 10% in their sport. The women's basketball was penalized a scholarship in both 2008 and 2009 for multiyear APR figures (NCAA, 2010d, under "data archive").

Over the past decade, issues of quality and quantity in the "alternative admissions" (i.e., special admissions) process at OSU have produced several key policy developments. An Oklahoma Board of Regents rule limits the university's alternative admissions—among both student-athletes and nonathletes—to 8% of the previous fall's freshman class; this limit is referred to as the "eight percent program" (Harris, 2007). In 2000, OSU's NCAA self-study assessment suggested that a high concentration of student-athletes in the eight percent program contributed to the Department's low graduation rates (Oklahoma State University [OSU], 2009, under "2.1"). Among football players in OSU's 1997–1999 incoming freshman classes, the average SAT score was just 878; the general student population's average score was 1103 (Schrotenboer, 2006).

OSU introduced a guideline in 2001 aimed at limiting the number of student-athlete alternative admits to nine percent of any year's total alternative admits—the "9% of 8% plan." However, as OSU FAR Meredith Hamilton explained to us, student-athlete special admissions often exceeded this guideline. Between 2001 and 2007, the number of student-athletes enrolling under the '9% of 8% plan' jumped from 17 to 42 (Harris, 2007).

Quality has been as much an issue as quantity, though. In spring 2008, caps were placed on student-athlete alternative admits: 40 total and 10 with ACT scores below 17. One year later, discretion concerning alternative admits was moved from

the Director of Undergraduate Admissions (who previously had sole responsibility for such admissions) to a committee that reviews alternative admissions requests—for both student-athletes and nonathletes—on a case-by-case basis. The 2008 caps on low ACT scores were also kept in place (OSU, 2009, under “2.1”). Hamilton says faculty are happier with the committee’s aim of minimizing pressure from the Athletics Department on admissions decision-making.

Associate Athletics Director for Academic Affairs Marilyn Middlebook explained that OSU also employs communication policies—introduced by the compliance office—to try to minimize pressure from Athletics on academic employees and faculty. Each year a letter provided to Athletics personnel outlines whom they can and cannot contact in academics. Coaches are prohibited from contacting faculty members to pressure them concerning student-athlete academics—a factor that she says had been a problem when she arrived at OSU. Academic concerns are routed through Academic Affairs rather than direct communication between faculty and coaches.

Several of our interviewees also noted AD Mike Holder’s high academic expectations for OSU Athletics. Associate AD Middlebrook—who has a direct reporting line to the Provost—says she doesn’t feel pressured by Holder’s expectations; she said those expectations are channeled toward the coaching staff rather than academics personnel. Holder has a record of student-athlete success. He was head golf coach before taking over the AD post. Since 1984, nine of the 14 golfers selected as both athletic and academic All-Americans in the same season were OSU golfers (“Mike Holder,” n.d.).

In recent years, OSU faculty governance leaders have also weighed in on Athletic Department finances. The Faculty Council has made several requests to Athletics and the Administration to address subsidies from the university to Athletics—particularly an annual General Education Fund payment of roughly \$944,000 for graduation facilities use. Following a meeting with the Faculty Council’s Budget Committee in spring 2009, University President Burns Hargis personally committed to eliminating the subsidy. (Oklahoma State University [OSU] Faculty Council, 2006, 2009b).

*USA Today* reports 2008–2009 OSU Athletics revenues of \$600,000 in “direct state or other government support” and \$2.11 million in “direct institutional support.” Athletics also received \$1.93 million in student fees. Perhaps more important than the subsidy, though, *USA Today*’s figures show a substantial budget deficit, with expenditures exceeding revenues by roughly \$20 million (Upton & Gillum, 2009).

Contributions make up OSU Athletics’ largest revenue source (Upton & Gillum, 2009). The Department and its Cowboy Athletic Board fundraising arm have grabbed headlines for large-dollar donations. In 2006, oil magnate and alum T. Boone Pickens gave \$165 million to fund the university’s new athletic complex—part of OSU’s \$825 million capital improvement project (Lederman, 2006; “OSU unveils long-term campus master plan,” 2007). As then-President, David Schmidly said of the athletics facilities plans, “a lot of universities have been doing this stuff over a period of decades. We have no choice but to get caught up” (Lederman, 2006, ¶ 8). In 2007, OSU also took out \$280 million in life insurance policies on 28 athletics boosters. When the deal soured, the Oklahoma State interests sued the insurance company, accusing it of inflated premiums (Hall, 2010; Wolverton,

2007). These large-dollar donations drew recent attention from the Faculty Council's Athletics Committee, particularly the absence of "oversight of the solicitation or expenditure of funds" (OSU Faculty Council, 2009a, under "Athletics"). In 2009, the committee recommended that the Cowboy Athletic Board include a faculty representative.

## The University of South Carolina

Like other case study schools, the University of South Carolina-Columbia (South Carolina) is dealing with serious budget issues. In 2010, the university anticipated a record freshman class—in part to expand accessibility, but also to enhance revenues; the State cut appropriations to the University by \$103 million for the previous two years, a 46% cumulative reduction (Washington, 2010).

South Carolina Athletics have fared better financially. When AD Eric Hyman stepped into his post at South Carolina in 2005, he inherited a \$2.5 million annual deficit. By fiscal year 2010, Hyman oversaw a \$2.4 million surplus (recessionary budget projections spot the surplus at \$900,000 for 2010–2011). The budget turn-around was assisted by the Conference's new ESPN contract, pushing South Carolina's payout to \$16.1 million per year—the highest among our case studies. (Emerson, 2009; Melendez, 2010; Morris, 2010).

South Carolina sponsors 9 men's and 10 women's D-1 teams. Academically, the NCAA's 2010 APR report shows nine teams with four-year APR scores in the top half of the nation's D-1 teams for their sports (see Table 1). Men's basketball and swimming fell in the bottom 20th percentile. The NCAA docked men's basketball a scholarship in both 2008 and 2009 for its multiyear APR scores (NCAA, 2010d, under "data archive"). In terms of graduation figures, South Carolina's 55% student-athlete FGR falls four points shy of the student body at 59%. The 74% student-athlete GSR is also below the NCAA's 80% benchmark (see Table 1).

South Carolina's last major NCAA infraction came in 2005, when the NCAA extended the university's self-imposed, two-year probation to three years in light of several major violations. The most serious of those violations concerned improper tutoring assistance arrangements in 2001 by South Carolina's former senior associate athletic director for academic support services ("Three years of probation for South Carolina," 2005).

South Carolina's University Athletics Advisory Committee (UAAC)—the school's athletics board—has seen a substantive shift toward an oversight role over the past decade. Bob Best, 2008–2009 Faculty Senate Chair, explained that by the early 2000s, "the Committee had become passive, generally, to the point of promoting athletics." Jim Augustine, who served as Faculty Senate Chair from 2003 to 2005, noted in our interview the prominent role that then-Athletics Director Mike Magee played at the first UAAC meeting he attended.

Serving as Faculty Senate Chair between 2003 and 2005, Augustine was in an opportune position for moving the University Athletic Advisory Committee in a new direction, reorienting it as a faculty-driven committee. In 2003, both he and senate chair predecessor, Robert Wilcox, attended faculty governance leadership meetings that urged faculty involvement in intercollegiate athletics reform, including in COIA (Augustine, 2004). At the request of Augustine, the UAAC assessed the budding reform movement during the 2003–2004 academic year.<sup>12</sup> In Febru-

ary 2004, the Committee recommended to the Faculty Senate that South Carolina become a member of the Coalition.

Perhaps more noteworthy at the local level was the University Athletic Advisory Committee's assessment of its charge as "not adequate to the task of managing substantive review and change in faculty governance of athletics" (University of South Carolina University Athletic Advisory Committee [USC UAAC], 2004, under "Changes in the Official Charge of the UAAC"). Before fall 2004, the UAAC had been largely responsive to other institutional bodies. Its official oversight roles concerned only student-athlete academic performance. Following its 2003–2004 deliberations, the UAAC—with the support of the Faculty Advisory Committee and the general faculty—substantially expanded its oversight role (USC UAAC, 2004). COIA's proposals in *Campus Athletics Governance, the Faculty Role* figured prominently in changes to the committee's charge. Augustine describes the Committee's change as "night and day." For instance, the Athletics Department budget—unmentioned in the UAAC's reports between 1994 and 2003—is now reviewed every year.

At its April 2005 meeting, with Bill Bearden as Chair, the University Athletic Advisory Committee designated a subcommittee to evaluate the consistency of the university's Athletic Department policy with the recommendations in COIA's new white paper, *Academic Integrity in Intercollegiate Athletics*. The UAAC discussed COIA's proposals at nearly every meeting during 2005–2006. Augustine notes that he and Bearden talked regularly, using the proposals to assess the UAAC's role and function.

As Bearden—now South Carolina's FAR—explains, the UAAC "doesn't approve a lot," but "it does review a lot." The committee's 2008–2009 report, for instance, reflects its expanded faculty oversight role. That year the Committee reviewed the class attendance policy, graduation rates, choice of major, student-athlete GPA and attendance, special and "contract" admissions, drug monitoring, APR figures, and the Athletics Department budget. The university's high score on the COIA/Curley Center "Athletic Integration into Academics" survey is almost certainly a reflection of the UAAC's adoption of COIA's suggested best practices and its expanded oversight function. Like some of our other case study institutions, Bearden notes that the university's Faculty Senate Chair also sits on the UAAC.

The University Athletic Advisory Committee's expanded role in athletic-academic oversight is not the sole result of faculty governance initiatives, though. Interviewees noted that transitions at Provost and President helped foster an environment accepting of faculty involvement. Further, Athletics Director Eric Hyman, who took over the post in 2005, has shown a greater willingness to meet the faculty and administration halfway. Past Senate President Bob Best describes Hyman's "standard of transparency" as "a sea change."

That said, multimillion dollar athletics facilities renovations under Hyman have come at the cost of an Athletics Department debt that now exceeds \$136 million (Person, 2010). Minutes from a February 2010 Board of Trustees meeting describe the renovations as necessary if South Carolina is to "continue to compete and recruit well in the SEC" (University of South Carolina Board of Trustees, 2010, IV62). Similarly, Ellis Johnson, USC's \$350,000-per-year assistant head football coach, described the recent escalation in SEC assistant coaching salaries as follows: "We don't play the Knight Commission and we don't compete against people that have

that theory (arguing fiscal restraint). We compete in the SEC . . . You get in the left lane and go slow in the SEC, they'll run over you" (Person, 2003, ¶ 25).

## Southern Methodist University

The relationship between athletics and academics at Southern Methodist University (SMU) cannot be discussed without noting the historical importance of the so-called "death penalty" handed to SMU by the NCAA in 1987. Each of our SMU interviewees stressed the importance of this moment in shaping subsequent athletic-academic developments. The football team was barred from competition in 1987 (and would cancel the 1988 season) for infractions that included a \$61,000 "slush fund" to pay 13 players. In the scandal's wake it became apparent that the corruption shot through the Athletics Department, the Board of Trustees, even the Texas governor's office (McCollough, 2007; Wangrin, 2007).

The death penalty left SMU Athletics a shell of itself—particularly football. Mustang football, a perennial power in the now-defunct Southwest Conference, posted only two winning seasons between 1989 and 2009. Today, SMU's 6 men's and 10 women's D-1 teams compete with the University of Houston in Conference USA. The swimming and diving team has had the greatest recent competitive success, winning C-USA championships each of the last five years ("SMU wins Conference USA," 2010). SMU's average Director's Cup final standing between 2007 and 2009 was 74 (NACDA, 2010).

The university's 2010 APR report shows eight teams with four-year APR scores in the top half of the nation's D-1 teams for their sports, including football and men's basketball (see Table 1). Four teams fell in the bottom 20th percentile. The NCAA recognized SMU's women's golf in 2008 and 2009 for APR scores in the top 10% in their sport. Men's golf lost a fraction of a scholarship in 2009 for its multiyear APR score (NCAA, 2010d, under "data archive"). The university's student-athlete graduation rates are the most impressive of our case study schools. The schools' 77% student-athlete FGR tops the SMU student body graduation rate, and its 89% GSR is nearly ten points higher than the NCAA benchmark.

Several factors contributed to the two decades of gridiron struggles above, including the dismantling of the Southwest Conference and the university's subsequent loss of traditional rivalries (Southern Methodist University [SMU], 2009). However, any evaluation has to note the Faculty Senate's intention to see that similar damage to SMU's reputation never happened again. In addition to extensive faculty oversight of student-athlete admissions, recruits were barred from visiting campus until admitted. This severely hampered the Athletic Department's ability to compete for recruits with competitive institutions (McCollough, 2007). In 2000, SMU relaxed those admissions and recruiting policies to attract athletic talent and to reflect the university's success in graduating student-athletes; SMU President Gerald R. Turner—today, cochair of the Knight Commission—maintained SMU's intention to "admit only those students who have a reasonable chance of graduating from the university" ("SMU modifies admission procedures for student-athletes," 2000, ¶ 1).

Several interviewees highlighted the importance of SMU's policy for evaluating "at risk" potential student-athletes. The policy was updated in 2009 and endorsed by Athletics, the Faculty Senate and university administration. SMU's Faculty Athletic



Admissions Subcommittee evaluates all student-athletes with SAT scores under 900 or high school GPAs below 2.5. Five Senate-nominated and Provost-appointed faculty members compose the committee. Before voting on whether to admit an at-risk prospective student-athlete, the committee receives information provided by the Athletic Department, the Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, and SMU's Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center ("Current issues and resolutions," 2009; Wilson, 2009).

Faculty oversight of athletics occurs at several levels at SMU. The Senate receives regular reports from its Athletics Policies Committee, whose members are also the Senate's nominees to the University Athletic Council.<sup>13</sup> The Faculty Senate President also serves as an ex officio member of council. Further, members from the Senate's Athletics Policies Committee also sit on the Board of Trustees Standing Committee on Athletics (SMU, 2009). Faculty Senate President Linda Eads says that the direct communication with the trustees has been helpful in athletics and in other areas. The Senate President has a seat on the Board.

While Eads says that the faculty are generally proud of student-athlete academic achievements at SMU, each of our interviewees highlighted the Athletics budget as a point of tension between the faculty and Athletics. SMU Athletics ran deficits of \$7.3 million, \$7.2 million, and \$5.9 million in the 2007–2009 fiscal years (Wilson, 2009). SMU's student newspaper contends that the deficit actually exceeds \$18 million when scholarships are accounted for (Thompson, 2010).<sup>14</sup> The Athletic Council receives a rather precise accounting of the Athletics budget and the Faculty Council a more general report. The transparency does not make the situation any easier for some faculty to stomach, however. Eads explains that some faculty see Athletics as a financial drain on other resource investment areas. For instance, SMU history professor Edward Countryman drew attention to the Athletics budget in criticizing the university's 2010 decision to close the SMU Press—Texas' oldest university publishing house (M. E. Young & Thompson, 2010).

The plan under President Turner and Steve Orsini—SMU's Athletics Director since 2007—is to reduce the debt while expanding the budget. With that equation, new revenue streams are a must. A \$60 million campaign for new and renovated facilities is underway. To address SMU's attendance woes<sup>15</sup>, Orsini signed head football coach June Jones, who had great competitive success at the University of Hawaii (Hairopoulos, 2007). A coach like Jones doesn't come cheap, however—his 2008 salary was 300% higher than his predecessor. The irony was not lost on *USA Today* that such a huge salary increase could come at a university headed by Knight Commission cochair Gerald Turner (Berkowitz, 2010). The faculty, nonetheless, remain abreast of the financial picture through the Athletic Council. In 2007, the Council received a five-year plan from Athletics for reducing the deficit to \$4 million. As a 2009 report to the Faculty Senate explained, though, "it remains to be seen, of course, whether this target will be met" (Wilson, 2009, ¶ 6)

## **The "Athletic Integration into Academics Survey": Strengths and Limitations**

These case studies proved helpful in evaluating the strengths and limitations of our "Athletic Integration into Academics" survey. First, our interviews suggest

that upon receiving the survey, faculty governance leaders at each institution either deferred to or consulted individuals from key athletic-academic faculty positions, including FARs, athletics board (CAB) chairs, and COIA representatives. Athletics department personnel were only occasionally consulted. Several individuals also noted the positive function of this survey and other processes like it (e.g., NCAA recertification) for encouraging reflection on institutional practices and policies; one purpose of the survey, again, was “to offer a means of self-evaluation for institutions” (COIA and Curley Center, 2009, p. 1). OSU’s Brad Morgan described the survey as “straightforward” and “user-friendly”; members from their Athletic Council completed it in roughly 30 min following a meeting.

Second, it should be noted that most case-study schools had recently completed or were in the process of completing NCAA recertification—an intensive, once-a-decade self-study process involving faculty, administration, and athletics personnel. Houston’s most recent self-study was in 2006, but, as noted above, the Strategic Action Group reviewed athletic-academics in 2008–2009. While no interviewees suggested that NCAA recertification substantially influenced their responses, rarely do faculty have as extensive an opportunity for oversight and review of intercollegiate athletics policies and practices than during self-study periods. This may have contributed to higher scores. However, since recertification is a detailed and important process, reliable information on policies and practices would have been readily available to survey participants. Three of these schools (UMD, OSU, and SMU) have self-study drafts publicly accessible on the web. Houston and Illinois each provided us with at least part of their self-study. Faculty members with an interest their institution’s athletic-academic policies and practices should ask for a copy of their institution’s self-study document and pursue involvement in their institution’s NCAA recertification processes.

## Discussion

It should be stressed that the preceding case studies and the “Athletic Integration into Academics” survey are not aimed to serve a prescriptive function. COIA’s proposals have, time-and-again, recognized the importance of finding athletic-academic policies and practices that mesh with the history, culture, structures, and missions of local campus environments (e.g., see COIA, 2007). Similarly, we do not wish to suggest that replication of our case study institutions’ policies and practices will best serve other schools; however, by exploring these case studies we can provide *some* insight into what *some* schools are doing at the local level to address *some* key matters of athletic-academic integration. We hope that faculty and administrators will approach the specifics of these case studies as points of comparison with their local conditions, evaluating what is in the best interest of their institutional mission with respect to the athletic-academic relationship.

That said, an underlying theme to be taken from these case studies is that each of these six institutions have established structures—often codified in written policy—for faculty oversight of intercollegiate athletics. Importantly, each of our case study schools looks to its campus athletics board as a key point for mediating the athletics and academics relationship. This board may serve a primarily oversight function, as at South Carolina, or it may play a stronger role in policy formulation, as at Maryland. In each case, though, senate-elected faculty play an important

role on these boards, making up a majority of each school's voting athletics board members. Further, several of our schools noted strategies, through either tradition or policy, for involving senate executives in the activities of the athletics board, often by having the senate president or chair serve as board member.

Further, many interviewees stressed the importance of oversight committees and evaluation processes focused on student-athlete admissions and academic progress. Establishing meaningful faculty oversight of student-athlete admissions, in particular, may be a fruitful area for other institutions to consider. Admissions structures logically impact a variety of crucial athletic-academic concerns, including graduation rates, academic progress, pressures on faculty, and disproportionate student-athlete resource commitments. This is not to say that special admits do not occur at the universities in our case studies or should not occur; however, faculty oversight of admissions may provide accountability and a better awareness of the academic attention individual student-athletes might require. Indeed, several interviewees noted the importance of bringing in students who have a *reasonable chance of academic success* at their institution; a strong argument can be made that doing otherwise is akin to exploitation or at least setting student-athletes up for failure.

A third theme among some (though not all) of our case studies is the introduction of oversight structures in response to troubled periods in a university's athletic-academic relationship. SMU's case may be extreme, but it speaks to the willingness of faculty to take a greater role in monitoring athletics when athletic transgressions jeopardize an institution's academic reputation. On the other hand, COIA's proposals appear to provide the groundwork for developing structures that encourage faculty oversight of athletics. The South Carolina case study specifically reinforces this point.

Financial pressures, driven by "big time" college sports' competitive pressures, are unavoidably related to all these matters. Many of our interviewees—faculty and athletics department personnel alike—stressed the transparency of their athletics budgets, at least at the athletics board level. For our case study institutions, the athletics budgets at Maryland, South Carolina, and Illinois appear to be in relatively better shape than those at Oklahoma State, Houston, and SMU; however, we must emphasize that these are how athletics budgets *appear*. Indeed, important differences exist between some of the figures available through the *USA Today* database and the numbers athletics administrators regularly produce. This is not to say that the administrators are misrepresenting budget figures, but that the lack of uniformity in accounting practices makes our outsider assessments of athletics finances difficult and, unfortunately, incomplete. In this respect, we firmly agree with the Knight Commission's *Restoring the Balance* report that greater transparency and uniform accounting standards are a necessary in college sports.

What does appear clear, both from press accounts and the official statements of athletics departments, is that each of our schools have entered or are preparing to enter major facilities construction and renovations projects. The projects are supported by capital campaigns and debt financing with the goal of generating new or enhanced revenue streams for intercollegiate athletics programs. Such initiatives raise the stakes for universities that decide to "play ball." Lavish facilities can provide new revenue for athletics departments while attracting star recruits; however, they also *require* winning programs. Without "butts in seats," payments

on 30-year bonds may make revenue generation precarious. Competitive demands may place pressure on a variety of athletic-academic processes. Further research should continue to explore the nature and extent of the facilities “arms race” within the normative dimensions of the athletic-academic relationship.

## Notes

1. We recognize that any weighting system—even equally weighting items—is in some respects arbitrary.
2. As noted in this issue’s companion article, survey results were confidential. Case-study participants were asked for permission to use the name of the institution.
3. This strategy yielded three interviews from persons at the University of Houston, two from Illinois, one from Maryland, three from Oklahoma State, four from South Carolina, and four from Southern Methodist.
4. The NCAA adopted the APR and GSR scores in 2004 as part of its academic reform package. Each NCAA D-1 team receives an APR score designed to provide “a real-time ‘snapshot’” of a team’s academic success each semester (based on) eligibility, retention, and graduation as factors in the rate calculation” (NCAA, 2010e, under “Campus Responsibility”). A score of 925 is designed to correlate to a 50% graduation rate. Teams that fall below 925 can lose scholarships. Further, a historical penalty structure exists for teams with consistently low APR scores. Two other measures, the GSR and FGR, measure the graduation rates of student-athletes; however, the GSR differs from the FGR is that it accounts for those student-athletes that transfer or leave the university in good academic standing (NCAA, n.d.; NCAA background on academic reform,” 2010). We acknowledge that the NCAA’s academic reform metrics are not perfect and that legitimate criticisms can be raised concerning each (e.g., Zagier, 2010).
5. Including three Cotton Bowls and four Final Four appearances.
6. The Director’s Cup is a National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and *USA Today* award presented to the nation’s top athletic department based on program-wide competitive success. Schools receive points based on their finish in up to 20 sports (10 men’s, 10 women’s). The figures here reflect each school’s final ranking among 278 D1 programs (not just FBS schools).
7. “Special admissions” or “special admits” refer to those students admitted to a university despite GPA and standardized test scores that fall below that school’s standard admissions requirements. A “special talent” in athletics, music, or dance, for instance, is often cited as a reason for bypassing such requirements. However, as analyses of NCAA recertification self-studies have shown (e.g., Alesia, 2008; Knobler, 2008), among FBS schools a disproportionate number of special admits are granted to student-athletes. Football and men’s basketball often receive the lion’s share of the exceptions.
8. Though the NCAA does not require one, most NCAA schools have a campus athletics board (CAB) for intercollegiate athletics oversight, advisory, and/or policy-making (NCAA, 2009). Since the NCAA allows rather wide latitude in formulating the make-up and function of these boards it may be unsurprising that—as COIA’s key document concerning CABs explains—“the effectiveness of athletic boards varies considerably from campus to campus” (COIA, 2004, under “2”).
9. Recognizing the gravity of Illinois’ 2009 admissions scandal, it’s worth noting that the State Admissions Commission was not charged to investigate student-athlete admissions (State of Illinois, 2009).
10. *USA Today*’s “NCAA college athletics finance database” is constructed from public records requests to FBS institutions for their NCAA revenue and expenditures reports.
11. The UMD competitive cheer team captured the four other national championships; however, competitive cheer is not an NCAA-sanctioned event.

12. Reform-related materials from groups including the NCAA, the Knight Commission, COIA, and the more radical recommendations of the Drake Group are all still available on the South Carolina Faculty Senate page at <http://www.sc.edu/faculty/reform.shtml>
13. SMU's campus athletics board.
14. As a private institution, SMU is not subject to *USA Today's* public records requests.
15. SMU football and men's basketball have seen some of the lowest attendance in C-USA in recent years.

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