

DOES THE POWER 5 DESERVE A HIGH FIVE?

AN EVALUATION OF THE NCAA POWER 5 AUTONOMY GROUP AND ITS EFFECTS
ON THE HIGH QUALITY STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Division I reorganized its governing structure in August 2015. As a result, the Power 5 Conferences, the BIG 10, the Southeastern Conference (SEC), the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Pacific Coast Conference (PAC-12), and the Big 12 Conference, formed an autonomous group that could modify and create new governing regulations. This thesis analyzes the impact the Power 5 Autonomy group has had on the number of high quality student athletes and the high quality student-athlete experience.

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Introduction

In 776 B.C. the first athletic competition was recorded in Olympia, Greece. Since that time sports have been a common recreational and competitive event in the community.¹ In the modern era, the Olympics are accompanied by hundreds of professional and top amateur athletic leagues that organize sporting competitions, like the United States National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA). Over the years these leagues and the NCAA have adapted to the changing athletic interests and cultures around the world; some of these modifications have been positive while others have been negative. Since the NCAA's inception in 1905, notable adjustments to the organization are the creation of divisions & conferences, the enforcement of Title IX, and the creation of the Power Five conferences.² Although the benefits and costs of these adjustments are controversial, they have made profound impacts on current and future athletes who interact with the NCAA.

History of the NCAA

Before understanding the relevant changes to the NCAA, it is worth understanding the transformation of the organization's purpose in collegiate athletics. The NCAA originated as a response to a need for an organization to regulate the injury-prone Football games played amongst northeastern universities.³ Presently, the organization has expanded its involvement into the academic sphere in addition to the athletic sphere for all of its member schools. Today the NCAA defines itself as a group of members who come together to "support student-athletes so they can succeed on the field, in the classroom and in life."⁴ Such members include collegiate

¹ (The Real Story of the Ancient Olympic Games, 2016)

² (Washington, 2004)

³ (Clotfelter, 2011)

⁴ (What is the NCAA?, 2016)

presidents, coaches, athletic directors, academic staff, health staff, conference staff, and other related groups.

Split into Divisions and Conferences

The university and collegiate members of the NCAA are further divided into divisions and conferences. In 1973, the organization divisionally split universities and colleges into three divisions: Division I, Division II, and Division III. Division I, containing the most prestigious and highest revenue driving universities, would continue to receive media coverage and television revenue, unlike Divisions II and III.⁵ Divisional separation allowed all colleges to participate in the NCAA in accordance with their respective budgetary capabilities. Smaller schools with less revenue could compete amongst other schools in Division III without needing the budget to provide athletic scholarships to athletes. Division II schools can provide athletic aid to student-athletes, but do not have a required attendance number for football games like Football Bowl Subdivision schools in the Division I.⁶ Division I schools are generally the highest revenue generating athletic programs that can offer athletic scholarships to their athletes while also focusing on driving higher attendance to their sports competitions. On a high level, the three divisions enable colleges to compete against other institutions that operate with similar budget and revenue streams.

Title IX Enactment

During the same period that the divisional separation took place, many gender-equality conscious rules and budgetary constraints were passed under the Title IX law. The law requires all educational institutions that receive federal funding to not discriminate based on gender.⁷

⁵ (Washington, 2004)

⁶ (Divisional Differences and the History of Multidivision Classification)

⁷ (Marburger & Hogshead-Makar, 2003)

Specifically directed towards athletics, all institutions must pass the three-pronged test in offering an athletic experience: “(1) equal opportunities to participate in sports; (2) an equitable allocation of scholarship monies; and (3) equal treatment in all aspects of athletics, including coaching, facilities, equipment, medical treatment, travel, and support among other things.”⁸

Title IX regulations have been accepted as a great win for women’s rights but critics claim that it hurts non-revenue men’s sports. Some people believe that allocating money appropriately between male and female teams caused men’s non-revenue sports teams to be neglected. Football and Basketball are heavily invested in, leaving very little for the remaining male teams and an abundance of money for female teams. Title IX has spurred many conversations and debates over how to appropriately allocate money so all student-athletes have equal opportunities to participate in collegiate athletics.

Creation of Power 5 Autonomy Group

The most recent adjustment to the NCAA and collegiate athletics is the formation of the Power 5 Conferences. Beginning in 2015, the Big 12, Pac 12, Big 10, SEC, and ACC were granted autonomy with regards to certain rules that the NCAA used to regulate. These conferences formed a new 80-member panel to reevaluate scholarship monies, “cost-of-attendance stipends and insurance benefits for players, staff sizes, recruiting rules and mandatory hours spent on individual sports.”⁹

All of these recent changes in collegiate athletics stem from the proper and improper allocation of money within collegiate athletic departments. When another change is enacted, athletic departments must react and adjust to these changes. These adjustments might lead to

⁸ (Marburger & Hogshead-Makar, 2003)

⁹ (Stich, 2014)

certain teams and sports being cut from athletic programs. A growing concern amidst these changes is the diminishing opportunities for high quality athletes to be able to participate in high quality athletic experiences in the United States. Before examining this concern, it is important to define a “high quality athlete” and a “high quality athletic experience.”

Will the Effects of the Power 5 Benefit Student Athletes?

For the purposes of this study, a high quality athlete is able and seeking out a roster spot on a NCAA Division I athletic program. There are many athletes that are capable of competing at a Division I level but choose to abstain from participating for reasons other than accessibility. This study excludes these athletes. On the opposite side, there are athletes on Division I rosters that never compete and might not be suited for a Division I team. Whatever the case, because these athletes are on the roster of Division I programs, they are included in this study.

Fundamental Definitions

A high quality athlete can be male or female who is on the roster of either a revenue or nonrevenue sports team from a NCAA Division I recognized school. Revenue sports teams are men’s football, men’s basketball, and women’s basketball. Non-revenue sports are all other NCAA recognized sports teams. More specifically, the athlete must be eligible to compete by being registered with the NCAA Clearing House. The NCAA Clearing House is a standardized certification that claims an athlete is an amateur and meets the logistical requirements to compete for a Division I or II program.¹⁰

Based on the definition of a high quality athlete, a high quality athletic experience must then be offered by an NCAA Division I athletic program. A NCAA Division I athletic program is designated by the NCAA to abide by Division I regulations and compete with such schools.

¹⁰ (How to Register)

Though the Division I is further subcategorized into the Football Bowl Subdivision, Football Championship Subdivision, and Programs without Football, all of these categories will be considered high quality athletic experiences. Further, a high quality experience includes athletic programs that provide their athletes with the necessary equipment, uniforms, coaching staff, transportation, facilities, medicine/training, and strength or conditioning work required to compete at the Division I level. While Division I athletic budgetary effects already constrain or threaten to constrain the above requirements, this study examines the extent to which this might continue moving forward.

High quality athletes should have the opportunity to participate in high quality athletic experiences. An important factor in preserving this opportunity is understanding the evolution in the collegiate athletic structure, like the creation of divisions and conferences, Title IX, and Power Five Conferences. These among other forces have the capabilities to promote or inhibit the number of high quality athletes and high quality athletic experiences. Before conducting additional research and drawing new insights into the high quality athletic experience, it is important to review the relevant research that has already been conducted in this space.

Literature Review

The profitability and the opportunity of intercollegiate athletics has been studied and analyzed for many years. Research has been conducted around the impact of collegiate athletics on universities as well as the impact academia has on athletics. Discussions around gender, specifically with Title IX, have also contributed to the debate surrounding the opportunities and constraints that regulation provides for high quality athletes. More recently, the debates over whether to pay collegiate athletes and the profitability of athletic departments have weighed heavily on collegiate athletic departments and their future strategic plans. All of these studies

provide context to the high quality athlete and experience while revealing benefits and drawbacks to intercollegiate athletics.

Athletics' Importance to Collegiate Institutions

Universities in the United States are unique to other higher education systems around the world in offering major athletics programs in conjunction with academic studies. According to Duke University economics professor Charles Clotfelter's, there are four main roles athletics plays in collegiate institutions. In his book, *Big-Time Sports In American Universities*, he claims athletics is a consumer good where there is incredible demand by sports fanatics and supply offered by the structure of the NCAA. Second, Athletics provides another revenue stream to potentially generate profits that can benefit universities.

The third contribution of athletics is its purpose as a marketing instrument for universities to advertise and build powerful constituencies. By providing a VIP experience for esteemed guests, universities can offer more entertainment and unique experiences for others. Beyond important communal figures, the athletics experience generates advertising and publicity for universities on a national and international level. Universities frequently experience high college applications following athletics successes of major sports teams at their universities. For example, Texas Christian University won the Rose Bowl Championship in January 2011. That same year, TCU had 19,334¹¹ collegiate applications, up 37% from 14,085 applications in 2010¹². Both the televised attention and national acclaim garnered by collegiate athletics offers one of the largest marketing platforms for higher education programs.

¹¹ (Griffith, 2014)

¹² (Office of Institutional Research)

The fourth role of intercollegiate athletics is its linkage to a stronger sense of community among students on campus. According to Clotfelter's research, he found that more students lived on campus and joined a fraternity or sorority at big-time sports universities when compared to other universities. Only 6% of students attending public big-time sports universities planned to live at home compared 25% of students at non big-time sports universities. Forty-eight percent of freshmen at private universities plan to join a fraternity or sorority versus on twenty-six percent at other universities. Both the residential experience and involvement in Greek organizations promote the sense community and involvement on collegiate campuses.

All four of these roles have the opportunity to contribute to or enhance the academic experience for high quality athletes and the normal student enrolled in a collegiate institution. Moreover high quality athletic experiences also enhance the high quality athletes that represent the university in the workforce after leaving the university. High quality athletes often exhibit desirable human capital characteristics like courage, integrity and the ability to remain calm under pressure.¹³ Whether benefiting the high quality athlete, his or her peers enrolled at the university, or the university's reputation in the workplace, collegiate athletics offers multiple opportunities to further a university's mission to prepare individuals for the future.

Collegiate Institutions' Importance to Athletics

Before athletics were integrated with the collegiate system, higher, education institutions focused primarily on educating individuals beyond the knowledge gained from a high school diploma. The primary sources of financial aid for higher education were academic grants and monies, awarded mostly on merit or financial need. The introduction of athletic scholarships to the collegiate space provided additional financial opportunities for high quality athletes to earn a

¹³ (Marburger & Hogshead-Makar, 2003)

college degree. Athletes, who might not have qualified for financial or academic aid and might not have ever considered a collegiate education, have another opportunity to participate in higher education via an athletics scholarship.

According to research conducted by P. Wesley Routon, Professor at Georgia Gwinnett College, and Jay K. Walker, Economics and Finance Researcher at Niagra University, there were more first-generation NCAA college students among revenue sports (Football and Basketball) versus non-athletes. Furthermore, there is a statistically higher percentage of athletes who graduate on-time versus non-athletes at collegiate institutions: 79% of athletes versus 72% of non-athletes. The pairing of athletics programs and higher education provides more academic opportunities for high quality athletes who might otherwise not seek out or complete their collegiate education.

Title IX

Title IX regulations have provided both opportunities and constraints for high quality athletes to participate in a high quality athletic experience in college. There is little debate about Title IX's effectiveness in assisting female high quality athletes to have access to similar high quality athletic experiences like their male counterparts. However, there are questions regarding the neglect of male non-revenue sports teams out of budgetary constraints tied to the Title IX regulation.

Due to the three-pronged test for Title IX regulation adherence, high quality female athletes have opportunities to participate in high quality athletic experiences. First, any of the opportunities offered to a Division I male revenue or non-revenue athletic team must also be offered to Division I female athletic teams. On a fundamental level, the number of high quality female athletes must equal the number of high quality male athletes at a Division I program. In

fact, a research study conducted by the NCAA in 1998 revealed that 52.6% of all Division I athletes were female, slightly higher than an equitable fifty/fifty participation rate.¹⁴ Another key benefit from Title IX requires equitable treatment and benefits be allocated to male and female high quality athletes. Female hockey players must be offered the same protective equipment, medical access, practice facilities, and experiences that male hockey players receive at the same institution. Title IX does allow some variations between male and female programs as long as they are justifiable and equitable overall.¹⁵ One important conclusion from this distinction is that the dollar amount spent on female athletic experiences must still match the dollar amount spent on male athletic experiences.

In compliance with Title IX, there have been concerns about the survival of male non-revenue sports. Between the 1991 and 1998 school years, 171 men's wrestling teams were discontinued across all NCAA divisions and NAIA college athletic programs. While this 40% decrease is significant, comparing male and female aggregate numbers reveals a larger disproportion between male and female collegiate teams. Male athletic collegiate teams across all sports increased in aggregate by 36, a 0.4% increase, whereas female sports teams increased by a total of 3,784 sports teams, a 66% increase, during the same time period.¹⁶ The change in teams at high quality athletic programs is not separated out from these figures, but a conclusion from the research data found that "at NCAA Division I-A schools... a majority (54 percent) of the respondents discontinuing a men's team cited gender equity considerations as a great or very great influence." (GAO-01-297) There might not have been an overall decrease in male

¹⁴ (NCAA, 1999)

¹⁵ (Title IX Frequently Asked Questions)

¹⁶ (Four-Year Colleges' Experiences Adding and Discontinuing Teams, 2001)

collegiate athletic teams, but the growth is underwhelming when compared to the growth in female collegiate athletic teams in the 1980's and 1990's.

Another way to evaluate the impact of Title IX on intercollegiate athletics is to compare the number of male and female athletes participating in sports overtime. During the 1981-1982 academic year, there were 90,100 female student athletes and 220,178 male student-athletes. Seven years later, the 1998-1999 academic year, the number of female athletes grew 81% to 162,783 women, and the number of male athletes grew 5% to 231,866 men.¹⁷ Again, the growth in male participants is underwhelming but when considering the number of male and female student athletes in 1998, there are still fewer females than males participating in intercollegiate athletics. From these statistics Title IX improved the number of collegiate athletic opportunities for females while maintaining a slight increase in the number of male collegiate athletic opportunities.

Although not specific to Title IX but specific to this thesis' focus on equal gender opportunities, the NCAA has instituted gender specific rules that intend to further offer equitable high quality athletic experiences to both males and females. For example, to maintain membership in the NCAA Division I, a university must have seven male or mixed sports teams and seven female sports teams. An exception is made for six male teams and eight female athletic teams. For Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) programs, there must be a minimum of eight female teams and at least sixteen overall teams.¹⁸ These membership requirements continue to support high quality athletes of both genders. Additionally, requiring a high number of

¹⁷ (Four-Year Colleges' Experiences Adding and Discontinuing Teams, 2001)

¹⁸ (Division I Manual, 2016)

athletics teams per Division I university places a floor on the number of high quality athletic experiences that must remain available to high quality athletes.

Athletic Budgets

A common critique of Division I collegiate athletic programs, is the very small percentage of schools that break even or turn a profit in their athletic departments. According to NCAA reports on athletic department's financial situations, only 20 of the 125 universities competing in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) turned a profit in 2013." Division I athletic programs in the Football Championship Division and athletic programs without football teams all operated with net revenue losses in 2013. In both of these subdivisions there has not been a university who turned a profit since 2004.¹⁹

For all Division I athletic departments, the two largest expenses were athletics aid and compensation. Athletics aid helps contribute to the high quality athletic experience by offering accessibility to students-athletes who could otherwise not afford a collegiate education. Meanwhile, compensation (both coach and administrative monetary allocation) has an indirect impact on high quality athletic experiences. Over the 2004-2013 decade, compensation at FBS schools has increased slightly as a percentage of overall expenses but has remained steady at the other two subdivisions of the NCAA.¹⁹

Both the expense allocation and the overall profitability are factors in hypothesizing the future of the high quality athlete and his or her experience in collegiate athletics. For vast majority of athletic departments, increasing expenses on athletic aid or paying collegiate athletes will place additional stress on athletic department budgets. Both well-known, high-revenue Division I collegiate programs and lesser-known lower-revenue Division I collegiate programs

¹⁹ (Fulks, 2014)

could face budgetary challenges in the wake of increasing the money paid to student-athletes. These budgetary modifications could have negative ramifications on the ability to have the same number of high quality athletes and high quality athletic experiences offered in the NCAA today.

Paying Athletes

This thesis does not focus on whether paying athletes is a worthy or unworthy cause, but it does seek to address the effects paying college student-athletes might have on the number of high quality athletes in college and the opportunities for high quality athletic experiences. Many of the modern conversations in collegiate athletics surround the debate of whether to pay collegiate athletes or continue to require them to maintain their amateur status to compete at the collegiate level. Though efforts to unionize athletes at Northwestern and other activist movements have increased awareness of this debate, the four-year lawsuit brought by former UCLA Basketball player, Ed O'Bannon, created sustained publicity to the compensation debate.

The O'Bannon ruling which takes effect for the entering class of 2016 student athletes "allow[s] schools and conferences to deposit money in trusts for football and men's basketball players that will become payable when they leave school or their eligibility expires." (Berkowitz) The money set aside in the trust must be larger than the cost of attendance and must be decided upon by the NCAA.²⁰ Colleges are not obligated to pay into this trust fund. The O'Bannon ruling only applies to Football Bowl Subdivision colleges and Division I programs with male basketball teams.

Paying high quality student athletes requires reallocating athletic dollars or generating new revenue to supply this trust fund. The University of Texas Athletic Department has publicly

²⁰ (Berkowitz, 2014)

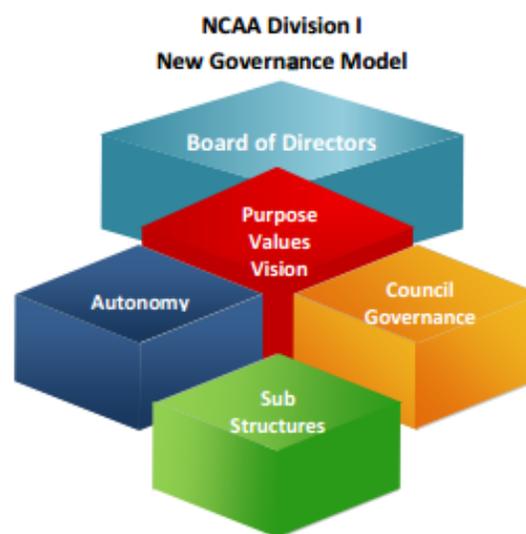
announced its willingness to pay its athletes a stipend up to \$10,000.²¹ Whether or not this new trust fund will have an ultimate effect of the opportunities for high quality athletes to participate in high quality athletic experiences remains unknown.

Power Five Autonomy

The newest change to affect the NCAA and Division I athletics programs is the creation of the Power Five conferences. Autonomy was granted to the Power Five because these schools have special needs unique to being a top tier athletic program. The autonomy allows the group of universities to “act on legislation for the permissive use of resources to benefit student athletes as well as on certain well-being issues” so long as the legislation “does not adversely impact fair competition in the Division I.”²² To determine whether the creation of Power 5 Autonomy will negatively or positively impact the high quality athletic experience, one must first become familiar with the Autonomy and its role within the Division I.

*Formation and Structure*²²

In the summer of 2014, the NCAA embarked on a movement to simplify its governing body. During the process of rethinking the way new regulations are created and monitored, concerns surfaced about the lack of student representation in governing decisions. Thus, there were more concerns about new policies straying further away from the NCAA’s mission to support student athletes in the best manner possible. After



²¹ (Wuornos, 2015)

²² (Governance, 2014)

months of discussion, the NCAA proposed a new governing process that is more streamlined and involves student athletes at every point in the process.

The most senior Division I governing body is the NCAA Board of Directors, which encompasses twenty university chancellors along with an athletic director and a student-athlete. This committee supervises the overall Division I system while most day-to-day policy and legislative duties are overseen by the Autonomy and Council Governance bodies. The Council will include athletic directors, academic representatives, conference staff members, senior women administrators and student athletes from each of the thirty-two Division I conferences. The Council will have decision power regarding “championships, legislation, student-athlete well-being, Division I membership, or other areas vital to the conduct of Division I affairs.”²³ Besides the Council, there is a separate governing body for the Power Five conferences in the Division I, named the Autonomy group.

The Autonomy governing body will encompass eighty members, 65 various athletic and academic staff and 15 student athletes. Due to the increased resources available to the schools within the five conferences, these universities “desire to provide student athletes with enhanced benefits such as full cost of attendance, lifelong learning and additional health and nutritional benefits.”²³ The student athletes in these conferences are much more likely to play professional sports; thus, they should have more resources to help them make more informed decisions about entering the professional athletics space. Essentially, the Power Five conferences argued that their student athletes have unique needs that must be addressed, so they should have their own governing body to create these rules. The Autonomy Group has been granted power to create its own rules in many different aspects of the student athlete experience.

²³ (Governance, 2014)

Powers Granted to the Autonomy Group²⁴

Health and Wellness

The Power Five can conduct research surrounding health care and medical policies. The group can then take action to update or change any of these policies as well as insurance options and the level of care provided to student athletes. (*NCAA Bylaw 16.4*)

Meals and Nutrition

Changes can be made to tailor the nutrition for student athletes based on their dietary needs and playing seasons. New regulations will be allowed to provide additional nutrition beyond what is currently allowed under the general Division I rules. (*NCAA Bylaw 16.5*)

Financial Aid

The Autonomy governing body has permission to “increase the aid available to student athletes in a way that is consistent with basic principles of amateurism and the collegiate model.” Additional aid can be provided outside of the traditional scholarship that totals up to the full cost of attendance at the university. Scholarships can also be extended to aid student athletes in completing their undergraduate degree even when the player is no longer eligible to compete. Furthermore, any rules related to the terms of financial aid (e.g., eligibility for aid, period of award, reduction or cancellation, renewals or non-renewals) can be altered beyond the general legislation for all Division I schools. (*NCAA Bylaws 15.01.5-15.2.8.2; 15.3-15.3.5.2*)

Expenses and Benefits (Student-Athlete Support)

Adjustments can be made to the quantity of awards student athletes can collect on outside competitions. The Power Five will be able to determine how much a student athlete can claim in benefits to cover the his or her expenses and the expenses undertaken by his or her family and

²⁴ (Governance, 2014)

friends associated with the competitive experience. Some permissible costs of that can be covered are postseason travel for friends and family, expenses incidental to practice (parking), and other expenses in conjunction with practice and competition. (*NCAA Bylaw 16*)

Expenses and Benefits (Pre-Enrollment Support)

Student athletes can be given monetary and other legitimate assistance to help their families visit universities. These visits could be for recruiting or for medical expenses and academic support during the summer prior to the student athlete's enrollment in college. This pre-enrollment support eases the recruitment process and transition to college. (*NCAA Bylaw 13.2*)

Insurance and Career Transition

Statistics indicate that student athletes in the Power 5 Conferences are much more likely to partake in professional athletics than other athletes in the Division I. Rules regarding securing loans for career-related insurance products (i.e. loss-of-value insurance) are more applicable to Power 5 athletes. Therefore the Autonomy Group has authority to allow student athletes to obtain loans or provide these expenses for athletes. Rules can also be adjusted to help student athletes in career planning efforts for professional competition. (*NCAA Bylaws 12.2 and 12.3*)

Career Pursuits

The Autonomy Group can also revise any rules that might hinder a student athlete's non-professional career pursuits. For example, the group can modify regulations that might affect an athlete's ability to promote his or her musical or artistic career. These modifications would not violate the basic principles of amateurism. (*NCAA Bylaw 12.5*)

Time Demands

In an effort to promote more of a balance between athletics and other student activities, the Power 5 can update time demand policies. Adjusting the time boundaries and implementing

“athletic dead periods” will allow students to participate in other educational activities outside of intercollegiate athletics. (*NCAA Bylaw 17*)

Transfer Eligibility

The five conferences will continue to share the academic eligibility requirements shared by all Division I schools. Nevertheless, the Autonomy Group has authority to modify transfer policies to more appropriately address their student athletes. Transfer eligibility will continue to fall under corporate governance for all Division I schools, but this amendment allows for the five conferences to adjust if deemed necessary in the future. (*NCAA Bylaw 14.5.*)

Academic Support

The Power 5 will be able to revise existing academic regulations to further promote academic success for its student athletes. Any modifications must be exclusively intended for improving academic performance. (*NCAA Bylaw 16.3*)

Recruiting

Modifications to existing Division I regulations will be permitted to address any concerns that could disrupt recruiting activities and/or a potential student athlete’s academic preparation for college.

Personnel

The Autonomy Group has authority to regulate the number of non-coaching personnel and any personnel titles for NCAA competition teams. Revisions to personnel rules will allow for new guidelines to meet the unique needs of the Power 5 conferences to achieve both academic and athletic success.

Purpose of New Regulations

All of the above amendments and the new Autonomy Group are designed to positively change the student-athlete experience. The guiding principle behind creating the Autonomy Group is to create “the optimal student-athlete experience based on available resources.”²⁵ Further, the Autonomy group will empower universities by having a fully transparent process that includes student athletes in the decision-making process every step of the way.

While the Autonomy Group is specifically empowered to create and modify legislation, the new regulations are not restricted to just the Power 5 conferences. Once adopted by the Power 5, any other conference can choose to adopt the same regulations or modifications generated by the Autonomy Group. Conferences can also choose to defer the implementation and adoption process to its member universities. Although other universities can adopt new regulations, most of these schools have stressed budgets. The new rules that require additional capital outflows will be difficult for these universities to implement and offer to their student athletes. The fact that some athletes will receive certain additional benefits and others will not, simply because one attends a Power 5 school and the other does not, could be a concern for the overall quality of athletics in the future.

Methods:

This thesis seeks to fill the void in the discussions and research conducted about the Power 5. Administrators, Coaches, Athletic Directors, and the public have all contributed their views on the new Division I governance and Autonomy Group, but there has been little to no voice for student athletes. My research will incorporate the student-athlete perspective on the newest changes to the Division I and help answer two fundamental questions:

²⁵ (Governance, 2014)

1. How will the Power 5 affect the number of high quality student athletes?
2. How will the Power 5 affect the high quality student-athlete experience?

To answer both questions I will use both primary and secondary research data. For the first question, I will use secondary historical data to compare yearly participation rate changes from the most recently published NCAA participation report. Then, I will gather primary research data from my survey examining the changes in team sizes from each of the survey participants. Based on this information, I can then draw preliminary conclusions from the data about the effect the Power 5 has had on the number of high quality student athletes in the Division I.

There are many methods available to examine the effect of the Power 5 on the quality of a Division I student athlete's experience. Conducting a student experience survey is the most appropriate method of research for this thesis. Secondary research will be consulted to compare and support the primary data where appropriate.

The student survey contains 6 different sections and a mix of question types designed to understand the important factors that affect the quality of a student athlete's experience. The first section collects basic demographic information such as an athlete's sport, university of attendance, eligibility and academic years in school, age, and the main reasons why the athlete chose to compete at his or her current university. The second portion of the survey collects team demographic information. This includes the roster and coaching staff sizes along with any changes in rosters or coaching staff over the past two years. The third section includes questions regarding the student athlete's scholarship, both academic and athletic. Also included are questions about the significance of scholarship in the athlete's college decision and about the cost of attendance or other compensation received as part of a Power 5 athletic program.

The final three sections contain more free response-prompted questions tailored to the athlete's experience and opinion of the Power 5. Section four includes questions about the different factors that enhance a student-athlete experience like study hall, medical treatment, nutrition, and tutor offerings. The fifth section covers experiences related to competitions. These experiences incorporate questions about having adequate equipment and apparel to compete and the type of travel to competitions. The last section asks the student athlete questions about his or her knowledge of the Power 5 and whether or not student athletes should serve in the Division I governance system.

Over the span of three weeks, 79 Division I student athletes participated in the survey. Of the participants, 19% of the respondents compete as a male in their sport and 81% compete as a female. Forty-one percent of the respondents attend universities outside of the Power 5 meanwhile 59% attend a school within one of the five conferences. Twenty-three universities and thirteen sports are represented across the 79 responses. Although there is variation in gender, university and sport participation, this survey represents only a small sample of the overall student-athlete population. The reader should take into consideration that the data and conclusions drawn from the survey are based off of this sample size.

Results and Discussion

Research Q1: How will the Power 5 affect the number of high quality student athletes?

Beginning in the 2014-2015 academic year the NCAA analyzed the participation rates for both high school and collegiate athletics institutions. This data is a good proxy for evaluating the overall changes in the NCAA participation rates relative to the changes in high school athletic participation rates. The high school participation data was collected by the National Federation of State High School Associations, and the NCAA participation data includes statistics from all

NCAA member schools. It is important to compare changes in NCAA participation rates with high school participation rates to account for the year to year fluctuations in the number of student athletes transitioning from high school to college.

In the data on page 26, the first column labeled “NCAA participants” indicates the number of NCAA student athletes added or subtracted from each sport from one school year to the next.²⁶ A positive (green) number indicates more student athletes joined the NCAA. The second column indicates the increase or decrease in the percentage of student athletes who competed in high school that now compete in college. The totals of both of these columns are positive indicating growth in the NCAA. The NCAA has added 9,196 and 2,973 athletes in the 2015-216 and 2016-2017 academic years, respectively. Further the percent of college athletes relative to high school athletes grew 2.20% and 1.10% over those same academic years. This data is further broken down by sport and NCAA Division.

Pertinent to this thesis are the changes in participation in Division I athletics. Overall, both years’ total changes in Division I participation rates relative to high school participation rates are slightly negative. From the 2014-2015 to 2015-2016 school years the men’s Division I participation in NCAA athletics fell slightly while the women’s participation fell from 2016-2017. A ten basis point decrease each year in Division I athletics is not a serious concern or shift. However, the Division I is the only Division to display decreases in its participation rates relative to high school participation rates for the same academic year.

To figure out whether or not the slight decrease in athletics participation comes from Power 5 schools or non-Power 5 schools I looked at the participation rate changes for just the Power 5 schools. Between the 14-15 and 15-16 school years no sports teams were cut and one

²⁶ (NCAA Research, 2017)

women's golf team and one men's golf team were added.²⁷ The participation data for the Power 5 in the 16-17 academic year is not yet available.

Changes in Participation Rates from the 15-16 to 16-17 yrs						Changes in Participation Rates from the 14-15 to 15-16 yrs					
	NCAA	HS to	% HS to	% HS to	% HS to		NCAA	HS to	% HS to	% HS to	% HS to
	Participants	NCAA %	NCAA	NCAA	NCAA		Participants	NCAA %	NCAA	NCAA	NCAA
	Change	Change	Change	Change	Change		Change	Change	Change	Change	Change
Men						Men					
Baseball	356	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%	Baseball	767	0.10%	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%
Basketball	-13	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Basketball	377	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Cross Country	82	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Cross Country	112	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	-0.10%
Football	872	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Football	1,497	0.20%	0.10%	0.10%	0.10%
Golf	22	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%	Golf	0	0.10%	0.10%	0.10%	0.00%
Ice Hockey	31	0.40%	0.00%	0.00%	0.20%	Ice Hockey	95	0.10%	0.00%	-0.05%	0.20%
Lacrosse	281	0.20%	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%	Lacrosse	483	0.20%	0.00%	0.10%	0.20%
Soccer	326	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Soccer	875	0.00%	-0.10%	0.10%	0.00%
Swimming	-260	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Swimming	85	0.10%	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%
Tennis	-119	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Tennis	130	0.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%
Track & Field	157	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Track & Field	663	0.20%	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%
Volleyball	81	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%	Volleyball	98	0.00%	-0.20%	0.10%	0.10%
Water Polo	-30	-0.20%	0.00%	0.00%	-0.20%	Water Polo	-7	-0.10%	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%
Wrestling	26	0.10%	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%	Wrestling	67	0.10%	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%
Women						Women					
Basketball	4	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Basketball	270	0.10%	0.10%	0.00%	0.10%
Cross Country	-192	-0.10%	0.00%	0.10%	-0.10%	Cross Country	228	0.00%	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%
Field Hockey	138	0.40%	0.10%	0.00%	0.10%	Field Hockey	-8	0.10%	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%
Golf	72	-0.10%	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	Golf	145	0.20%	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%
Ice Hockey	114	1.00%	0.00%	-0.10%	0.90%	Ice Hockey	35	-0.30%	0.30%	-0.10%	-0.40%
Lacrosse	381	-0.10%	0.10%	0.10%	-0.20%	Lacrosse	664	0.40%	0.00%	0.10%	0.20%
Soccer	363	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Soccer	637	0.20%	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%
Softball	52	0.00%	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	Softball	581	0.30%	0.10%	0.10%	0.10%
Swimming	-72	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%	-0.10%	Swimming	95	0.00%	-0.10%	0.00%	0.00%
Tennis	-27	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Tennis	-68	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Track & Field	251	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Track & Field	1,045	0.20%	0.00%	0.20%	0.00%
Volleyball	93	0.00%	0.00%	-0.10%	0.00%	Volleyball	379	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%
Water Polo	-16	-0.40%	-0.20%	-0.10%	-0.10%	Water Polo	-49	-0.40%	-0.30%	0.00%	-0.10%
Total Change	2,973	1.10%	-0.10%	0.10%	0.80%	Total Change	9,196	2.20%	-0.10%	1.45%	0.80%

The student-athlete experience survey does not just analyze the differences in participation rates across the NCAA, Division I, and Power 5. It also sheds light on why roster sizes changed in the past two years as well as information on transfer student athletes. Frequent explanations for why roster sizes fluctuated were athletes quitting due to the time commitment, typical differences in recruiting class sizes, walk-ons leaving the team, and personality or

²⁷ (Sports Sponsorship, Participation and Demographics Search Database, 2016)

coaching tensions. Only one of the 79 responses cited that athletes were cut from the team. There are typically many factors involved for athletes that are cut or transfer schools. More observations and detailed responses are necessary to evaluate the Power 5's influence on roster size changes.

Based on the participation data from secondary research, the overall number of student athletes receiving a high quality (Division I) athletic experience decreased slightly over the past two years compared to high school athletics participation rates. While it is not a significant decrease, any decrease is noticeably different from the increases across the other two NCAA Divisions in the same period. Upon further investigation, it appears that between the 14-15 and 15-16 academic years the slight decrease in male athletics participation took place in colleges outside of the Power 5 conferences. The preliminary data indicates that participation rates in the Division I are noticeably different and slightly more negative than Division II and Division III athletics.

Research Q2: How will the Power 5 affect the high quality student-athlete experience?

The quality of each student athlete's experience depends on many different factors. Some of the most common factors of quality are: team's national rank, university's academic national rank, scholarship, academic facilities, athletic facilities, nutrition, having a voice in one's athletic experience, equipment and apparel needed to compete, professors' willingness to accommodate athletic travel schedules, the coaching staff, a player's teammates, and the overall competition experience.

In the survey, each student athlete ranked the importance of his or her team's national rank, scholarship, athletic facilities, cost of attendance, the coaching staff, the university's academic performance, and the university's overall athletic performance in his or her college

decision. There was also an “other” category where the athlete could write in another important factor in the decision process. The factor receiving an “8” in the rankings was considered the most important factor for the student athlete in his or her college of choice. Analyzed from a different perspective, the ranking of these factors also represents the level of influence each factor will have on the overall quality of the athletic experience. Since each of these factors influences the quality of the athletic experience and their rankings represent their relative importance, this question will serve as a proxy for measuring the quality of the athletic experience.

Below are the results and analysis pertaining to each factor that the student athletes had to rank by level of importance in their college decision process:

Team’s National Rank

A team’s national ranking is often associated with many other factors that, overall, encompass a student athlete’s quality of experience. Two of these factors are the quality of recruits and the quantity of athletic gear, apparel, and accessories given to higher ranked teams.

NCAA Football illustrates that the highest ranked athletics programs receive the best recruit classes for incoming football student athletes. For the 2017 signing day, the 2016 national championship runner-up team, University of Alabama, earned top honors for the top recruiting class for the 2017-2018 season according to scout.com. University of Georgia, University of Michigan, Ohio State University, and USC rounded out the top five for having the strongest recruiting classes for the upcoming season.²⁸ Four of these five programs were ranked within the final top 25 national ranking for the 2016 NCAA Football season.²⁹

²⁸ (Trieu, 2017)

²⁹ (Rankings - College Football Playoff, 2016)

Higher ranked teams often receive better equipment from athletic sponsors like Nike, Under Armour, and Adidas. When teams qualify for post-season play or are invited to the national championship, they receive new uniforms, shoes, and other equipment prior to their games. This year Adidas unveiled a brand new line of jerseys for sale and promoted the line by outfitting all Adidas sponsored schools in the NCAA Men's Basketball March Madness Tournament.³⁰

Since a team's national ranking impacts many components of an athlete's quality of experience, I wanted to see if the formation of the NCAA Autonomy group has altered the number of Power 5 and not Power 5 schools in national rankings. To do this I looked at the teams in the top 16, quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals of the NCAA national championships in five Division I sports: women's indoor volleyball, women's soccer, men's tennis, men's basketball, and football. I looked at the NCAA national championship data from 2015 (the year the Autonomy Group was established), 2012, 2007, 2002, and 1997. For Football, I used the final AP Poll for the designated athletic season as the top 16 team rankings due to the slightly different national championship tournament organization.

Based on the data collected, the Power 5 schools have dominated national championship tournaments since 1997. In 2007, 2012, and 2015 only one school not part of the Autonomy Group made it to the semifinals of the national championship tournament out of the four sports in the secondary research study. There is slightly better representation of non-Power 5 schools in national championships in 2002 and 1997, but the majority of teams competing in the national championships still hailed from the Power 5 conferences. Since the Power 5 dominates most of the teams competing in the national championship, there is not much more of an opportunity for

³⁰ (Boone, 2017)

the creation of the Power 5 to further skew the number of Power 5 vs non Power 5 teams in the top 16 in the national championships.

2015

Sport	Round of 16		Quarter Finals		Semi Finals		Finals	
	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not
W Volleyball	12	4	7	1	4	0	2	0
W Soccer	14	2	8	0	4	0	2	0
M Tennis	14	2	8	0	4	0	2	0
M Basketball	13	3	7	1	4	0	2	0
Football	15	1						
Average	13.25	2.75	7.5	0.5	4	0	2	0

2012

Sport	Round of 16		Quarter Finals		Semi Finals		Finals	
	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not
W Volleyball	14	2	8	0	4	0	2	0
W Soccer	12	4	7	1	4	0	2	0
M Tennis	14	2	7	1	3	1	2	0
M Basketball	12	4	7	1	4	0	2	0
Football	15	1						
Average	13	3	7.25	0.75	3.75	0.25	2	0

2007

Sport	Round of 16		Quarter Finals		Semi Finals		Finals	
	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not
W Volleyball	12	4	7	1	4	0	2	0
W Soccer	14	2	6	2	4	0	2	0
M Tennis	16	0	8	0	4	0	2	0
M Basketball	12	4	7	1	4	0	2	0
Football	13	3						
Average	13.5	2.5	7	1	4	0	2	0

2002

Sport	Round of 16		Quarter Finals		Semi Finals		Finals	
	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not
W Volleyball	12	4	6	2	3	1	2	0
W Soccer	11	5	5	3	2	2	0	2
M Tennis	14	2	6	2	4	0	2	0
M Basketball	13	3	6	2	4	0	2	0
Football	14	2						
Average	12.5	3.5	5.75	2.25	3.25	0.75	1.5	0.5

1997

Sport	Round of 16		Quarter Finals		Semi Finals		Finals	
	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not	Power 5	Not
W Volleyball	13	3	5	3	3	1	2	0
W Soccer	8	8	4	4	2	2	1	1
M Tennis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M Basketball	13	3	7	1	4	0	2	0
Football	16	0						
Average	8.5	3.5	4	2	2.25	0.75	1.25	0.25

Scholarship/Cost of Attendance

According to the survey, 54% of student athletes consider their scholarship offer as one of the top three factors in choosing to attend a specific university and 23% listed scholarship as their top factor in the college decision process. With over half of the respondents emphasizing scholarship money in deciding what college to attend, scholarship likely affects the student's perception of a quality athletic experience while enrolled in the university.

Scholarship Decision Factor			
Importance	Overall	Power 5	Not Power 5
Top 3	54%	50%	57%
4 to 6	30%	38%	14%
7 to 8	12	13%	29%

For athletes not in the Power 5, scholarship appeared more frequently as a top 3 factor in the college decision process. A possible explanation for this could be that these athletes did not consider a team's national rank as significant of a factor in the college decision process. Schools outside of the Power 5 are much less likely to be highly ranked or play in a national championship. Since the Autonomy group has authority to make financial aid adjustments, it will be interesting to see if scholarships will play a larger or smaller role in the college decision making process in the future.

One of the Autnomy Group's first new rule additions was adding the cost of attendance allowance to the full scholarship amount, which went into effect in August 2015. The cost of attendance allowance helps athletes pay for gas, travel, phone bills, and other miscellaneous costs associated with attending a university. In my survey, I asked how significant a factor the cost of attendance stiped, which differs at each university, was in the college decision making process. The data in the chart below includes only first year and second year eligibility students who have started their eligibility since the new rule was enacted. From the 29 responses gathered, only 10% of the Power 5 athletes claimed that the cost of attendance was a top 3 factor in their college deicison making process. This is much lower than the 50% observed from the scholarship factor.

Cost of Attendance Decision Factor		
Importance	Overall	Power 5
Top 3	7%	10%
4 to 6	7%	10%
7 to 8	25%	27%

Overall only 10% of Power 5 respondants and 7% overall respondants indicated that the cost of attendance was a top 3 factor in their decision process. If this number grows over time, then the universities and sports that do not provide the cost of attendance allowance for their athletes may see a shift in the level of talent they recruit. This is assuming that the most talented athletes typically receive scholarships and would be more likely to receive cost of attendance expense from at least a few of the schools they are considering attending.

University's Academic Rank

The University's Academic Rank is one of the most important factors for student athletes when considering what university to attend. Of all of the responses, 39% of the athletes said that the university's academic rank was the most important factor when considering what college to

attend. In fact, 67% of survey participants claimed that it was a top three factor in why they chose a specific university to attend. While a university's academic rank is an important to making a college decision and to measuring the overall quality of the collegiate experience, the Power 5 has very little to influence over the academic operations of a university.

In the survey, athletes were asked if their athletic department provided an academic study hall area and if the department offered tutoring services. Only three of the twenty-three universities do not have an academic study hall area and/or a tutor program. The three schools that do not have those resources are also schools outside of the Power 5: UNLV, Incarnate Word, and Harvard. Based on the sample data presented, the Power 5's larger budget makes investing in a student-athlete's academic success more feasible and practically a guarantee. Due to its significance in the overall decision process for athlete recruits, having an academic study hall and tutors or the lack thereof might weigh heavily on a college decision. If all Power 5 schools provide academic facilities but not all Division I schools do, then the Power 5 could earn the competitive advantage in recruiting new players. However, it is important to note that not all players at Power 5 schools care about their academic performance, which would render this factor ineffective in measuring the quality of an athletic experience.

Athletic Facilities

The average importance of athletic facilities in the college decision-making process for student athletes was a five out of eight according to the survey results. The quality of athletic facilities likely took on a different meaning for each student athlete depending upon his or her sport. For example, Football players probably consider that their athletic facility is the football stadium and track athletes consider the track their performance arena. However, football players might measure quality in terms of the size of their stadium whereas track athletes might consider

the quality of their weight room of higher importance than their track, especially track athletes that rarely compete at home like football athletes do. Moreover, some sports, like golf, do not have their own facility, which could influence the rank of facilities in an athlete's overall expectation of quality of experience.

Voice in athletic experience

A basic human desire is to be heard and understood. For that reason, all survey participants

"Yes, I have a voice"	
P5	79%
NP5	61%

were asked to answer whether or not they felt they had a voice on their team or within their athletic experience at their university. More student athletes from Power 5 schools said that they believed they had a voice in their athletic experience. There are many different contributing factors to why an athlete feels they have a voice in athletics at their university. Rather than understanding the fundamental drivers of having a voice, it is important that more Power 5 athletes believe they have a voice. This will be an interesting pattern to follow in the future, as more student athletes are asked to get involved with the Autonomy Group in modifying existing and creating new regulations for the Power 5 schools.

Coaching Staff

The student athletes surveyed ranked the coaching staff on average a six out of 8 in terms of overall importance in making their college decision. According to the assumptions made during the research process this means athletes do not think that coaching has a significant impact on the quality of an athletic experience. Only seven of the seventy-nine respondents said that the coaching staff was a top three factor in their college decision process.

Besides asking about the importance of the coaching staff in making their college decision, the student athletes were asked about the number of coaches they had and whether or

not that number has fluctuated in the past twelve months. Every athlete responded that he or she had both a head coach and an assistant coach. Two of the athletes at a Power 5 university said that they did not have a coach for their given skill or specialty in their respective sport. No such comments were made by any non-Power 5 athletes. Another two athletes said that they lost an assistant coach who was replaced by a new assistant coach this academic year. Eight respondents said that their teams added graduate assistants or additional assistant coaches within the past twelve months. Overall, the net number of coaches per team has grown or remained constant for every team represented in this survey.

Correlation and Regression Analysis

After analyzing each of the above variables independently using observational data, it is important to understand the statistical significance of each factor in the quality of the athletic experience. To find the statistical significance of each factor I first set up a model with dependent and independent variables. Using this model, I ran correlations and regressions of the variables together as well as independently to better understand the data. Before evaluating the results, it is important to understand the dependent and independent variables in the model.

In the model, the dependent variable resembles the overall quality of the athletics experience as best as possible. Using the assumptions above, the factors in making a college decision are similar to the factors used in evaluating the quality of experience. Specifically the ratio of the national rank of the athlete's team to the university's overall athletic performance helps determine the athlete's perception of his or her team's overall treatment relative to the athletic department. As stated above in the "Team's National Rank" section, generally a higher ranked team will receive additional new gear and potentially other benefits from the athletic department. The result will likely be at least a neutral or positive overall effect on the quality of

experience. Since both of these factors are performance based, this thesis assumes that performance is heavily related to the quality of the athletic experience.

The independent variables are the university's academic rank; the athlete's scholarship amount; the team's coaching staff; the university's status as Power 5 school; and the athlete's gender. The Power 5 and Gender independent variables are based on yes or no responses. A "yes", which means the athlete attends a Power 5 school, is designated as a "1" in the data set. When an athlete recorded her gender as female, the survey recorded the response as a "1" in the data set. A male athlete is designated as a "0" in the data set. Since the university's overall athletic performance and the team's national rank comprise the ratio for the dependent variable, neither of those are independent variables. In addition, both the "other" category and the cost of attendance factors were excluded for two main reasons. First, those factors had little to no statistical significance when evaluating the overall influence on the quality of the athletic experience. Second, due to the ranking nature of the question, eliminating two variables helps minimize the correlations between the data. In a rank-type question, when one factor ranks higher, it automatically assumes the other choices are lower. Therefore, rankings are highly correlated to each variable, which could create potential errors in the data when trying to isolate and evaluate each independent variable.

Before regressing the data, I first created a correlation matrix to evaluate the relationship of each variable to one another. The highest correlation occurs between the Power 5 and University's Academic Rank variables. This means that the surveyed athletes who placed importance on the university's academic rank were also more likely to attend a school with a Power 5 designation. The most powerful negative correlations are between the University's Academic Rank and Scholarship Amount variables as well as the University's Academic Rank

and Athletic Facilities variables. For every increase in the relative importance of the university's academic rank in quality of experience, there is a relative decrease in importance of the scholarship amount and quality of athletic facilities. One possible explanation for this negative correlation could be that students who emphasized academic rank focus more on academics than on athletics for their collegiate career. Moreover, athletes who highly value their athletic scholarship might place less value or importance on academics to focus on their athletic performance.

Correlation Matrix							
	National Rank/ University's Overall Athletic Performance	University's Academic Rank	Scholarship Amount	Athletic Facilities	Coaching Staff	Power 5	Gender
National Rank/ University's Overall Athletic Performance	1	0.003367568	0.036495318	-0.090383461	0.16303024	-0.043305987	-0.014806582
University's Academic Rank	0.003367568	1	-0.307363288	-0.333533301	-0.158900467	0.352268778	-0.084140127
Scholarship Amount	0.036495318	-0.307363288	1	0.021136219	-0.106420159	-0.100648921	-0.022755556
Athletic Facilities	-0.090383461	-0.333533301	0.021136219	1	-0.076026608	-0.06619445	-0.094966372
Coaching Staff	0.16303024	-0.158900467	-0.106420159	-0.076026608	1	-0.073303735	0.006922698
Power 5	-0.043305987	0.352268778	-0.100648921	-0.06619445	-0.073303735	1	-0.196863998
Gender	-0.014806582	-0.084140127	-0.022755556	-0.094966372	0.006922698	-0.196863998	1

The highest and lowest correlations in the matrix are no more than 35% positively or negatively correlated to another variable. This could indicate that the variables are not highly correlated; however, as one variable changes in rank that automatically affects all other variables in the overall rank. If I were to run this survey again, I would ask the relative importance of each factor on its own scale from 1 to 10. Therefore, the relationships between each independent variable would be more accurate in a correlation analysis. Performing a regression with each of these independent variables also reveals new information about impact each variable has on the quality of the athletic experience.

Regression Results				
	Multiple r	0.1967		
Variable	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
National Rank/ University's Overall Athletic Performance	1.1947	1.1882	1.0055	0.3181
University's Academic Rank	0.0212	0.0748	0.2832	0.7779
Scholarship Amount	0.0298	0.0596	0.5006	0.6182
Athletic Facilities	-0.0523	0.0929	-0.5630	0.5752
Coaching Staff	0.1131	0.0819	1.3814	0.1715
Power 5	-0.1104	0.2843	-0.3884	0.6989
Gender	-0.0770	0.3348	-0.2301	0.8187

By regressing each variable against the ratio of national rank to the university's overall athletic performance one can understand how each factor changes the ratio: a change in ratio represents a change in the quality of the athletic experience. For example, as the coaching staff increases importance by one rank level the ratio of national rank to university's overall athletic performance increases by 0.113 (from the coefficients column in the regression). While an increase in rank of coaching staff increases the ratio, an increase in rank of athletic facilities by one rank decreases the ratio 0.052. However, data indicates we can only be 82.9% confident that an increase in coaching staff with increase the ratio by 0.113. We can only be 42% confident that an increase in athletic facilities will decrease the ratio of national rank the university's overall athletic performance by 0.052. When considering the confidence level, neither of these relationships satisfy the 95% confidence level for proof used in statistics. In conclusion, the results from the regression indicate that there is little statistical significance to the data collected in my survey being able to explain the quality of the athletic experience beyond an 82.9% confidence level. Sample errors, the interdependence of the variables and many other errors could be at fault for the errors and lack of significance of the data collected.

Implications

Although the statistical significance of the data collected does not fulfill the 95% confidence level, the survey results still contribute the research into the Power 5's effect on the quality of the Division I athletic experience. First, the survey data collected stems from the student-athlete population rather than the administrative, coaching, or academic populations involved in university academics or the National Collegiate Athletics Association. Second, the observational data from my survey can point to nuances and outlier data or it can point to the start of a new trend because of the Power 5.

It is important to keep in mind that the implementation of the Autonomy Group is still quite new in the NCAA and very little data has been collected or published since the group's formation. Further, many new rule implementations will affect athletes in the 2017-2018 academic year, and the effects of these rules will not be measureable for at least another two years. Still the data gathered in this thesis can help academics and non-academics understand the relative importance of the factors student athletes consider in the quality of their athletic experience.

For people outside of the academic realm, like the university athletic directors, the Power 5 decision committee, and NCAA committee members, the results of the survey can play a factor in deciding what new rules the Power 5 should or should not implement. For instance, the committees should consider how new Power 5 rules will positively or negatively affect a student athlete's academic performance. According to the survey, 39% of student athletes consider their university's academic rank as the top factor in which college to attend while another 67% considered it a top three factor in their decision process.

Based on the results of my research on the number of student athletes in the NCAA since the formation of the Power 5, the public and NCAA committees now know that the overall number of student athletes has increased. More student athletes who played a sport in high school are competing at the NCAA level this year than two or three years ago. Additionally, the slight decreases in the number of Division I student athletes in some female sports is not taking place within Power 5 schools, but rather with other Division I schools. Also, the public arguments claiming that student athletes might pick one athletic program over another due to the differences in cost of attendance stipends is disproven. Based on my survey results the cost of attendance is not a significant factor in the college decision process or the quality of the athletic experience.

Within the academic realm, researchers can conduct more studies to isolate each factor in the quality of the athletic experience to accurately analyze the individual influence each has on the overall quality of the athletic experience. Although the participation rate only slightly decreased at the Division I level over the past two academic years, a focus group on these sports could reveal whether or not the changes are a result of the Power 5 formation or another factor. Another study could examine the significance of scholarship in a student athlete's college decision process and perception of the quality of athletic experience. For athletes not in the Power 5, scholarship appeared more frequently as a top 3 factor in the college decision process. Ultimately, the primary and secondary data presented in this thesis lay the foundation for additional research projects in the academic realm.

Conclusion

The research conducted in this thesis seeks to answer two fundamental questions:

1. How will the Power 5 affect the number of high quality student athletes?

2. How will the Power 5 affect the high quality student-athlete experience?

Based on the data from the 2014-2015 and the 2015-2016 school years, one Power 5 conference added both a men's and women's golf team and no sports were cut in the Power 5 conferences. Nevertheless, the number of high quality student athletes has fallen 0.10% each of the last two years at the Division I level. This indicates that the Power 5 schools have not cut athletic programs due to their new designation as a Power 5 school. The slight decrease in the number of Division I athletes occurred at universities not a part of the Power 5. It is undetermined whether the Power 5 was an influencing factor in the decrease in student athletes at these universities. Regardless, a higher percentage of high school student athletes compete on an NCAA (Division I- Division III) athletic team now than two years ago. Overall, there has likely been little impact on the number of high quality student athletes due to the formation of the Autonomy Group.

Based on observational data, there are very few negative comments about student-athlete experiences negatively changing over the past two years. The most statistically significant factor in measuring athletic experience quality, the coaching staff, is associated with increases in coaching staff counts rather than decreases. When the Power 5 group formed, student athletes received more voting power and seats on governing committees within the Division I. All of the students surveyed agree that student athletes should sit on the governance committees. Furthermore, more Power 5 student athletes believe they have a voice in their athletic experience. Therefore, the Power 5's decision to add more student athletes to governance committees and give them more voting power seems to have a ripple effect into student athletes across the Power 5 conferences. Although the data is not statistically significant, there are positive indicators that favor the Power 5 increasing the overall quality of the athletic experience.

Overall, the research stated in this thesis indicates that the Power 5 has either had a neutral or positive impact on the number high quality athletes and the high quality athletic experience. The newest modification to the NCAA and Division I athletics system, the formation of the Power 5 Conferences, appears positive. Nonetheless, like anything in life, only time will tell if the Power 5 will continue to enhance or become a detriment to the number of high quality athletes and the high quality athletic experience.

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