ADMINISTRATOR MANUAL

Best Practices for Improving Parent Involvement in Intercollegiate Athletics









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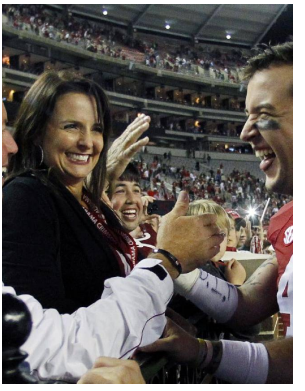
Forward



The transition from high school to college is a salient ecological shift in emerging adults' lives that has important implications for shaping students' success and well-being. This process is even more complex for student-athletes, who perceive a tremendous amount of pressure to succeed athletically and academically. For instance, researchers have found that many college student-athletes experience academic difficulties due to a lack of time and energy associated with their sport involvement. Student-athletes are also at a greater risk than non-athletes to experience drug and alcohol abuse and social anxiety. Furthermore, student-athletes are more likely to engage in other risky behaviors and experience higher levels of depression than their non-athlete peers.

Because parents continue to play an important supportive role for athletes during emerging adulthood, it is surprising that researchers have yet to fully explore the impact of parent involvement on student-athlete development during the college transition. The maintenance of connections to parents during emerging adulthood, however, poses challenges for renegotiating the type and level of parent involvement during this developmental stage. Seminal theories of college student development placed parents at the periphery of socialization influences; however, in line with cultural and demographic shifts that emphasize active parenting throughout the transition to adulthood, recent theories of college student development have increasingly accounted for the role of parents in student development. Despite this theoretical redefinition of the parental role, empirical work has yet to operationalize key parent involvement factors or identify links between parent involvement and student outcomes, especially among NCAA student-athletes.





As parents have become core components of student development, colleges and universities have sought to cater to the increasing presence of parents in students' lives. The University of Minnesota's biannual survey of parent programs reveals a drastic increase in the percentage of institutions providing parent services. Despite this, researchers have failed to fully operationalize parent involvement during college. This has led to incompatibility between parent program implementation and empirical research. In sport, a number of programmatic interventions have been utilized with NCAA student-athletes; however, these programs have focused on education and intervention at the athlete level and have yet to account for the role of parents in student-athlete development. This is an important gap to address, as parent involvement has been linked to both student-athlete distress and success. Given the lack of an operational definition of parent involvement, especially among student-athletes, as well as the mixed findings regarding the impact of parent involvement on student-athlete outcomes, research is warranted to clearly identify key parent involvement factors that are associated with positive student-athlete development.

To fill this gap, the present research was designed to provide a systematic, evidence-based parent education program for practitioners in an effort to enhance academic success, athletic satisfaction, well-being, and individuation in college student-athletes. As a first step in achieving this aim, we sought key stakeholders' perceptions of core design components, barriers to feasibility, and expected outcomes of parent education in the setting of intercollegiate athletics. This *Administrator Manual* is the product of that effort and is a preliminary tool for intercollegiate athletic administrators to understand best practices in educating parents about involvement in the lives of their NCAA student-athletes.



About the Authors



Dr. Travis E. Dorsch is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development and Director of the Families in Sport Lab at Utah State University. A former NCAA All-American football player at Purdue University, Dr. Dorsch's research is focused on parent-child relationships in sport and the developmental impact of sport participation on children and families. His findings have been used by sport administrators, coaches, and parents to construct more developmentally appropriate sport contexts and to evaluate the role of parent involvement in organized sport.



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About the Authors



Ms. Logan K. Lyons is a doctoral student in the Family, Consumer, and Human Development Department at Utah State University. She is a Research assistant in the Utah State University Families in Sport Lab and works in a consulting role with the athletic department on campus. Her research targets the impact of family factors on the development of student-athlete individuation and motivation.



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About the Stakeholders

We recruited participants who could provide varied and detailed insights into the potential impact of evidence-based parent education in the setting of intercollegiate athletics, while maintaining a manageable sample size for in-depth qualitative analysis. Senior athletic administrators, head and assistant coaches, and directors of team operations were recruited to participate in the study. Study participants were recruited from these three groups because we sought to gain insights from key stakeholders with experience interacting with parents of NCAA student-athletes.

Ultimately, 29 participants were recruited from athletic departments at Utah State University (n = 13) and Purdue University (n = 16). In total, 22 males and 7 females participated, ranging in age from 27 to 65 years (Mean = 44.50). Participants were senior athletic administrators (n = 4), head coaches (n = 19), assistant coaches (n = 5), and directors of operations (n = 1). Of the 25 non-administrators, participants reported being associated with seven men's sports and six women's sports at the NCAA Division I level. Participants reported having been at their current institution for an average of 9.11 years (range = 1-37) and reported having worked in a similar capacity at a different NCAA-member institution for an additional 11.92 years (range = 0-37). The sample represented a primarily educated cohort of individuals with 17 participants having earned a bachelor's degree, 11 participants having earned a master's degree, and one participant having earned a doctoral degree.

Our Research Approach

We used a grounded theory approach to gain insight into key **STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS**. This afforded us the opportunity to highlight participants' experiences while showcasing the understandings of key stakeholders in intercollegiate athletics. In using this approach, themes and categories emerged from our interactions with key stakeholders. Stakeholders were framed not as sharing a single, objective reality, but as forging dynamic and contextually embedded personal understanding. Guided by this approach, interviews were based on pre-specified research questions, but remained flexible based on participants' knowledge and experiences.

Participants took part in **ONE-ON-ONE, SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS** in the summer of 2014. Through these interviews, we aimed to glean key stakeholder perceptions in two areas. First, we aimed to understand coach and administrator experiences of parent involvement in NCAA athletes' lives. Second, we aimed to understand how these individuals would structure parent education if given the opportunity. Specifically, we sought participant perceptions of core design components, barriers to feasibility, and expected outcomes of parent education in the context of NCAA Division I athletics.

Participant quotes were coded into specific themes and broader categories. First, the authors extracted raw data from interview transcripts. As a second step, the authors took these themes and organized them into coherent categories. Finally, the authors polished the data into an explanatory model, presenting the relationships between those themes in a visual way. The themes and categories have been synthesized to create a this *Administrator Manual* for NCAA-member institutions wishing to implement evidence-based parent education programming.

Stakeholders' Views

Thirty-nine descriptive themes illustrate administrator and coach perceptions of the numerous factors that could impact the successful implementation of evidence-based parent education in intercollegiate athletics.

Below, each theme is structured hierarchically into one of eight categories.

Categories
Themes

Negative Parent Involvement
- *Over involvement*
- *Under involvement*

Policy
- *Empower the athletes*
- *Sport is the coach's domain*
- *Communicate with parents*
- *Understand the transition*
- *Facilitate parent-child communication*
- *Educate parents*

Barriers (to educational programming)
- *University buy-in*
- *Feasibility*
- *Timing*
- *Funding*

Educational programming
- *Timing*
- *Program content*

Barriers (to positive parent involvement)
- *Appropriate voice*
- *Parent buy-in*
- *Appropriate message*

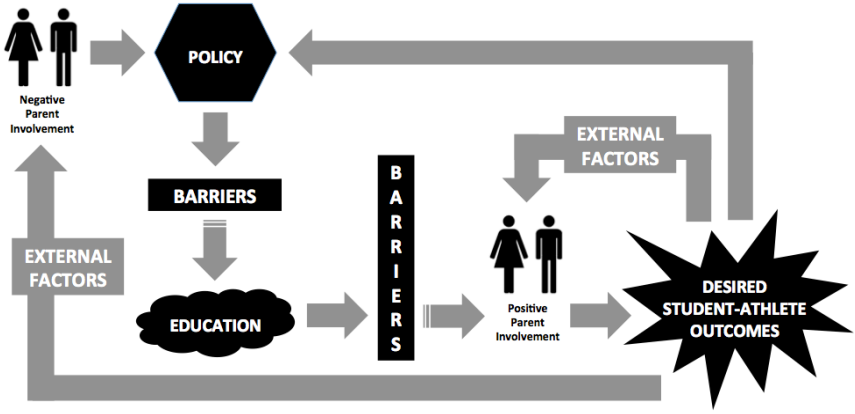
Positive Parent Involvement
- *Appropriate support*
- *Facilitative involvement*

Desired student-athlete outcomes
- *Student-athlete excellence*
- *Preparation for life after sport*
- *Transition to adulthood*
- *Independence*
- *Confidence*
- *Balance*
- *Family synergy*
- *Enhanced performance*
- *Less pressure*
- *Enjoyment*

External factors
- *Family location*
- *Generation*
- *Competitiveness*
- *Class in school*
- *Student-athlete sex*
- *Family dynamics*
- *Sport culture*
- *Parenting culture*

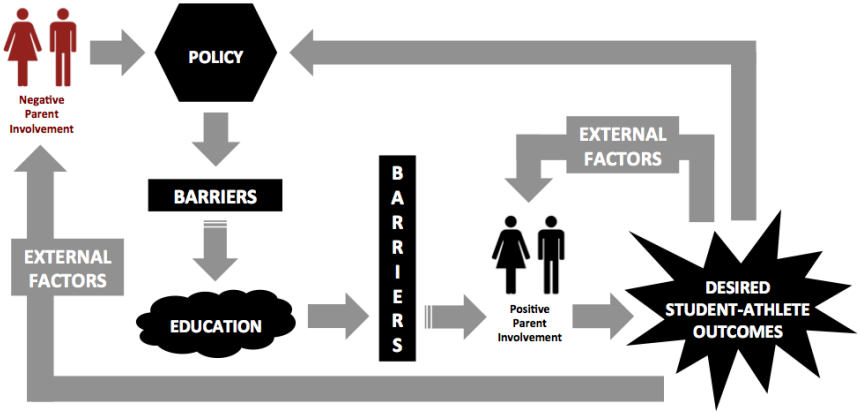
Concept Map

A concept map of evidence-based parent education in intercollegiate athletics, informed by interviews with administrators, coaches, and directors of operations is offered below. These stakeholders described **NEGATIVE PARENT INVOLVEMENT** as the primary reason for the creation of **POLICY** at the institutional and NCAA level. Despite this, stakeholders described multiple **BARRIERS** that could impede the role policy plays in evidence-based **EDUCATION**. If educational programming is successfully implemented, additional **BARRIERS** were described that could limit its impact on **POSITIVE PARENT INVOLVEMENT**. However, stakeholders believed that if positive parent involvement is achieved, **DESIRED STUDENT-ATHLETE OUTCOMES** will be more likely to result from their participation in intercollegiate athletics. Impacting each of these factors are a number of **EXTERNAL FACTORS** related to student-athletes, parents, athletic departments, and universities.



On the subsequent pages, direct quotations from key stakeholders are shared within our study narrative to illustrate meaning of particular themes and categories, as well as the relationship between categories. Specifically, we will walk administrators through our concept map, highlighting the categories that may impact administrators' decisions on how best to implement parent education in intercollegiate athletics.

Negative Parent Involvement



Parent involvement is often seen as a vital asset to an athlete's participation in sport. Throughout our interviews with coaches and administrators, the majority of them spoke of the importance of parental support and involvement throughout an athlete's career. However, most also expressed concern that **NEGATIVE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT** has the potential to inhibit student-athletes' experiences.

The two primary themes that emerged pertaining to the creation of policy were:

1. Over involvement

2. Under involvement



Over Involvement:

Intrusive behaviors as their children participate in intercollegiate athletics

A lack of respect for coach's role in mentoring the student-athlete on and off the field

Taking over major responsibilities of the student-athlete (e.g., communication with teachers and coaches, completing homework, running errands)

Placing **unnecessary pressure** on the student-athlete to achieve specific outcomes (e.g., playing status, grades)

"The more the parents want to see their kid succeed, and the more they probably find themselves getting involved. Unfortunately, I think selfishly some parents want to live through their kids..."

Male administrator

"You are an over involved parent when the kid (is) looking up in the stands to get feedback from their parents, more so than from their coaches. Over involved parents are the ones that are always trying to contact the coach to find out why their kid isn't playing..."

Male assistant coach, Football

Under Involvement:

Not present either not physically attending competitions, or being an absent emotional support to their child

Unavailable for communication

Parents show little to **no support** for their child's needs, either sport related or otherwise

Parents show **lack of interest** in their athlete's participation in their sport

Focused only on student's academic career rather than athletic participation (e.g., a parent who sees participation in sport as a way to earn a college degree)

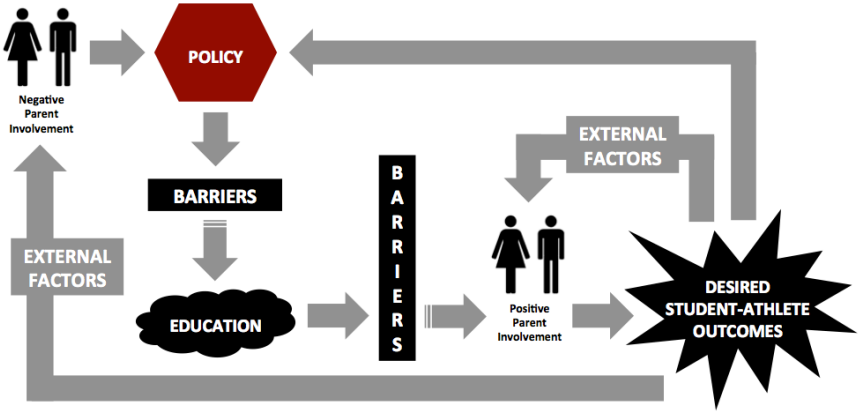
"You never see them at matches, which I think is difficult ... (and) if you do have to deal with a (school) issue, they don't really respond. There is generally no interaction between the coach and the parent (or) the player and the parent..."

Male head coach, Women's tennis

"(Many) parents, when you have a problem, don't call them. In my mind, those are the parents who, 'As long as I don't have to pay anything out of my pocket. As long as they aren't hurt, I don't really care...'"

Male head coach, Track and field

Policy



Participants were generally in support of implementing **POLICY** to address negative parent involvement in intercollegiate athletics. Collectively, participants discussed creating evidence-based policy to help guide parents' involvement behaviors. Specifically, coaches and administrators discussed wanting parents to become more aware of the potential negative impact of their involvement behaviors and to expose them to positive strategies of involvement and the outcomes associated with these behaviors.

The five primary themes that emerged pertaining to the creation of policy were:

1. ***Empower the athletes***
2. ***Sport is the coach's domain***
3. ***Understand the transition***
4. ***Facilitate parent-child communication***
5. ***Educate parents***



Empower the Athletes:

Parents can empower their student athletes in all aspects of life:

Allow athlete to **learn from their own mistakes**

Provide **advice** rather than solutions

Give athletes the opportunity to experience **independence**

"By letting the student-athlete speak for themselves and act for themselves, it makes them a stronger person when they are out in the world. (Sport) is a microcosm of life outside of school, professionally..."

Female administrator

"The best growth I have seen is when (my athletes) handle things that didn't go so well. The parents (can be) involved peripherally if necessary, but a lot of parents want to jump in and not let their child do it..."

Male head coach, Women's soccer

Sport is the Coach's Domain:

Parents need to become aware of their role, and be a parent to their athlete and allow the coach to coach:

Hand over the reins

Trust the coach to do the job they were hired to do

Be a parent and a fan, **NOT a coach**

"I love hearing parents, but coaching decisions are mine and my staff's ... I don't want to talk to (parents) about playing time. If there is a problem that I can help solve, I want to be involved, but I don't want parents to tell me I am screwing that up..."

Male head coach, Women's volleyball

"Let (your child) enjoy the experience. Let them be coached by people who have experience and have knowledge ... We aren't going to do it the same way you did it in your own house for the last 18 years, but we are doing it the right way or we wouldn't be in the position we're in ... So let us do our jobs and know that we're not perfect ..."

Male head coach, Men's golf

Communicate with Parents:

Coaches shared that in their experiences, parents are much more amicable and understanding when coaches:

Create expectations related to parent/coach communication

Create a **consistent and honest** communication environment between parent and coach

Create clear boundaries upfront

"I think making sure that (parents) immediately understand in the interaction with me what the line is. They have to understand what I am responsible for and what I will communicate with them about..."

Male head coach, Women's swimming

"I'm more than happy to have conversations with (parents) if there's a problem. However, I would expect I would have already spoken to their daughter about this problem prior to them reaching out to speak to me ... And, if we are to go and delve into it further, I would like your daughter to be present when we have this discussion so we're all on the same page..."

Male head coach, Women's soccer

Understand the Transition:

Parents need to become aware of the inevitable transition stage their athlete will go through in transitioning from high school to collegiate athletics:

Collegiate sport environment is a **unique and demanding world**, much different than high school

Transitioning from high school star to being one of the stars on a college team

Transitions unrelated to sport, changes in lifestyle related to being a new college student (e.g. academics, living on their own for the first time)

"I think parents are used to the performance of a senior year athlete, and when they see this dip they panic and they put more pressure on them..."

Male head coach, Men's golf

"Maybe their son isn't playing as much, and he is going through (adversity) for the first time. I am not saying that we as coaches always handle things right, but it's a tough situation for the student-athlete and for a parent to be in because they have been the best and the star and all of a sudden it's a bigger pond..."

Male head coach, Baseball

Facilitate Parent-Child Communication:

The majority of coaches support the involvement of parents as long as it doesn't impact the athlete negatively. The parent/child relationship could benefit from more efficient communication, and through better communication skills parents can become positive systems of support for their athlete:

How to give **constructive feedback** rather than criticism

When to give feedback to their athlete (e.g., not reiterating negatives after a loss)

Honest communication between parent and child

"The most positive message a parent can have for their student athlete is support ... Stay out of the everyday logistics and take more of a global stance..."

Male head coach, Women's tennis

"There is a way to give constructive feedback and a way to give positive feedback. Along with that, there is a time to give positive feedback and then there is a time to give negative feedback but it's not all the time. Most parents don't have the education part of it..."

Male head coach, Softball

Educate Parents:

Coaches and administrators realize that parents are entering a brand new experience. Therefore, parents could become much more efficiently involved if they were educated on what to expect and how they should interact with or react to entering collegiate athletics.

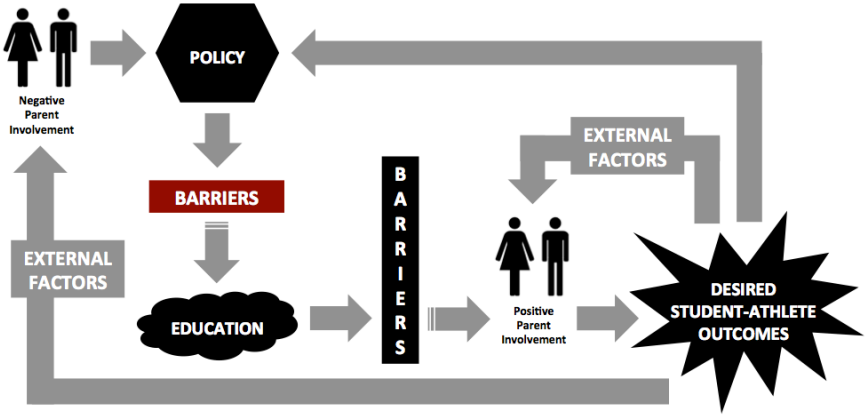
I don't think parents understand all that goes into being a student athlete, the time constraints and the travel and all that stuff. I think the (educational) program could be a tool (for) parents to do a little more work on the front end, before their kid is going to school, and understanding what their kid is getting into..."

Male head coach, Swimming & Diving

"I think it's about understanding what (the student-athlete's) time commitments are going to be and what their schedule is going to look like. I think understanding what that calendar looks like is big for parents..."

Male head coach, Wrestling

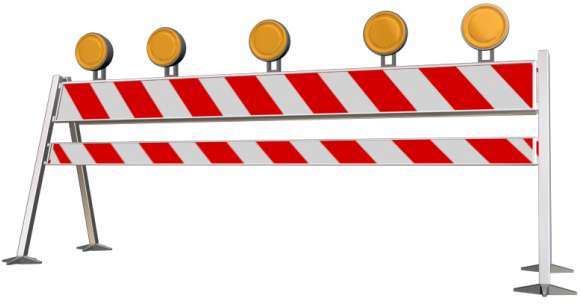
Barriers to Educational Programming



Despite the aforementioned policy considerations, coaches and administrators shared a number of potential **BARRIERS** related to the implementation of evidence-based parent education in the context of intercollegiate athletics.

The four primary barriers that emerged were:

1. ***University buy-in***
2. ***Feasibility***
3. ***Timing***
4. ***Funding***



University Buy-in:

In order for the program to be successful, the University as a whole has to be behind the program and its mission.

Consistent and complete support from the administration, coaches and any other support staff involved in the program

Creating ***one voice***, to exemplify the program's intention and procedures

"Time is huge for a coach because (parent education) can be quite time intensive. (The athletic department) would really have to be balanced against that if coaches are involved..."

Male head coach, Wrestling

"If the parent education program educated the parents in a way that (the university) or the coaches did not agree with ... then it's a negative..."

Male head coach, Women's swimming

Feasibility:

Feasibility describes the ability to put the policy into practice. Barriers include:

Variance in season starting dates, creates a barrier to when the program should occur, or be implemented

Parent locations (e.g., out of state parents aren't as accessible as local ones)

"I don't think anybody's ever going to change if they don't think there's something wrong. But if you throw out a net, you're going to catch who's willing to change. So I think that's it's a great way to reach a lot of people and you're going to influence some..."

Female assistant coach, Women's basketball

"I don't think implementing parent education is realistic because you are never going to get all the parents together, with out-of-state kids. We have about two-thirds that are from in-state, but even with that we have one Hawaiian, and her parents can't afford to come over more than once a year, for a game..."

Female head coach, Women's soccer

Timing:

Timing refers to the barriers that appear as a result of the age or class level (e.g., freshman versus senior) of the athlete during implementation:

> Administrators, coaches and directors believe the program would be most successful if implemented before and during an athlete's first year of participation:

"I think it is a build up. I think you start with some educational materials with the student-athlete. As we send out information, you start ... and then you have the punch line coming in a parent meeting to launch their student- athlete's freshman career..."

Male administrator

"I think freshmen's parents would be the best targets because they are almost like freshmen themselves. They always have big eyes, and a lot of questions and they want to do what they are supposed to do. I think they would love it. I think after the first year, parents aren't going to be too into it..."

Female assistant coach, Women's basketball

Funding:

Funding for non-mandated programs is always going to create a barrier. Most university athletic programs already have a lack of funding:

> Where would the athletic department receive **funding** from?

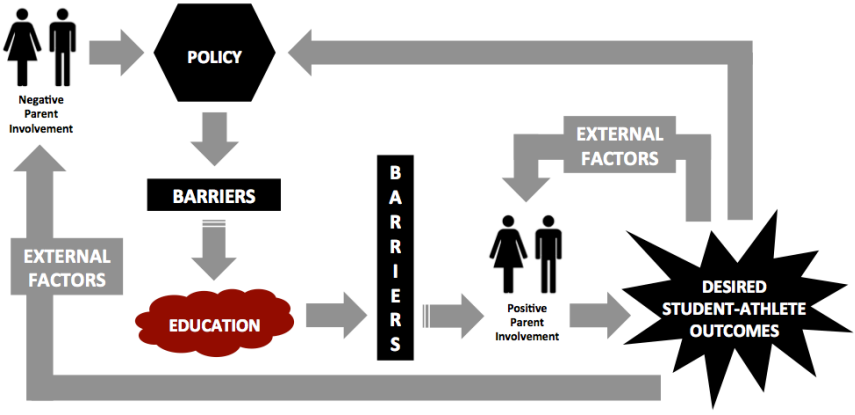
"Money is the biggest issue ... Is it coming from the NCAA, the athletic department, the parents themselves?"

Male head coach, Women's soccer

"Obviously funding money is always an issue, especially when you don't have any. It isn't an issue if you do but it becomes an issue when you don't..."

Male assistant coach, Men's basketball

Educational Programming



A primary goal of the present research was to highlight key stakeholders' opinions of to what parent education programming should look like in the context of intercollegiate athletics.

The two primary themes that emerged pertaining to evidence-based parent education were:

1. Timing

2. Program content



Timing:

Within the education category, **timing** refers to the time of year the program should be distributed to parents:

During the ***recruitment process***, as it is the initial interaction coaches will have with parents

Once the athlete displays ***commitment*** to the school

Throughout the athlete's career to ensure the parent is kept in the loop ***(multiple renditions of program)***

"I think as soon as the kid verbally commits to the school that something should be given to the parent like, ok here's how life has changed from this point forward for your son or daughter..."

Male director of operations, Men's basketball

"I think (education) has to happen in the recruiting process ... before the athletes even get here to campus, (parents) have to understand (what's) expected. I think it is tough to change all that stuff later when they are already here and Mom and Dad are already in their ear and stuff ... Earlier is better..."

Male head coach, Women's volleyball

Program Content:

The **content of the program** describes what the program would look like:

Relatable content (e.g. real-life examples)

Education should be directed at:

(a) Appropriate **sport parent roles**
(b) Awareness of **athlete's demanding schedule**
(c) Awareness of **parent impact on athlete outcomes**

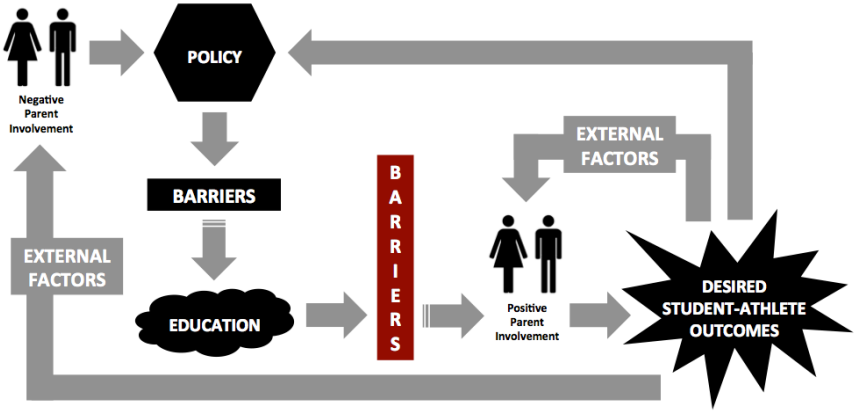
"I think you should talk about time management, so that the over involved parents are giving their kids the space that they need to be kids and to hear other voices and to be coached and to learn from the people..."

Male assistant coach, Men's basketball

"I think we live in a world where education is important. I compare (parent education) to telling my athletes not to eat certain foods. I can only educate them ... but then (I have to) allow them to make the decision..."

Female head coach, Women's gymnastics

Barriers to Positive Parent Involvement



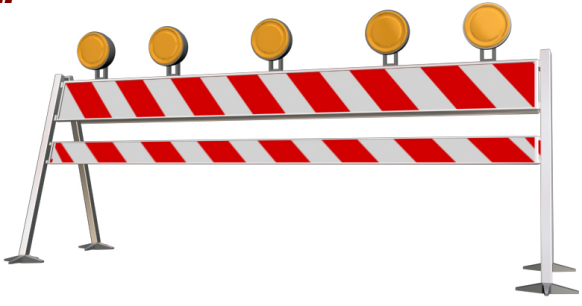
Despite the potential for parent educational programming to facilitate positive parent involvement, participants discussed a number of barriers that would have to be overcome to achieve this end.

The three primary barriers that emerged were:

1. Appropriate voice

2. Appropriate message

3. Parental buy-in



Appropriate Voice:

Appropriate Voice refers to the person who administrators and coaches felt would hold the most credible presence, and would be best to present the program to the parents: Participants varied on whom they thought would be the most appropriate voice to administer the parent educational programming:

Coach
Former student-athletes
Former sport parents
Sport psychologist

Administrators and coaches agreed it had to be a person close to the team, credible, trusted, and charismatic and that administrators should not be part of the program presentation.

"It'd have to be a role model, somebody that has been successful as an athlete, as a mentor, as a parent, as a community person -- somebody that had the values and the standards that the institution represented..."

Male head coach, Women's golf

"I think it has to come from coaches, because sometimes the message is lost if it's coming from someone else. There is direct interaction between the player and the coach..."

Male head coach, Football

Appropriate Message:

Creating an appropriate voice is only successful if the **message is also appropriate**:

Message of program must ***correlate to voice***

Focus on potential positive outcomes rather than the burden of the current involvement

"I think (parents) need a map, so that they see the whole picture. If they are a parent who is constantly hovering, they are only going to look at their own kid. Laying out what it does for the team, what it does for the coaches, and what it does for their performance..."

Female head coach, Gymnastics

"If the message is conveyed correctly, it would definitely be beneficial. I enjoy watching other coaches coach because I can take something from them ... but I don't want someone to tell me how to coach. Same thing, parents want to listen and take something, but don't want to be told how to parent..."

Female head coach, Softball

Parent Buy-in:

Parent buy-in becomes a large barrier in that parents are usually unable to see the impact their behavior has on their athlete's experiences. Often not seeing themselves as an inhibiting influence.

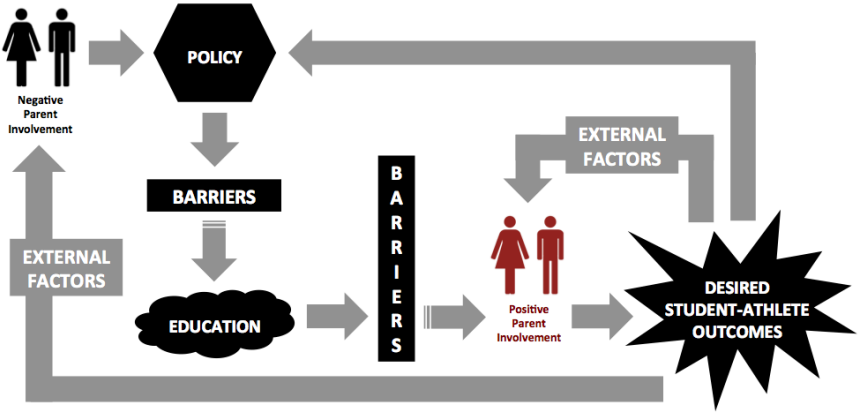
"Trying to convince parents that this will be something beneficial for them, that it might make their life easier. Maybe you have to deal with parents going, 'Wait, you're going to tell me how to parent?' 'No, I'm not telling you how to parent; we're simply trying to bring out issues that your child might face and perhaps offer ways for you to support your child without seizing control of (their) decisions' ... the danger to me is getting the parents to buy into that..."

Male head coach, Women's soccer

"I think you will get a great response from student-athletes, but I think you will get a percentage (of parents) that just don't do it because of time. So, maybe participation becomes one of the barriers. I don't think there is really any heavy barrier other than that..."

Male administrator

Positive Parent Involvement:



The primary goal of evidence-based parent education is positive parent involvement.

The two primary themes of positive parent involvement were:

1. Appropriate support

2. Facilitative involvement



Appropriate Support:

Appropriate support was described by the coaches, administrators and directors as behaviors that provide support to the student athlete:

Encourage independence

Support coaching staff and team roles

Be responsive and present to advocate when necessary

"Somebody that has a balance, and I think the balance comes from somebody that is involved enough to show their sons and daughters that they care, but not so involved that they become intrusive or meddling in the process. A supportive parent that is not over-bearing or over-stepping their bounds, and you can define that in a number of ways."

Male administrator

"Appropriate support occurs when a parent gives quality encouragement, support, and unconditional love for their child, regardless of their rate of achievement..."

Male head coach, Women's golf

Facilitative Involvement:

When parents support the student athlete in appropriate ways, they encourage their athlete's growth and they play a much more facilitative role in their athlete's experience:

Parents ***remain in the parent role*** and provide support that only a parent can

Supportive and encouraging of the athlete's needs

Allows the coach do their job, respects the boundary between coach and parent

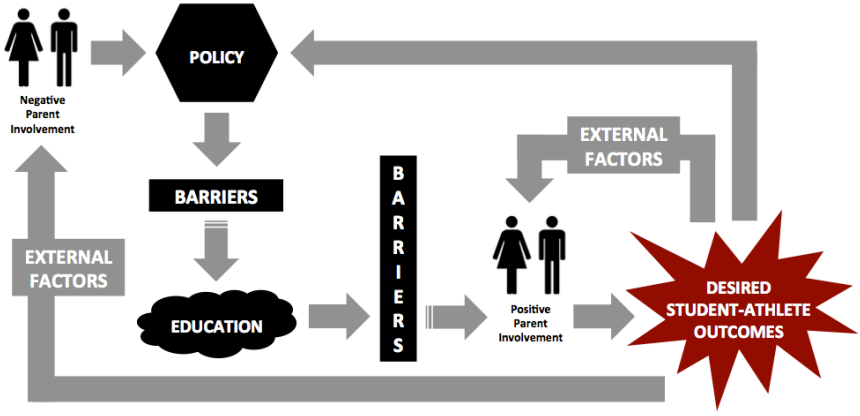
"I think where I've seen kids bloom the most (is with) parents who help facilitate it but it's not been their vision or their goal. Then, when the kids are in a place that has the coaching, the resources, (and) the scheduling, the kids really take off and bloom..."

Male head coach, Wrestling

"Somewhere along the lines your child is going to reach out to you and let you know that (being a student-athlete) is difficult. You have to support them, listen to them, and at the same time say, 'You have to learn to deal with it. That's the challenge, and that's what facilitates growth..."

Male head coach, Women's soccer

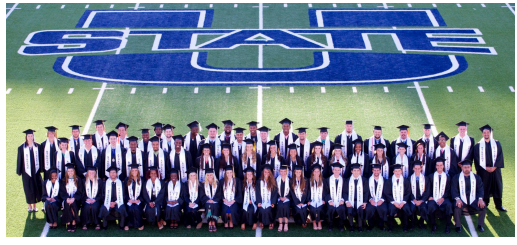
Desired Student-Athlete Outcomes



According to participants, positive parent involvement enhances the likelihood of desired outcomes in the student-athlete population.

The ten primary themes that emerged pertaining to desired student-athlete outcomes were:

1. ***Student-athetlte excellence***
2. ***Preparation for life after sport***
3. ***Transition to adulthood***
4. ***Independence***
5. ***Confidence***
6. ***Balance***
7. ***Family synergy***
8. ***Enhanced performance***
9. ***Less pressure***
10. ***Enjoyment***



Student-athlete excellence:

The administrators, coaches and directors loudly valued the desired outcome of excellence:

(a) ***Excellence in athletics***

(b) ***Excellence in academics***

(c) ***Excellence in life***

"What is our mission? Excellence in the classroom, and excellence on the fields of play ... (therefore) we are trying to improve the student athlete's experience, the wellness aspect, the mental healthiness piece, and their experience while they are in college. I feel (parent education) will be one more tool in the tool kit to advance our mission..."

Male administrator

"We are asking them to be competitive, we are asking them to go to class, to be disciplined, it is a whole process that we are taking these kids through..."

Male head coach
Women's volleyball

Preparation for Life After Sport:

With effective parent support, an athlete becomes more exposed to life lessons created by sport participation and is able to grow from them and apply them to the real world after sport

"I think we all want to win ... you are going to be competitive in life too, and you're not always going to win, so I mean it's the life skills that can be learned because of the sacrifices that you have to make..."

Male head coach, Baseball

"I believe athletics teaches you all the lessons you cannot get in the classroom -- effective communication, discipline, teamwork – (That's what) I love about college athletics, balancing life is still huge for these young men because for (wrestlers) there is no professional sport and so they have to have that degree and they have to have that balance and be prepared for life after college athletics..."

Male head coach, Wrestling

Transition to Adulthood:

Sufficient parent involvement encourages an athlete to become more independent and more self-sufficient, which will lead to a more productive adult

"Again, the biggest thing that I would like to see is players becoming self sufficient, advocating for themselves, that they grow up..."

Female head coach, Women's soccer

"Our goal in the four or five years we have them is to have them go from living at home with their parents to becoming educated, helping them learn to make the right choices. At the end of this, even if their parents love them, they don't want them coming back and living on the couch ... it's our job to transition them from a young adult living with (parents) to a young adult who is capable of excelling and living on their own..."

Male head coach, Women's softball

Independence:

When parents are able to step back, their athlete is able to become more responsible for their own lives and become more independent in their actions

"Our goal in those next four or five years is to have them go from living at home with their parents, to become educated and to help them learn how to make the right choices, because at the end of this, even if their parents love them, they don't want them coming back and living on your couch. WE say that right up front, it is our job to transition them from a young adult living with you to a young adult who is capable to excel and live on their own..."

Male head coach
Softball

"More positive (parent) involvement during the college years could make the student athlete more independent and better prepared to deal with their professional experiences..."

Female Administrator

Confidence:

Confidence is an attribute important to a successful athlete and is a characteristic that results from more appropriate parent involvement

"Being pushed to have good grades, being pushed to make sure and do better than what you did the day before ... It's going to lead, obviously, in my opinion this whole athletic side of it just allows you to handle all that stuff confidence-wise..."

Male assistant coach, Football

"I think (student-athletes) stop always going to talk to Mom and Dad about not getting enough playing time. It becomes, "I am going to just go talk to Coach about (it). I think they start to get a lot more confidence from that..."

Male head coach, Women's volleyball

Balance:

When parents become aware of the demands put on their student athlete, they are likely to balance the needs of the athlete with their own.

Parents who constantly contact their athlete every day after practice are likely to respect their time after they realize the daily demands put on the student-athlete.

"I have never known kids that were really happy and that they called home everyday. When they are really happy and they are doing their own thing it becomes a balance where they call home once a week just to check in with their parents..."

Male head coach, Men's tennis

"The more you educate and the more you try and reach parents about the do's or don'ts, and the rules, and what a student-athlete really needs and what really they don't need -- I cannot see that being anything but extremely helpful and positive..."

Female assistant coach, Women's basketball

Family Synergy:

When parents become more positively involved, the student athlete is going to feel more supported, creating more effective communication between athlete and parent, thereby enhancing the overall relationship within the family

"Hopefully parent education helps the relationship between the student-athletes and their parents..."

Male director of operations, Men's basketball

"There is more synergy between everybody when they understand their role and they are on the same page (as us)..."

Male assistant coach, Men's basketball

Enhanced Performance:

In addition to the multiple individual- and family-level outcomes desired by coaches and administrators, intercollegiate sport remains a results-oriented business. Therefore, one of the most important outcomes for student-athletes is enhanced sport performance. Participants mentioned that positive parent involvement is a key factor in student-athletes' on-field performance.

"There are some parents who affect their kids in a negative way and they certainly don't mean to and I don't know if they're aware of it or what not, but I think in that aspect, if educating that parent would help my student athlete's performance then absolutely..."

Male head coach, Men's golf

"Ultimately it comes down to the performance of the student-athlete, (and) the development and the mental maturation of the student-athlete ... I think if there is more understanding between a parent and a player, there is more developing taking place and more maturity being learned. So, I think there is lot to be gained from (positive parent involvement)..."

Male head coach, Baseball

Less Pressure:

One of the outcomes stressed most by coaches and administrators was limiting the pressure student-athletes feel from their parents to excel in sport. Through more positive involvement, participants felt that the pressure perceived by student-athletes would decrease.

"I think for the student-athlete, parent education (could) decrease the pressure on them. Maybe parents aren't realizing that they are putting some of that pressure on or that they are becoming a distraction, so there could be more focus on what the (parents) are doing..."

Male head coach, Baseball

"I think the biggest advantage would be taking away extra pressure from our student-athletes ... Parents are rarely patient and are used to having total control and are used to having their kid have total focus on his or her sport and it just doesn't work that way in college..."

Male head coach, Men's golf

Enjoyment:

The final desired outcome discussed by participants was to create a more enjoyable environment for student-athletes. Coaches and administrators contested that parents play a large role in making the student-athlete experience more enjoyable and argued that parents would be more likely to facilitate this outcome if they were more educated and aware of their impact on the life of their student-athlete.

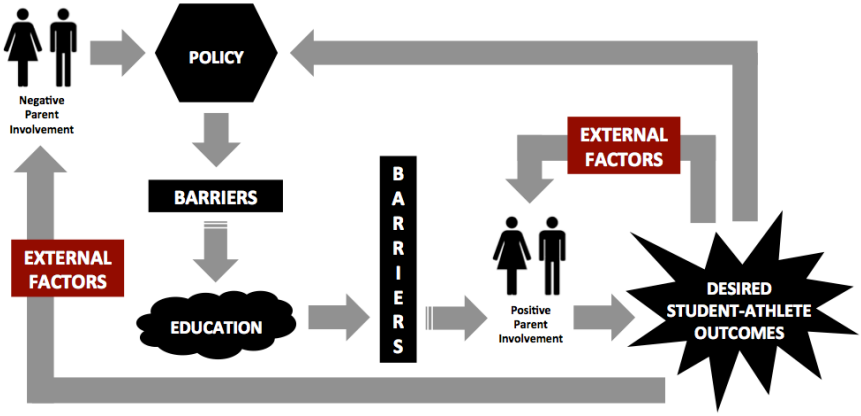
"I think the (primary) goal is for the kids to just enjoy the game. To allow us as coaches to implement what our plan is without having an outside influence counteract what we are trying to do..."

Male head coach, Softball

"Athletically, academically, overall just their experience with college would be better if the parents were more educated..."

Male head coach, Men's golf

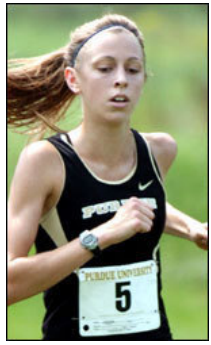
External Factors

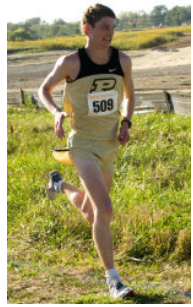


Several external factors were discussed in the qualitative interviews with the coaches and administrators that may moderate the effectiveness of parent involvement and/or policy implementation.

The following external factors were discussed with the highest frequency:

1. Family Location
2. Generation
3. Competitiveness
4. Class in school
5. Student-athlete gender
6. Family dynamics
7. Sport culture
8. Parenting culture





Family Location:

Family location depicts the physical geographic location of the family, and the distance between the athlete and their family seems to play a significant role in the parents' level of involvement:

Parents ***close in proximity***:
(a) Attend more competitions
(b) More vocal with coaching staff
(c) More involved in athlete's experience overall

Parents ***distant in proximity***:
(a) Rarely attend competitions, may only come to important events (e.g., Senior Night)
(a) Less involved in overall experience
(b) Less communicative with athletes

"Tailoring would be in the in-state versus out-of-state kids; because you then have the distance that will change the involvement a little bit..."

Female head coach, Women's soccer

"The American parents, because they are closer and they visit more, they will once in a while be calling and seeing what is going on. So those differences make the dynamic a little different..."

Male head coach, Men's tennis

Generation:

Generation is referring to the advancements in technology that allow for parents to have more access to the lives of their athletes. This constant access the parent has could be a factor in the intensity of involvement in current programs:

Cell phones allows parents to contact their athlete constantly

Social media sites allow for parents to keep tabs on the life of the athlete without the athlete's knowledge

Fan sites create an outlet for parents to vent about opinions pertaining to coaching staff or athlete that could have negative connotations

"The fact that the parents are so incredibly accessible now, you know, from text messages to emails. It's so hard to tell emotion in a text message or email. By the time I wrote a letter home or my parents,, by the time (my) parents got upset and called, I couldn't even remember what the issue was..."

Female administrator

"I think that with cell phones and technology they're almost too involved – to a fault – because the kid is not able to grow up and experience some things..."

Female head coach, Softball

Competitiveness:

Competitiveness is attributed to the pressures relevant to Division I athletics, and the impact that has on the parents.

Division I parents feel like there's more entitlement. It's all about, 'My daughter goes here,' and wearing the shirt and bragging about a scholarship. At Division II or III it's all about the work and the experience. Sometimes Division I parents are so competitive, so proud of where their daughter is ... 'My daughter's going here, and she's on a full ride...'

Female head coach
Softball

"The stakes are higher the stakes become higher as you move up; the number of patrons that are watching, the roles that the intercollegiate program plays all affect it... I think the parents play into that, the higher the stress, the more the parents want to see their kid succeed and the more they probably will find themselves getting involved. Unfortunately, selfishly, some parents want to live through their kids. The kids can sense that and I feel that it happens more frequently at the Division I level than it would at the others..."

Male administrator

Class in School:

Class is really related to the school classification level (e.g., Freshmen – Seniors) of the athlete. Participants noted this can have a strong influence on a student's interactions with their parents:

Athletes **communicate less** with parents as they age

Upper class athletes **become less dependent** on parents (e.g., a senior is more comfortable talking directly to the coach)

"Someone who's a freshman, I might communicate with the parent a lot more than someone who is a senior. For two reasons: they don't need the information because the kid should learn how to do those things, and the older the student gets, the less they want the parent involved..."

Male head coach, Track and field

"You see them a lot freshman year, you see them a lot senior year. The middle years not so much ... In the beginning, they come to visit a lot, they're very involved ... you see less and less of the parents until it becomes the senior year and then you see them almost all the time again, because now it's coming to a close and they're starting to realize 'this is it'..."

Female assistant coach, Women's basketball

Student-Athlete Sex:

The **Sex** of the student athlete seems to play a role in they way the parent is involved in their participation in sport:

Female athletes:

(a) Parents are more vocal
(b) Females are more likely to internalize negativity
(c) Female specific sports cultivate parent involvement (e.g., softball girls are often coached by their Dad)

Male athletes:

(a) Parents allow athlete to advocate for self
(b) Males are more likely to externalize reactions

"Females have a lot more needs than males. We are a little more high maintenance..."

Female assistant coach
Women's basketball

"For the most part, male athlete parents are less involved in the standpoint of communication with administration and coaches. They allow their student athlete to really do more of the communication. Where female student athlete parents are really more involved in sharing their opinions with administration and coaches and/or speaking for their student athlete instead of having their kid talk for themselves..."

Female administrator

Family Dynamics:

Family dynamics refers to the established dynamic the family is accustom to, which doesn't change as the child enters college.

If a child was raised in a home of continuous involvement they are likely to want that continuous parent involvement to continue.

No family is going to need the same things, creating an obvious moderator to involvement.

"You are dealing with a spectrum of parents ... I think 'helicopter parent' has such a bad connotation but it works for some players and I think everybody's family has a different dynamic..."

Female head coach, Women's soccer

"I do believe that it's probably a continuum of what has been going on in that student-athlete's life coming through high school (and) junior high. So I don't see that dramatically changing ... so I think the interaction and the tie that parents have with their student-athlete makes a big difference into the experiences that those student-athletes receive, positively and negatively..."

Male head coach, Women's soccer

Sport Culture:

In creating and implementing a parent program, a factor to consider is the variation in sport specific needs:

Each sport has its own demands for its athletes that impact parent involvement (e.g., baseball has 25-30 home games per season whereas swimmers may only have one chance to compete at home)

Parent involvement expectations vary among sport venues (e.g., a parent at a golf match can be in close proximity to players versus a parent at a basketball game who must remain in the stands)

Individualized sports vary greatly from team focused sports (e.g., track versus football)

"In softball, tennis, (and other sports), the parents are more actively involved in coaching the skill sets. In volleyball, they go to club so they have been with a coach for a long time as opposed to their parent being their coach..."

Female administrator

"I honestly believe that every sport is different. They have their own little tendencies. Not always, but (different sports) can be different, so I think you have to tailor (parent education) a little bit.

Male head coach, Wrestling

Parenting Culture:

The **parenting culture** in general is too intense, parents have the best of intentions, wanting what is best for their child. However, in most cases they are too involved in the lives of their children, wanting to do everything for them. This over involvement spills over into the athletic arena and in most cases negatively impacts their experience. The moderator here is this is the current parent culture norm, making it harder to change the parent behavior in the athletic environment.

"Schools have accommodated (parents) because their children were so talented athletically. They've played on AAU teams, club baseball, club soccer – and parents pay the coaches … so the parents are in control of the environments in which their children participate. (College) is perhaps the first environment that those children go to that the parents aren't in control…"

Male head coach, Women's soccer

"It's out of control when they get to us. It is hard to flip them because now parents are like, 'why isn't he playing?' 'He is not playing cause he shouldn't be playing.' So, don't be one of those parents. But it happens everywhere…"

Male head coach, Football

Conclusion

In line with our specific aim, the proposed research provides key stakeholders' perceptions of core design components, barriers to feasibility, and expected outcomes of parent education in the context of intercollegiate athletics. Importantly, answering this call has the potential to inform campus-level programming for parents of NCAA student-athletes. Our long-term goal is to offer a mechanism for campus-level programming for parents of NCAA student-athletes that promote enhanced student-athlete well-being and mental health.

This research is potentially transformative because it has the potential to inform policy addressing the role of parent involvement in the context of NCAA Division I athletics. From a policy standpoint, we have created an evidence-based manual for NCAA administrators that can be used to guide the implementation of evidence-based educational programming for parents of current and future NCAA student-athletes. This has the potential to enhance the strategies that can be implemented to improve the NCAA's efforts to enhance student-athlete well-being and mental health.



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Notes



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