

FUNCTIONS, PRACTICES AND LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES  
OF HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC DIRECTORS IN THE UNITED STATES

By

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## ABSTRACT

TAMMY LYNN DECESARE. Functions, Practices and Leadership Responsibilities of High School Athletic Directors in the United States. (Under the direction of DR. DAVID M. DUNAWAY)

The consistent growth of high school sports has created a noticeable evolution in the athletic director position requiring an increase in competencies in business administration and leadership. However, academic requirements, credentials, and training have not increased proportionally with the occupational demands.

The purpose of this study was to describe the modern day requirements of high school athletic directors and provide insights to the professional functions, practices, leadership responsibilities, salaries, educational requirements, and qualifications of high school athletic directors in the United States. This study surveyed 1,592 athletic directors who were active members of the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association. The demographic composition of the respondents were 84% male, 16% female; 48% work in city school districts, 38% a county school district, and 14% a large county with urban and suburban schools; 41% of schools were located in a rural area, 40% suburban area, and 19% in urban settings; schools with less than 650 students accounted for 45% of the respondents. They completed a survey that provided information regarding their educational background, experience, responsibilities, salary considerations, supervision and evaluation experience, and school's demographic data. – A combination of descriptive statistics and frequency distributions were collected nationally and delineated geographically to analyze the data.

The results showed the description and responsibilities of athletic directors are dynamic, and noticeable changes have occurred in the last two decades. The shift from past expectations that has occurred incorporates more responsibilities evolving from the increased interest and enthusiasm for high school athletics. The data showed the responsibilities of the athletic director position have grown in complexity with the expectation to blend communication skills, ethical leadership, and business management. Additional changes revealed through the data indicate 64% of athletic directors are full-time and 70% have master's degrees, however; a considerable amount of current athletic directors (61%) have limited administrative experience. The results denote a decrease in the expectation of athletic directors to coach sports teams (32%) and 57% are required to obtain a teaching license for employment.

Based on the results, there is a need for states, districts, and schools to recognize the importance of creating a baseline job description to address consistency in athletic director responsibilities presented in this study to establish certification and professional development requirements, and to implement consistent evaluation measurements of athletic directors.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Competitive interscholastic sports contribute to society's cultural development and are an enormous source of pride and identification that stems beyond campus confines into the community (Toma, 2003). According to Gaddis (2013), "what once began as intramural activities in schools, interscholastic athletics has developed into a professionally staffed business within the school" (p. 1). A successful athletics program can indirectly impact the prestige and standing of an institution. Success in athletics provides a public perception as an indication of existing excellence at that institution. Institutional athletics "is more about teams and institutions – and their customs and traditions – than about star players. It is the name on the front of the jersey that matters" (Toma, 2003, p. 247). For an interscholastic sports program to achieve a high level of success, athletic department leadership, in the form of an athletic directors must be competent, trained and an experienced administrator (Schnieder & Stier, 2001).

Traditionally, the job of the athletic director was viewed as a reward for a seasoned coach at the conclusion of their coaching career (Judge & Judge, 2009). Athletic directors were typically selected for their playing or coaching skills and were assumed to possess the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed as an athletic director (Branch, 1990). However, few had any level of formal educational preparation to assume their roles as leaders in a high profile, public relations, and business-oriented position. The traditional athletic director held a degree in education or physical education instead of in business or sports management (Branch, 1990; McGee, 1984).

Modern-day high school athletics have evolved beyond its beginnings of intramural sports teams. The significant growth of competitive sports in high schools has increased the responsibilities and expectations associated with the high school athletic directors' position (Masteralexis, 1998; Nielson, 1989; Schnieder & Stier, 2001). A study conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) shows that participation in high school sports has grown for twenty-five consecutive years (Gaddis, 2013; NFHS, 2017). Sports participation reported by the NFHS reached a record high exceeding 7.8 million participants in the 2015-16 school year (NFHS, 2017). The rapid growth in the number of sports available at the high school level, coupled with the increase in the number of athletes competing in sports at this level, has expanded the workload and complexity of the challenges being faced by the typical athletic director (Schnieder & Stier, 2001). This increase has also impacted the business component of the athletic director position. Today's high school athletic programs commonly operate with budgets ranging from \$100,000 upwards of a quarter of a million dollars. Additionally, athletic directors work to secure the support of additional corporate sponsorships to assist with the continuing growth of athletic programs (Gaddis, 2013; Reeves, 2006).

Regardless of the level of interscholastic athletics - high school, junior college or a university – the essential skills, competencies, attributes and elements of managing and administering a sports program remains essentially the same (Jensen, 1992; Schnieder & Stier, 2001). Given that the job of athletic directors has evolved into a rigorous set of differing tasks and responsibilities, it is critical that today's athletic directors possesses a gamut of positive personal and professional qualities, attributes, knowledge, and

characteristics to effectively lead and manage an athletic department (Steir, 2003).

Today's athletic director position carries the responsibility of being the leader of the athletic program and is responsible for providing overall direction of the program and overseeing every element of competitive high school athletics. According to Stier & Schneider (2001), the athletic director is the athletic department expert who highly influences the philosophy, policies, procedures, practices, and priorities of the athletics program. The management component of athletic administration involves the duties and functions necessary to operate an athletics organization. Athletic management incorporates the fundamental principles and knowledge of the tasks involved in running an organization with the implementation of administrative techniques and strategies to complete those tasks (Jensen, 1992; Steir & Schnieder, 2001).

Athletic directors are known for working in multiple capacities throughout every workday. Many athletic directors wear multiple hats serving as teachers or school administrators in the morning and athletic director for the remainder of the day (Gaddis, 2013). Considering the magnitude of influence and responsibility held by an athletic director, it is important for school administrators to understand, appreciate, and master the qualities, attributes, and characteristics that make a competent and successful sports administrator (Stier & Schnieder, 2002). However, in the past two decades, the high school athletic director position has seldom been studied or even uniformly defined by the majority of the states. Additionally, there is little data and no uniform compendium of official roles or a best practice. This poses the questions as to what qualifications should be required for the athletic director position and how can this multi-range position be evaluated? Current literature suggests that due to the various of duties expected of

today's athletic director, it would be difficult to create a single evaluation tool for this position that would appropriately assess athletic directors nationwide (Bryant, 2012; Gaddis, 2013). Additionally, those evaluating the athletic director have likely never been an athletic director and fail to understand the complexity of the position.

There are currently over 20,000 high schools and middle schools currently members of the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA), which govern over seven million athletes nationwide. Preliminary observations of conditions in high schools indicate that athletic directors assume varied titles and responsibilities. Some are employed as assistant principals or full-time administrators, while others assume roles in teaching, coaching, and administration (Anderson, 1999; Gaddis, 2013). Additionally, expectations and roles of the athletic director vary with the individual, the job, and the situation that exists within the community. Some large school systems view the position as a full-time position, in other schools systems the athletic director receives one hour of released time to perform athletic director duties (Blumette, 1992; Judge & Judge, 2009). The roles and responsibilities of today's athletic director are so varied that individuals must have leadership and administration skills but also operate as a business-person (Davis, 2002).

The goal of this study was to develop a descriptive collection of common functions, practices, leadership responsibilities, salaries, educational requirements, and qualifications of high school athletic directors in the United States. Since there was little data, there were limited standards for school administrators to use when developing or hiring for the athletic director position. Conducting this in-depth descriptive study allowed the data and conclusions of this study to inform administrators and policy makers

regarding the practices, functions, and responsibilities of the athletic director position. The study provided insight into compensation, expectations, and evaluation for today's athletic directors. Additionally, the study provided a level of consistency regarding the best practices of the position.

A summary of the results was provided to the NIAAA, allowing them to measure these findings against their current requirements of the athletic director position. The NIAAA can disseminate this information to the state executive athletic directors to enhance the qualifications, expectations, and evaluations of the athletic director position in their respective state.

This study examines the primary functions, practices, expectations, salaries and educational requirements of high school athletic directors within the United States and how they vary by region, state and school demographics with a specific emphasis on the following questions:

1. What are the current primary roles, functions, and practices performed by athletic directors?
  - a. What are the current levels of academic preparation and experience for the position of the athletic director?
  - b. How do current high school athletic directors define the national employment status of the high school athletic director position?
  - c. How do functions and practices for athletic directors vary according to NFHS geographic region?
  - d. To what extent do athletic directors engage in managerial and leadership functions and practices of the athletic department?

2. What is the source and level of compensation of athletic directors?
3. How are athletic directors supervised and evaluated by school and district administrators?

### **Rationale for the Study**

The athletic director position originally developed to manage, supervise, and regulate the work of coaches and the demands of operating an athletic program (Gaddis, 2013). The need for competent athletic administrators has increased as the commercialization of interscholastic athletics has increased. Current demands on the modern day athletic director include, but are not limited to, leadership, management, fundraising, financial management, communication, personnel, scheduling, facilities management, and administrative tasks. High school athletic programs have evolved from the traditional roots of interscholastic sports creating a more complex position for the athletic director. Although the early forms of the position originated out of necessity, the constant growth and impact of athletics on schools has required an ongoing evolution of the athletic director's skills, training, and experience. The increase in the number of sports available, coupled with an increased number of athletes has significantly expanded the responsibilities and job description of the athletic director (Gaddis, 2013; Whisenant, Miller, & Pedersen, 2005). The objective of this study was to determine the modern-day requirements of high school athletic directors to provide insight regarding the skills, training, and experiences high school athletic directors should possess.

### **Delimitations**

The study surveyed current high school athletic directors in the United States with an active NIAAA membership. This study did not survey state executive athletic directors or liaisons of the NIAAA.

### **Limitations**

The study was limited to high school athletic directors in the United States that were current members of the NIAAA during the 2016-2017 school year, the main time frame of the study. The athletic directors' electronic completion of the survey was voluntary. The level of honesty and perceptions of the athletic directors completing the survey limited the answers they provided.

The salary analysis in this study used the compensation levels provided by the athletic directors may have yielded general rather than precise analyses. This limitation could create a margin of error depending on the experience and level of the respondents.

The data was gathered from a national pool of respondents, but the evidence did not reveal equal representation from each geographical region in the response rate. Additionally, responses from athletic directors from student populations over 2,500 were lower than school sizes less than 2,500 students. These limitations could represent a margin of error considering the majority of school sizes represented in each region.

### **Assumptions**

The study assumed that the athletic directors answered survey questions honestly and completely, providing reliable and valid information on current roles, responsibilities and general demographic information.



The NIAAA has over 8,000 members serving as high school athletic directors in the United States. The study assumed that there will be adequate representation and data provided by each state.

The method of data collection and analysis adequately described the role, duties, qualifications, expectations and evaluation method of high school athletic directors and allowing for comparisons across demographic characteristics.

### **Methods of Analysis**

This study collected data through an online survey instrument that was developed through a review of similar studies implemented in earlier decades. The previous surveys were created during the 1990's and validated through an expert panel of university sport management professors, former athletic directors, and university research consultants. This survey was modified to reflect additional duties, functions, practices, athletic classes, student-population, demographics and salary considerations. Additional questions examining leadership, management responsibilities, supervision, and evaluation were added to reflect the development, growth and legal considerations that reflect the complexities of modern day athletic programs. Directors from the NIAAA reviewed the survey in relation to their competency areas for professional preparation as high school athletic directors, which increased the validity of the survey further. The survey was emailed to all active, athletic directors employed during the 2016-2017 school year.

## **Chapter Organization**

This study is organized as follows:

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, problem, and significance, purpose, theoretical framework, research questions, delimitations, limitations, assumptions and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 is a review of literature pertaining to critical topics and related research and provides the conceptual transition from Chapter 1 to Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 describes the research methods and statistical procedures used to collect and analyze the data in this study.

Chapter 4 details the analysis of data, discussion, and significant findings and provides the conceptual transition from Chapter 3 to Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 connects previous chapters, and summarizes the data and makes implications and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

The significant growth of competitive sports in high school has increased the scope and responsibilities of the high school athletic director creating a position that requires savvy managerial and financial skills coupled with educational leadership (Gaddis, 2013; Masteralexis et al., 1998; Schnieder & Stier, 2001). Historically, the training, education, and leadership requirements of athletic directors have not increased proportionally with the occupational demands (Gaddis, 2013; Monaghan, 2012). The purpose of this study is to describe the modern day requirements of high school athletic directors and provide insights to the professional responsibilities, leadership and management a high school athletic director should possess. This chapter will highlight the professional qualities, skills, attributes and characteristics recommended for an individual to effectively lead and manage an athletic department. Additionally, today's athletic director position is so varied, the process and criteria used to evaluate an athletic director are equally varied - creating a standard position in high schools across the nation that lacks common standards for the position. Aspects of the role of the high school athletic director are reviewed in this chapter, and a brief discussion of the evolution of interscholastic athletics and the athletic director are included with the historical introduction of the athletic director position. There is limited research on the high school athletic director position, which has required this researcher to also examine studies done with the college level position. I have reviewed the research at the high school and college level for similarities of results in describing the position of athletic director.

Therefore, all references to the position of athletic director are to the high school position unless specified otherwise.

### **Historical Background**

From the ancient civilizations of the Mayans and Aztecs to the physical contests of Olympia, athletics has been evident in cultures for centuries. Primitive societies used physical exercise and, in some cases sport, in ritualistic, sacred or religious events. This participation in athletics created a transitional culture between tribal or governed behaviors and social organization (Guttmann, 2012). The Greek culture is viewed as the ancestor of modern sport. In the Greek society, physical excellence was valued and athletics played an important role to develop both a well-rounded society and individual (Christian, 2000). Athletics has evolved beyond its primitive beginnings, but the contribution to society's cultural identity still extends beyond the academic campus confines into the community (Toma, 2003).

When high school sports began to develop in America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they modeled many features of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century intramural framework of intercollegiate sports. In these early beginnings, there was no need for a highly trained and specialized director of athletics since the scope of high school sports was limited to where teams were organized and coached by students (Gaddis, 2013; Sage, 1987; Stier & Schneider, 2000; Stier & Schneider, 2001). Formal high school competition was later introduced in the late 1890's in Michigan. Those that organized Michigan's secondary athletics also established the first state athletic association. This step prompted other states to provide organized opportunities and in 1920 the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations (NFHS) was established (Stier & Schnieder, 2001).

Initially, the NFHS had five states in the membership and today all fifty states are members. As high school sports expanded and became more competitive, the position of athletic director surfaced to assist school principals with responsibilities associated with athletics (Anderson 1999; Jones 1988). During the 1960's many medium and larger high schools had athletic directors officially operating the athletic department (Stier & Schneider, 2000). Another historic moment for the director of athletics came in 1969 when the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) created the National Council of Secondary School Athletic Directors (Gaddis, 2013; Stier & Schneider, 2001). To date, this council continues to serve high school athletic directors in all facets of the position (Keller & Forsyth, 1984; Stier & Schneider, 2000; Stier & Schneider, 2001). During the 1970s several events occurred that increased both the professional status and the level of responsibilities of athletic directors. In 1971 the NFHS began sponsoring conferences for high school competitions and in 1976 a constitution was created for a new professional organization - the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) (Stier & Schneider, 2001). Later in 1977, the National Federation Conference for Directors of Athletics formally adopted the constitution of the NIAAA (Stier & Schneider, 2001; Youngblood, 1980).

Today what began as student-driven intramural activities in high schools has developed into a professionally staffed operation (Gaddis, 2013). Jones (2007) contends that athletics can be considered a “ ‘front porch’ for any school system as an effective athletic program will, though public exposure, be able to demonstrate weekly, if not daily, measurable achievements (wins) more frequently than a schools typical academic success release (graduation rates, SAT/ACT scores, etc.)” (p.58). High school sports,

much like their collegiate counterparts, have the power to drive communities members together, maintain alumni connections, bolster a schools' image, affect the educational growth of students, and affect enrollment (Anderson 1999; Branch, 1990; Denhart et al., 2009; Gaddis, 2013; Nazarian, 2007; Olson, Hirsch, Breitenbach, & Saunders, 1987; Palmero, 2010).

According to the National Federation of State High School Associations (2017), the number of participants in high school sports has steadily increased for twenty-five consecutive years. Based on participation figures in 2017, a new record high of 7.8 million students participate in high school athletics, which was an increase of over 82,000 students from the previous year. While the number of participants continues to rise, an increase also has been seen in the number of sanctioned sports being offered, staffing, facilities, and budgets. As an example, today's high school athletic programs commonly operate with budgets ranging from \$100,000 upwards of a quarter of a million dollars. Additionally, athletic directors work to secure the support of additional corporate sponsorships to assist with the continuing growth of athletic programs (Gaddis, 2013; Reeves, 2006). According to Whisenant & Pedersen (2004a), the increasing influx of dollars in athletics has morphed many athletic departments into business entities. This change impacts how athletic departments operate and has required a change in the athletic directors who manage these athletic businesses.

As economic momentum builds in the sports industry -sports is a \$213 billion industry according to Broughton, Lee & Nethery, 1999-, the level of organization and management, traditionally present in business settings, should be applied to the developments influencing athletic business organizations (Whisenant & Pedersen,

2004b). However, Pope (1997) contends that to be successful, an athletic director must also possess an understanding of sport, which makes athletics different from traditional business since the consumer is a student-athlete. Operating, managing, and leading a high school athletic program today is an arduous task that requires more skills, training, and experience than ever before. This increase in demands and challenges now present in high school athletics has caused schools to respond by expanding the job description, qualifications, and expectations of the athletic director (Gaddis, 2013; Stier & Scheider, 2001; Whisenant et al., 2005). Researchers recognize that the athletic director position, at all levels, has changed over the last half century. These changes have created a more complicated and challenging position than in the past increasing the amount of work expected of today's athletic director (Gaddis, 2013; Hoch, 2000; Judd, 1995; Kjeldsen, 1992; Stier & Schneider, 2002; Williams & Miller, 1983). As a result, a qualified and competent athletic director is vital to the success of the athletic department, the school and community.

### **Background of Athletic Director**

Historically, the majority of athletic directors have been collegiate players. Research indicates the traditional path of athletic directors progressed from elite athletes to coaching careers and retiring from coaching into the athletic director position (Anderson, 1999; Branch, 1990; Hall & Bradwin, 1989; Huggins, 1996; Pope, 1997; Stier & Schneider, 2001; Wojnar, 2008). Despite the importance of the athletic director, this typical route from player to administrator provides little guarantee that this course qualifies or prepares individuals for the athletic director position. However, as Branch (1990) contends, having a playing or coaching background is certainly a professional

asset to help understand the unique environment of athletics, and former-coach-turned-athletic directors appear to have these essential qualities.

According to Stier & Schneider (2001), the “greatest distinction between past and present perceptions of the athletic director position is that today there is recognition of the need for athletic directors to receive professional training” (p. 45). Since this position is important and affects many, it is vital that athletic directors have the education and experience to properly operate an athletic department (Anderson 1999; Branch, 1990; Gaddis, 2013; Olson et al., 1987; Palmero, 2010; Stier & Schneider, 2001). No one particular model creates the ideal athletic director; however, modern day athletics favors candidates with an understanding of athletics coupled with strong marketing and management skills that can operate the athletic department with integrity (Huggins, 1996).

Previous research on athletic directors sought to identify characteristics of the position. These studies also gathered educational and experience backgrounds on their subjects generating a profile in the preparation path (Pope, 1997). The findings show the vast majority of athletic directors studied hold bachelor’s degrees, a small percentage have a master’s degree, and an occasional study indicates the rare evidence of a doctoral degree. Physical education was consistently at the forefront of college majors closely followed by education, athletic administration, health, and recreation (Branch, 1990; Case, 2010; Nielson, 1989; Phillips, 1996; Pope, 1997; Rouff, 2007; Stier & Schneider, 2001; Whisenant et al., 2005). Only Case (2010) indicated that 8% of the population he surveyed held a degree in sports management. Gaddis (2013) found that although over 52% of the states reported athletic directors are required to hold a bachelor's degree, 41%



indicated that no specific certification is required to be an athletic director. Additionally, he found only 34% of states recognize a master's degree for a rank change/salary increase and less than 25% require athletic directors to engage in professional development.

Studies found that possessing a valid teaching license was a necessary qualification to pursue a profession as a high school athletic director. Many researchers pose that the rationale behind this requirement is due to the common split position of the athletic director. In many cases, athletic directors are also required to function in another capacity within the school (teacher, administrator or dean) and many athletic directors indicate coaching as a requirement as an athletic director (Case, 2010; Phillips, 1996; Whisenant et al., 2005). Some studies note teaching and coaching experience as part of the job description, to the point of requiring the qualified candidate to also serve as the head football coach (Whisenant et al., 2005). The findings by Stier and Schneider (2001) describe two essential factors principals identified for future success by an athletic director: certification as a high school teacher and head coaching experience. The researchers stated that coaching experience provides the necessary insight to the daily challenges in athletics.

Earlier research also indicated a varied range of experience, although each study reported that athletic directors with less than six years experience represented the highest percentage of their population. Athletic directors with approximately 9-10 years experience were a marginal representation and those with over 10 years experience were consistently less than 10% (Branch, 1990; Case, 2010; Hoch, 2000; Nielson, 1989; Pope, 1997; Rouff, 2007; Stier & Schneider, 2001; Whisenant et al., 2005). Furthermore, a 2005 study conducted by Whisenant and colleagues found only 4% of job descriptions

required previous experience as an athletic director (2005). In successful athletic departments, the leader of the program, the athletic director, possesses skills and competencies relevant to the position (Stier & Schneider, 2001).

The data from previous research identifies a need for school administrators to recognize the importance of educational and certification requirements for high school athletic directors. Although current requirements for the position exist, evidence reveals a lack of uniformity nationally regarding the criteria used to develop, and later identify, qualified athletic directors.

### **Role of the Athletic Director**

Hoch (2000) states that a successful athletic program can "boost school spirit and inject enthusiasm into a school" and that high school athletics "provides a link to the community" (p.44). Athletic directors leading these programs wield a tremendous amount of influence (Pope, 1997). They deal with large volumes of students, a large staff, some of the most visible school activities and interact with people in an emotionally charged athletic environment (Hoch, 2000; Martin, Kelley, & Dias, 1999). The athletic director is the impetus for an athletic department's vision, philosophy, expectations, and policies for athletic programs (Cardone, 2011; NIAAA, 2017; Phillips, 1996; Stier & Schneider, 2001).

Research indicates athletic directors have a variety of educational and professional backgrounds (Branch, 1990; Case, 2010; Nielson, 1989; Parks & Zanger, 1990; Phillips, 1996; Pope, 1997; Rouff, 2007; Stier & Schneider, 2001; Whisenant et al., 2005). High school athletic directors typically serve in multiple roles. Because of their pedagogical background, athletic directors often assume positions as teachers, coaches or

school administrators in addition to their athletic director responsibilities (Martin et al., 1999; Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004a). Previous research indicates that athletic directors spent half their time fulfilling their athletic-oriented responsibilities and less than 15% of athletic directors worked full-time in their titled position (Gaddis, 2013; Hoch, 2000; Martin et al., 1999; MASDA, 2007; Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004a).

Although a dilution of duties occurs between collegiate and high school athletics, the essential elements and competencies of the position remain the same (Jensen, 1992; Stier & Schneider, 2001). Both now function in more business-oriented environments requiring the athletic directors to oversee a more complicated department (Stier & Schneider, 2001; Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004a). This new environment with increased demands and scrutiny has forced the athletic industry to examine the leadership and management roles of the athletic director.

Complex leadership and management behaviors are essential for today's athletic director (Branch, 1990). Some researchers contend that the central role of the athletic director provides leadership and direction to the program while contributing to the mission of the school (Anderson, 1999; Grande, 1990; Stier & Schneider, 2001). Others suggest that the increased complexities of high school athletics require that athletic directors primarily assume a business management role (Palmero, 2010; Rouff, 2007; Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004b). However, there are fundamental differences between leaders and managers. Management is an expectation whereas leadership is a choice. Leaders impact others to affect change. Managers control aspects that impact the organization (Rouff, 2007). In athletics, a leader would influence the activities of the athletic department, whereas a manager would govern the functions of the athletic

program. Modern ideas about leadership suggest that effective organizations should have leaders who balance both of these tenants – the competency and energy to get things done and the ability to develop and nurture people (Branch, 1990; Stier & Schneider, 2001).

### **Leadership and Management**

Culture, heritage, and position impact the evolution of leadership and management (Rouff, 2007). With its influence on leadership, culture affects how organizations operate regardless of environment. According to Whisenant and Pedersen (2004), sport is a cultural institution that operates with the constant influx of change. This environment requires those that successfully manage athletic departments to be able to recognize and adapt to ongoing changes in athletic leadership and management.

Leadership and management are complementary but are not the same. For years researchers have delineated the differences between leaders and managers. Management exists in the relationship between positions in an organization; leadership involves interaction between people and uses influence to achieve outcomes (Hickman, 1998). Simply stated, managers plan, organize and coordinate whereas leaders inspire, motivate and affect others (Bennis, 1989).

### **Leadership**

Leadership embodies a range of behaviors that impact the people of an organization. They develop a vision, adopt a personal attitude toward goals, guide others, relate to people intuitively and align their staff to achieve the groups' goals. Rather than concentrating on how things get done, as is a managerial approach, the focus is on people and how they impact the organization as a whole (Evers, 2007; Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004; Rouff, 2007; Yusof, 2002; Zaleznick, 1977). Additionally, they are innovative,

motivating, inspiring, promote growth and communicate a long-range perspective (Bass, 1985; Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Eicher, 1999; Kotter, 1990; Rouff, 2007).

As in any successful organization, leadership is a necessary quality in the field of athletic administration. Considering the athletic director position has evolved into an infinite amount of tasks and responsibilities, it is critical for today's athletic director to demonstrate the qualities and attributes of an effective leader (Stier & Schneider, 2003). Watkins and Rikard (1991) state that leadership behaviors determine the effectiveness of an individual to perform athletic director responsibilities. Research also contends that when a leader displays these behaviors, the result is higher job performance and greater job satisfaction among employees (Avolio & Goodheim, 1987; House, 1971; Howell & Frost, 1989; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; Yusof, 2002). In a time when athletic departments have limited resources, the ability to motivate employees beyond minimum standards and achieve more with less is a priceless quality (Bass, 1985; Yusof, 2002).

Although all members of the athletic department should share the integrity issues that confront athletics, the responsibility ultimately rests with the athletic director (Branch, 2007). In several studies conducted by Stier and Schneider (2001, 2002, 2003), NCAA university presidents, high school principals and athletic directors agreed that honesty and trustworthiness were the top two essential traits for an athletic director to possess in order to experience success. Considering the athletic director's immense influence over philosophy, policies, procedures, practice and priorities, a foundation of honesty and trust as part of the athletic director's management characteristics appears vital, or they may find it difficult to lead.

## **Management**

As the athletic director position continues to increase and become more complicated, athletic directors struggle to serve as a visionary leader, teacher and mentor because the demands of successfully managing a department supersede the individual development of the staff (Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004a; Wojnar, 2008). These important daily tasks begin to take precedence over leadership development even though research indicates leadership behaviors would improve the long-term efficiency and productivity of the staff and environment (Bass, et al., 1987; Howell & Frost, 1989; Podsakoff et al., 1990; Yusof, 2002). As such, leaders also need to possess the ability to manage and control factors that impact the athletic department and affect the organization's success (Rouff, 2007).

Regardless of the environment, the managerial process involves the duties and functions that pertain to an enterprise while working through individuals or groups in their roles to accomplish organizational goals (Kimball & Kimball, 1947; Nielson, 1989; Stier & Schneider, 2001; Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004a). Managerial behaviors employ an impersonal, task-oriented approach, which includes an emphasis on sound practices, rationale, strategy, structure, and performance (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Eicher, 1999; Kotter, 1990; Rouff, 2007; Zaleznik, 1977). Case and Branch (2003) found that upper-level sport facility managers demonstrate behaviors associated with conceptual, leadership, and strategic planning activities whereas entry-level managers were more involved with technical, human/personal, and supervisory activities.

According to Phillips (1996), management is a “crucial ingredient in any...sports program and must be soundly implemented if that program is to be conducted in an

effective and meaningful fashion” (Luthans, 1988, p. 4). Whisenant and Pedersen (2004a, 2004b) conducted studies of athletic directors based off Luthans’ (1988) research that collapsed primary managerial activities into four categories: communication, traditional management, networking, and human resource management. Their research indicated that the greater amount of time athletic directors engaged in those primary activities, the more successful they were. Additionally, the most significant impact on an athletic director’s success drew from time spent in activities associated with communications and networking. Research indicates high success when athletic directors appropriate time to accomplish the managerial responsibilities they face daily. The challenge becomes balancing management with leadership within the time constraints of a workday, as both have merits that elicit success.

### **Duties and Functions of an Athletic Director**

As noted previously, the essential competencies for the position of athletic director at high school and college are equivalent (Jensen, 1992; Stier & Schneider, 2001). Although there is less funding and a dilution of duties at the high school level, the leadership and management skills required to succeed in the position are remarkably similar to their collegiate counterparts. The pressures of fundraising, increased media, financial dealings, legal obligations, the effects of Title IX, and constant use of facilities requires today’s athletic director to make an operational shift from athletics to the business realm regardless of level (Whisenant & Pedersen, 2004a).

A study by Luthans (1988) classified primary managerial activities into four categories: communication, traditional management, networking and human resources. However, research conducted on high school and collegiate athletic directors through the

1990's and early 2000's expanded upon those primary responsibilities and provided a comprehensive and specific breakdown of duties (Anderson, 1999; Case & Branch, 2003; MASDA, 2007; Pope, 1997). These studies collectively propose seven areas of managerial duties essential to high school athletic administration: (1) fundraising, marketing and financial management, (2) public relations, (3) personnel management, (4) event/facility management, (5) policy development, (6) athlete governance, and (7) administrative duties.

### **Fundraising, Marketing, and Financial Management**

Fundraising has become a cornerstone to the budgetary restraints experienced by most athletic departments requiring athletic directors to become financially savvy and develop into competent fundraisers (McMannon, 2007; Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013). In fact, due to rising operational costs, many high school athletic departments operate with deficit budgets (McMannon, 2007). Therefore, the ability of an athletic director to adequately fundraise and support the athletic department has become a primary role and, at times, a factor in the selection or firing of athletic directors (Anderson, 1999; Bortner & Sabock, 1986; Williams & Miller, 1983; Pope, 1997).

There are multiple avenues to pursue when overseeing fundraising activities to generate external revenue. Corporate sponsorships, booster clubs, and individuals are potential donors whose contributions can impact the financial component of an athletic department. According to McMannon (2007), communication with these stakeholders is fundamental to success. She contends that providing a framework to help the stakeholders understand the philosophy, needs, processes, and roles of the athletic department are essential for success. The business perspective categorizes sporting



events as the entertainment business. Therefore, an athletic director must develop a promotional plan to capitalize on the finances afforded to the entertainment industry (Brooks, 1990). According to Pope (1997), marketing and promotions play an integral role in a fundraising campaign. School branding and sales of paraphernalia advertise programs, help gain public notoriety and popularity, and generate additional revenue for the athletic department.

In addition to fundraising, athletic directors also oversee the control of fiscal management. The athletic director develops budgetary procedures and goals suitable for the department's needs. An athletic director is responsible for developing a departmental budget, overseeing the staff to ensure budget limits are followed, authorizing expenditures, establishing admission prices, and supervising the accounting in all fiscal matters (Anderson, 1999; Christian, 2000; MASDA, 2007; Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013). Financial accountability and a frugal perspective on expenditures are benchmarks of an effective athletic director (McMannon, 2007; Whisenant et al., 2005).

### **Public Relations**

With the high profile and visibility of athletics, public relations are a vital component of the athletic environment and an essential responsibility of the athletic director (Case & Branch, 2003; Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013). According to Hoch (2014), athletic directors are the departmental lead in public relations, and they have a responsibility to present a positive, favorable public image highlighting the valuable aspects of the athletic programs while minimizing any adverse developments. Athletic directors must understand how to utilize media outlets to stimulate interest in team events and success, and how to develop a rapport with on-campus and external communities to

provide opportunities for athletics to interact with fans to generate popularity and familiarity (Hoch, 2014).

Public relations, essentially communication skills, according to Case and Branch (2003) are among essential competencies for sports directors. As discussed earlier, the findings of Whisenant & Pedersen (2004a, 2004b) communication had a direct impact on the level of success an athletic director experienced. They found the more time an athletic director spent on activities associated with communication, the more success the athletic director experienced. Considering the influence strong communication can have on the success of an athletic department, athletic directors must possess strong skills in interpersonal relations, public speaking, writing, and media relations (Anderson, 1999; Huggins, 1996; Nielson, 1989; Whisenant et al., 2005).

### **Personnel Management**

The reputation of an athletic director significantly affects their ability to hire exceptional people in the athletic department. Equally the personal power ascribed to success affects the ability of an athletic director to manage high profile personalities within the department (Hall & Bradwin, 1989; Hoch, 2010; Phillips, 1996; Pope, 1997; Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013). The administrative responsibilities of an athletic department ultimately rest with the athletic director. Therefore, athletic directors must possess the ability to recruit, develop and evaluate quality staff members, as well as terminate the services of employees (Hoch, 2010; Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013). At the high school level, the athletic director often recruits candidates for high profile sports. In other cases, the athletic director assists the principal in the search process, with the principal making the final decision (Lowder & Tyson, 2016). Before officially hiring a

coach, human resources must confirm their acceptance into the school system. To hire well, an athletic director needs to have a firm understanding of the qualities future employees need to possess through the recruiting and interview process.

Securing the right personnel is the beginning. Assigning, delegating, and organizing personnel tasks are imperative for the smooth operation of a program (Hoch 2010; MASDA, 2007; Whisenant, et al., 2005). The athletic director is also responsible for supervising the athletic department staff (Huggins, 1996; Pope, 1997) while providing continued guidance and direction to help develop team members (Anderson, 1999; Evers, 2007; Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013).

Additionally, the athletic director evaluates the athletic staff. Often, end of season evaluation reports examine professional and personal relationships, coaching performance, job and administrative responsibilities, and player development (Lowder & Tyson, 2016; Toguchi, 2017). In a study conducted by Case and Branch (2003) the findings indicated that personnel evaluation was the most critical competency according to general managers. They also suggest that successful athletic directors disseminate the attributes used for assessment to staff members. According to Popke (2008), job descriptions, qualifications and expectations are essential to the evaluation process, and athletic directors should observe staff and coaches year round, observing coaches during games and practices in addition to conducting formal preseason and postseason evaluations.

### **Event and Facilities Management**

Event management involves a myriad of components requiring athletic directors to prepare for the elements they can control. The rising concerns surrounding athletic

contests make safety a paramount concern, so effective planning and coordination are crucial tasks for athletic directors (Bruno, 2016). Safety also embodies an entire gamut of procedure manuals that outline event duties and responsibilities, ticket sales, game night security, emergency response plans to transportation safety of away contests (Popke, 2008). Rivalry games are a distinct event that presents a unique challenge to the host institution and administration faced with the prospect of managing large crowds and intense competition (Stevens, 2011). In these particular instances, planning and preparation are critical to a safe and successful event. Additionally, facility maintenance requires athletic directors to make ongoing evaluations of the conditions of the facilities and what restrictions for access should be implemented to ensure the proper upkeep, maintenance, and safety of the facilities (Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013).

Scheduling events and coordinating the facility is often challenging. Facilities are often rented to external groups to generate revenue for the athletic department (McMannon, 2007; Pope, 1997). Depending on the size of the school and other groups that may have a claim on the facilities, access to playing arenas may be in high demand. Athletic directors have an obligation to provide equitable treatment to those staking a claim on the facilities for both contests and practices (Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013).

Event and facility management encompasses a breadth of responsibilities for the athletic director. Additional responsibilities include: attend home contests; conduct pregame inspections of the facilities; organize team travel; secure officials; ticket management; arrange broadcasting/media outlets; concessions; promotions; insurance; record results of the contest; and coordinate with the band, cheerleader and other faculty

for any pre-game or halftime entertainment (Anderson, 1999; Hoch, 2010; MASDA, 2007; Pope, 1997).

### **Administrative Guidelines Development**

The athletic directors are responsible for the direction of the athletic department (Stier & Schneider, 2001). They are in charge of the development of the athletic department's mission, which should remain consistent with that of the institution (NIAAA, 2017; Pope, 1997; Stier & Schneider, 2003). The mission then sets the parameters for the athletic director to determine goals, objectives, and standards. Additionally, the athletic director has tremendous influence by establishing the philosophy, departmental guidelines, and practices of the athletic programs (Hall & Bradwin, 1989; MASDA, 2007; Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013,).

Athletic department oversight requires an athletic director to address a myriad of areas. Schroeder and Brasfield (2013), caution athletic directors to avoid dwelling on responsibilities directly related to competition and to implement strategic guidelines through decisions centered around the best possible student-athlete experience.

The elements to consider when developing guidelines and procedures include (1) department mission, philosophy, and goals, (2) department administrative control, (3) general department guidelines and procedure, (4) internal guidelines and procedures, (5) external guidelines and procedures. The department mission, philosophy, and goals allow an athletic director to convey a vision and discuss the far-reaching impact athletics can have by developing athletes as students, athletes, and citizens. Areas addressed in department administrative control include organizational charts and governing bodies, departmental guidelines implementation, and summary of individual duties and

responsibilities. General department guidelines and procedures focus on conduct, standards, and expectations of staff, participants and parents in all areas. Topics such as departmental guidelines regarding the media, eligibility, safety, conflict resolution, hazing, and sportsmanship relate to general guidelines. Internal guidelines and procedures deal with the “how-to’s” of the athletic department. Areas such as financial procedures, equipment, travel, facilities, and scheduling are examples of a few areas covered by internal athletic guidelines. External guidelines address the similar areas about the school, district, athletic association or other governing bodies. External guidelines also extend to areas dealing with legal affairs, security and external support (Lowder & Tyson, 2016; Miller & Gipe, 2017; Parker & McGrath, 2014).

### **Athlete Governance**

Although many essential duties have been discussed based on their value and importance to the athletic department, nothing is more important than ensuring the well-being of student-athletes (NIAAA, 2017). According to Schroeder and Brasfield (2013), “student-athletes function best when they clearly understand what is expected of them, so a concise, communicative student-athlete handbook is essential” (p.7). Athlete governance requires that athletic directors generate guidelines based on institution, athletic associations, and athletic department policies and procedures. These guidelines include a code of conduct that reflects policies and violations regarding alcohol/drug use, sportsmanship, social media, harassment, hazing, and conduct becoming of a representative of the program. Additionally, standards of participation and athlete expectations are outlined to include eligibility, class attendance, tryouts, physicals, competition and training guidelines, honors and awards, equipment use, and

transportation policies (Anderson, 1999; Lowder & Tyson, 2016; Miller & Gipe, 2017; Parker & McGrath, 2014).

Athletic directors also help prepare and guide student-athletes for opportunities beyond high school. Whether athletes are college-bound, have Olympic abilities, or have talent to join the professional ranks, athletic directors are there to guide and counsel athletes. The journey to the next level can be a complicated one, and the better versed an athletic director is in college eligibility or requirements and professional pathways, the better service an athletic director can provide (Anderson, 1999).

Athletic directors oversee and enforce these policies, procedures, and expectations to maintain the integrity of the department, and it's programming, to ensure a quality student-athlete experience. Ongoing accountability for the athlete is enhances the success of athletic director and the athletic program (Schroeder & Brasfield, 2013).

### **Administrative Duties**

Daily communication regarding pertinent matters is an expectation of athletic directors (Lowder & Tyson, 2016; Miller & Gipe, 2017; Parker & McGrath, 2014). Ultimately the athletic director represents the school regarding athletic matters. The influence and voice of the athletic director is apparent through many administrative duties: (1) disseminating information to conferences, school and district administration, coaches, parents and athletes, (2) voting at meetings at local, conference and state levels, (3) serving on school or external committees, and (4) consulting with groups affecting athletics (i.e. boosters, maintenance, facilities, etc.) (Anderson, 1999; Lowder & Tyson, 2016).

Additional daily duties are largely operational matters dealing with expenditures, deposits, reports, inventories, insurance, safety, correspondence, and records. Failure to comply with the rules and regulations set by the state, conference, district and school can adversely affect the athletic program (Pope, 1997).



### **Supervision and Evaluation of the Athletic Director**

As described in the literature, the athletic director holds a unique position within the world of interscholastic athletics. Athletic directors are required to multi-task, often in multiple positions, since many transform from teacher or school administration into an athletic director at the end of the day.

Considering the extensive range of tasks prescribed to the athletic director, a standards-based evaluation for this position poses a difficult challenge for supervisors (Bryant, 2012; Gaddis, 2013). Research conducted by Stier and Schneider (2000) indicated over 88% of high school athletic directors reported to, and are evaluated by, their principals. In most cases, those that supervise and evaluate athletic directors have never been in the position and often evaluate the position as they would a full-time administrator (Gaddis, 2013). Additionally, because the athletic director position is poorly defined, conducting consistent evaluations is complicated, if not impossible, for a supervisor.

Further research by Stier and Schneider (2001) stated the top five qualities and characteristics principals expressed as essential for the success of a high school athletic director were honesty, trustworthiness, possession of high ethical standards, leadership and dedication. These findings indicate that nearly two decades ago the athletic director position was evaluated primarily on characteristics related to ethical behaviors. Principals expressed other essential expectations in Stier and Schneider's research (2000), which included: successfully working with other colleagues and parents, being highly visible at events, and having the ability to problem-solve. These findings contrast the research asserting that athletic directors need to possess essential management skills.

Those studies, conducted over a decade ago, scrutinized athletic directors on their ability to oversee major business avenues of athletics: fundraising, financial management, personnel management, personal relations, event and facilities management and athlete governance. Additionally, athletic directors are subject to the perceptions of a diverse group of athletic constituents: administrators, teachers, coaches, parents, players, and the community. The standards and expectations of each group make determining the important objectives of the position quite difficult for those supervising athletic directors (Bryant, 2012).

### **Summary**

The focus of this literature review was to examine the overall roles and responsibilities of high school athletic directors. The early forms of the position may have originated by school administrators out of necessity; however, the constant growth and impact of athletics on schools as organizations require an ongoing evolution of the athletic director. The increase in the number of sports available, coupled with an increased number of athletes has significantly increased the responsibilities of the athletic director (Stier & Schneider, 2000). Considering the impact athletic directors have on athletics, the position requires a more qualified, competent individual to oversee athletic department then in years past. Based on these findings, the general scope of the position that existed twenty years ago may no longer be practical in modern day athletics, creating a need to examine the position of the athletic director.

Recent studies have focused primarily on college or amateur directors. The review suggested several roles and responsibilities deemed essential for success by athletic directors or their supervisors. However, there are no uniform standards

established to measure the qualifications or abilities of a high school athletic director.

These inconsistencies, coupled with the growth in high school athletics, justify the need to examine how today's economic influence has impacted the roles and expectations of high school athletic directors.

The literature also describes contrasting positions suggested for the success of today's athletic director – one a visionary leader, the other a scrupulous business manager. The review identifies the magnitude and importance of successful leadership in athletics. Likewise, researchers present the complex business management issues forcing athletic directors to assume the role of the innovative business executive.

Overall, due to outdated information, limited publications, and inconsistent requirements of high school athletic directors, further research was needed.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This descriptive study was designed to determine the roles, functions, practices, leadership responsibilities and status of high school athletic directors in The United States. The study provided insights into compensation, expectations, evaluation and consistent best practices for the athletic director position. This chapter provided the description and selection process of the participants, the studies research design is explained in detail, and the pilot survey used to evaluate the technical quality of the instrument is described.

A survey was developed to measure regional affiliations, educational backgrounds and positional requirements and expectations of athletic directors. Executive directors of the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) sent the electronic survey to their current membership base, which was used as the target population for this study.

### Research Questions

Within the United States:

1. What are the current primary roles, functions, and practices performed by athletic directors?
  - a. What are the current levels of academic preparation and experience for the position of the athletic director?
  - b. How do current high school athletic directors define the national employment status of the high school athletic director position?

- c. How do functions and practices for athletic directors vary according to NFHS geographic section?
  - d. To what extent do athletic directors engage in managerial and leadership functions and practices of the athletic department?
2. What is the source and level of compensation of athletic directors?
  3. How are athletic directors supervised and evaluated by school and district administrators?

### **Participants**

This study targeted high school athletic directors in the United States. The NFHS reports that within the 50 United States, the District of Columbia and Canada, there are nearly 20,000 high schools that offer athletics. Of the 20,000 high schools, the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) has over 8,000 active members that represent high schools in the United States (NIAAA, 2017). High-school athletic directors from the United States were selected because of the nationwide congruency used to determine a school's conference, and level affiliation is based on school population. This hierarchy creates a pool of participants in each state that serves in athletic departments at different levels, congruent across the nation. The participants also share nationwide educational and experience backgrounds. Based on previous studies of athletic directors, 60% of the participants hold a bachelor's degree in either teaching or sport related studies, and only 50% of them have more than six years experience as an athletic director (Gaddis, 2013; MASDA, 2007).

The NIAAA was solicited as an informational source for the content and background of athletic directors in the United States. Following conversations with a

director at the NIAAA and their review of the study, the NIAAA expressed an interest in the findings of this research about their membership. The letter of support from the NIAAA was obtained to confirm their involvement in distributing the survey to their active membership (APPENDIX C). The participants were selected based on their membership with the NIAAA during the time of this study. The survey was distributed through the NIAAA to all active members in the United States and was completed on a voluntary basis.

### **Research Design**

The design was a descriptive study using survey research methods. The design allowed the researcher to assess information involving high school athletic director requirements, demographic profiles, functions, practices and expectations based on the school demographics. By generating a range of preparatory and professional qualifications evident in athletic directors across the United States, the researcher is able to provide needed information to the state, district and school administrations to permit them to make informed assessments of their own high school athletic director qualifications.

### **Instrumentation**

An online survey instrument was developed to collect specific job description data and demographic information. An earlier study, conducted in 1999, of high school directors in South Dakota, served as a starting point for the questions developed in this survey. The athletic director position has changed over the decades, so revisions to the earlier survey were necessary. Modifications include current duties, functions, practices, athletic classes, student population, demographics and salary considerations. Additional

questions examining leadership, management responsibilities, supervision, and evaluation were added to reflect the development, growth and legal considerations that reflect the complexities of modern day athletic programs.

The tailored design method uses a scientific approach to minimize measurement error. According to Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014) measurement error occurs as a result of the poor wording of questions or poor question presentation that leads to incorrect or uninterpretable answers. To reduce measurement error in this study, a group consisting of a college research professor, two high school principals, two collegiate athletic directors and three former high school athletic directors to assess question clarity and content based on their knowledge of high school athletic directors. This group of professionals reviewed each question and provided feedback on their assessment of the question's clarity during the development of the survey instrument for this study. A pilot survey was then conducted in order to refine the survey instrument and data collection methodologies. Additionally, to assess the content validity prior to administering a pilot survey, the NIAAA reviewed the survey questions within their group of experts.

The complete survey is in APPENDIX A. The final version of the survey instrument contains multiple sections. The sections concentrate on job-related questions dealing with employment status, time commitment, job assistance, leadership and management, role and salary. Section One contains questions that focused on the conditions of employment. Questions are comprised of contract terms, job status, stipend, primary and secondary responsibilities, supervision and evaluation of the athletic director position. Section Two poses questions that focused on the number of sports offered and the time commitment required to maintain the volume of athletic teams

offered. Section Three consists of questions about job assistance offered to the athletic director through assistants or clerical personnel. Section Four contains questions regarding the athletic director's influence of leadership through department policy and procedures, as well as the management and evaluation of the coaching staff. Section Five solicited demographic information about the school. Section Six consisted of questions regarding the participant's educational background, experience, and demographic information. Section Seven contained questions pertaining to the role and responsibilities of the athletic director. The final section focused on salary-related questions. The survey questions were developed using Dillman et al.'s (2014) guiding principles of the tailored design method. The survey used the closed-ended question format for 45 or the 56 available questions. Based on Dillman et al.'s (2014) guidelines, forced choice responses in a check box format were the primary response option. Drop down menus were used sparingly to maximize response and minimize technological issues. Unipolar ordinal scales were used when questions were presented in a scale format creating distinct answers that avoided any overlap in the categories. Finally, the survey was concise and included the use of skip-logic to steer the participant to only relevant questions based on previous answers. In all, the survey took a range of 10-15 minutes to answer based on the amount of skip logic applied to the participants' answers.

This online survey was developed to collect data electronically and was administered through Survey Share. Each question was designed to gather data that provided the necessary information to answer the following questions related to the primary research questions:



1. What are the current primary roles, functions, and practices performed by athletic directors?
  - a. What are the current levels of academic preparation and experience for the position of the athletic director?
  - b. How do current high school athletic directors define the national employment status of the high school athletic director position?
  - c. How do functions and practices for athletic directors vary according to NFHS geographic region?
  - d. To what extent do athletic directors engage in managerial and leadership functions and practices of the athletic department?
2. What is the source and level of compensation of athletic directors?
3. How are athletic directors supervised and evaluated by school and district administrators?

### **Procedure**

The research process began by filing an application requesting approval of investigation from the UNC Charlotte Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following approval, the data collection process began. A Letter of Invitation/Informed Consent (APPENDIX B) and a link to the online survey was distributed in May 2017, at the conclusion of the 2016-2017 school year to all high school athletic directors that were members of the NIAAA. Contact information for the researcher and dissertation chair was provided to the participants in the event there were questions about the study. The participants were sent an email from the NIAAA office providing the Letter of Invitation/Informed Consent document and the link to the online survey instrument

administered through Survey Share.

Participants were instructed to read the Letter of Invitation/Informed Consent prior to participating in the survey, which explained the research, survey, and the intended use of the data being collected. Once they decided to voluntarily participate, subjects were directed to click to confirm they have read the Informed Consent and chose to voluntarily participate in this survey. Data was collected during Summer 2017. Identifying personal information and school names were not collected.

### **Data Analysis**

The tailored design method approach minimizes additional errors in three sources surveyed error: sampling error, coverage error, non-response error. To limit sampling and coverage error, this survey was sent to all active members of the NIAAA. By using all active members, the survey population included all athletic directors who voluntarily participate in the governing body of high school athletic directors in the United States. The survey aimed to limit nonresponse error by being conscious of timing of the initial mailing to avoid times of the year when the majority of athletic teams were in session.

Close-ended survey questions format was primarily used in this survey to provide immediate analysis and results with minimal data coding (Dillman et al., 2014). Each item on the survey instrument related back to at least one of the specific research questions outlined in the “Instrumentation” section of this chapter.

Table 1

*Alignment of Research Questions and Survey Items*

Research Question	Survey Question Item Numbers
1. What are the current primary roles, functions, and practices performed by athletic directors?	14, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 33, 47, 48, 49, 50
1a. What are the current levels of academic preparation and experience requirements for the position of athletic director?	39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44
1b. How do current high school athletic directors define the national employment status of high school athletic director position?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
1c. How do functions and practices for athletic directors vary according to NFHS geographic section?	34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 45, 46
1d. To what extent do athletic directors engage in managerial and leadership functions and practices of the athletic department?	1, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32
2. What is the source and level of compensation of athletic directors?	4, 5, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55
3. How are athletic directors supervised and evaluated by school and district administrators?	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

The data from these items provided a general depiction of the athletic director positional components across the United States. Additionally, the data analysis allowed the researcher to review the data for any trends that may be present in schools of similar demographic variables.

## **Summary**

The primary goal of this study was to examine the multifaceted position of the athletic director position in high schools across the United States. The intent of the survey was to gather data related to the duties, functions, education, evaluation, compensation, leadership and management roles and responsibilities of high school athletic directors. The population for this survey targeted high school athletic directors in the United States that must meet two criteria: 1) they had to be employed as a high school athletic director during the 2016-2017 school year; 2) they had to possess an active membership in the NIAAA (National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association).

This study can assist district and school administrations by providing insight into the current background, demands, and role of the high school athletic director position. Understanding these components of the high school athletic director position can provide a framework for current or aspiring athletic directors to use when making decisions regarding their role and responsibility within their institution.

This chapter contains descriptions of the targeted participants, instrumentation, the reliability and validity of the survey instrument. Methods to conduct the survey and data collection are detailed. In the next chapter, I present the results of the survey instrument.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles, functions, practices, leadership responsibilities, salaries, educational requirements, and qualifications of high school athletic directors in the United States. The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the current primary roles, functions, and practices performed by athletic directors?
  - a. What are the current levels of academic preparation and experience for the position of the athletic director?
  - b. How do current high school athletic directors define the national employment status of the high school athletic director position?
  - c. How do functions and practices for athletic directors vary according to NFHS geographic regions?
  - d. To what extent do athletic directors engage in managerial and leadership functions and practices of the athletic department?
2. What is the source and level of compensation of athletic directors?
3. How are athletic directors supervised and evaluated by school and district administrators?

The data were analyzed, using the SPSS software system, to examine roles, functions, practices, evaluations, and preparation tracks of current athletic directors in the United States. The descriptive data and findings of this study are presented in this chapter.

### **Characteristics of the Population**

The subjects were selected to participate in this study based on their status as an athletic director and membership with the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA). There are over 8,000 NIAAA members in the United States, of which 1,592 responded to the survey. A demographic analysis showed that 84% of the respondents were male and 16% were female.

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) divides high schools into one of eight geographic sections:

I – Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Maine, and Vermont.

II – Mideast: Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

III – South: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

IV – Central: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

V – Midwest: Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

VI – Southwest: Arkansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

VII – West: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Utah.

VIII – Northwest: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming.

A demographic analysis revealed a relatively equal distribution of responses from six of the eight NFHS regions: I (16%), II (16%), III (13%), IV (21%), V (13%), VI (5%), VII (11%), and VIII (5%).

An additional analysis of school demographics disclosed that 48% of respondents work in schools that are in a city school district, 38% a county school district, and 14% a large county with urban and suburban schools. The analysis also revealed that 41% of schools were in rural locations, 40% in suburban areas, and 19% were located in urban settings. A frequency distribution showed that participants who worked at schools with smaller student enrollment responded more than schools with a larger student population: Less than 650 students (45%); 651-1000 students (17%); 1,001 – 1,550 students (16%); 1,551 – 2,000 students (10%); and schools with 2001 or more students (12%).

### **Research Question 1**

The central research question for question one was: What are the current primary roles, functions, and practices performed by athletic directors? Due to the complexity of this question, sub-questions (1a – 1d) were created to address the multiple aspects of this central question. The findings of question one are contained in the following sections.

#### **Research Question 1a.**

Research question 1a for this study was: What are the current levels of academic preparation and experience for the position of the athletic director? The survey instrument contained six questions that corresponded to the preparatory track of high school athletic directors. Two questions pertained to the participant's educational background asking respondents to disclose their highest degree earned and their undergraduate major. A frequency distribution revealed 70% of athletic directors have obtained their Master's degree. Health, physical education, and recreation-based undergraduate majors were the highest reported at 33%, while the lowest at 4% was athletic administration (Table 2).

Table 2

*Athletic Directors' Highest Degree Earned and Undergraduate Major*

Degree Earned	Frequency	Percent	Undergraduate Major	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor Degree	337	21	Health, PE, and Rec	518	33
Master Degree	1118	70	Political, Social Science	317	20
Doctoral Degree	44	3	Education	220	14
Specialist	56	4	Business	142	9
Certificate of Adv. Studies	13	1	Bio & Phys Science	137	9
Other	24	2	Math	92	6
			Athletic Administration	59	4
			Other	34	7
Total	1592	100	Total	1592	100

Three questions referred to licensure and certification. A frequency distribution disclosed that 44% of participants do not hold an athletic director certification, while only 9% reported holding a state level certification. Conversely, 76% reported that they hold a teaching license (Table 3). Participants were asked if they were required to hold a teaching license to be considered for employment as an athletic director. The response choices were either *yes* or *no*. A frequency analysis showed that 57% of athletic directors are required to hold a teaching license. Based on the reported data, the requirement to obtain teacher licensure for employment (57%) and respondents that hold some form of athletic director certification (56%), are essentially equal.



Table 3

*Licensure and Certification Held by Athletic Directors*

Licensure	Frequency	Percent	Certification	Frequency	Percent
Teaching	1204	76	NIAAA Provisional CAA Certificate	112	7
Administration	755	48	NIAAA CAA	542	34
Other	254	16	NIAAA Master CAA	178	11
Counseling	26	2	No certifications	703	44
			State Certification	148	9

A final question asked participants to indicate former teaching and coaching experience prior to obtaining their current position as athletic director. A frequency analysis conveyed that previous teaching experience was most common with 15% having 9-11 years of experience and 45% with 12 or more years of experience (Table 4). Therefore, based on the data collected, 60% of full-time athletic directors across the United States have 9 or more years of teaching experience. This percentage is congruent with the reported 57% of athletic directors being required to hold a teaching license for employment. Varsity coaching experience was another frequent response with 11% holding 9-11 years' experience and 38% having 12 or more years. The frequency analysis also revealed an apparent disparity in the athletic administrative experience reported by participants was significantly lower. Based on the data reported, 61% indicated that they had never been an athletic director prior to their current position and 67% indicate having no experience in athletic administration (Table 4). The results

indicate that 60% of athletic directors in the United States have more prior experience in the classroom than they do running an athletics program.

Table 4

*Percentage of Athletic Directors' Prior Experience*

	0 Years	1 - 2 Years	3 - 5 Years	6 - 8 Years	9 - 11 Years	12+ Years
Teaching	11	5	12	12	15	45
Varsity Coaching	14	8	16	13	11	38
JV Coaching	24	20	21	12	7	16
College/Pro Coaching	78	11	5	2	2	2
Athletic Director	61	8	12	6	4	9
Administrator	67	11	9	5	3	5

**Research Question 1b.**

Research question 1b for this study was: How do current high school athletic directors define the employment status of the high school athletic director position? The survey instrument contained 11 questions related to employment status. In Table 5, a frequency distribution revealed that 49% of respondents are primarily contracted to serve as an athletic director; 23% are contracted as administrators; 22% are contracted as teachers. However, a frequency analysis of requested salary information indicated that 64% of the respondents are paid to perform as full-time athletic directors. Based on the data, the percentage of contracted full-time athletic directors (49%) is 15% lower than the number of respondents that indicate they are paid as full-time athletic directors (64%). A frequency analysis comparison was done comparing employment status and school enrollment. The data showed that school enrollment impacted the percentage of full-time athletic directors: enrollment under 650 students, 32% of athletic directors are full time; 651-1,550 students, 50% of athletic directors are full time; 1,551 – 2,500 students, 53%

are full-time; and enrollment with 2,500 students or more, 64% of athletic directors are full time. A frequency analysis comparison was also done comparing the primary employment contract and other responsibilities reported by the respondents (Table 5). The data revealed a consistent percentage of contracted teachers (22%) and those that reported teaching as an assigned duty (22%). However, the data also showed that although 49% indicated they are primarily contracted as the athletic director, only 21% reported having no additional duties assigned to the scope of the school day. Lastly, the 23% that reported as contracted administrators the data showed only 17% reported serving in those roles during the scope of the day (15% as an assistant principal, 2% as a superintendent/principal).

Table 5

*Athletic Director's Contractual Agreements*

Primary Contract Title	Percent of day allocated to			Length of Contract		
	Frequency	Percent	Position	Frequency	Percent	Length of Contract
Athletic Director	789	49	100 <sup>1</sup>	688	43	12 mo.
Administrator	368	23	76-99	238	15	11.5 mo.
Teacher	352	22	50-75	307	19	11 mo.
Split position	45	3	25-49	191	12	10.5 mo.
Dean/Counselor/ Advisor	8	1	1-24	168	11	
Director/Coordinator	19	1				10 mo.
						9 mo.
Not Specified	11	1				Did not specify
Total	1592	100		1592	100	Total
				1592	100	100

<sup>1</sup>Indicates Full-time

Table 6

*Contractual Agreement Compared to Other Responsibilities Assigned*

	Primary Employment Contract		Other Assigned Responsibilities		
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Athletic Director	789	49	Teacher	356	22
Administrator	368	23	Athletic Director only	330	21
Teacher	352	22	Other	273	17
Split position	45	3	Assistant Principal	235	15
Dean/Counselor/Advisor	8	1	Combination of positions	171	11
Director/Coordinator	19	1	Not Specified	121	7
Not specified	11	1	Department Chair	60	4
			Superintendent/Principal	33	2
			Counselor	13	1
Total	1592	100	Total	1592	100

Participants were also asked if they had coaching responsibilities while serving as the athletic director. The response choices were either *yes* or *no*. A frequency analysis showed that 32% of athletic directors held coaching responsibilities in addition to serving as the athletic director. Based on the data, of that 32%, the largest demographic of athletic directors that also coached (67%) worked at schools with a student population of fewer than 650 students. In schools with a student population over 2,000, only 6% of athletic directors reported having coaching responsibilities in addition to serving as the athletic director. Respondents were also asked to indicate the number of varsity sports offered at their school. A frequency analysis showed that over 50% of athletic directors responded that their school offered 10 or more varsity sports for both boys and girls (Table 7). Based on the data, over half of athletic directors in the United States are required to govern 20 or more varsity sports each school year.

Table 7

*Number of Varsity Sports*

Number	Male Varsity Sports		Female Varsity sports	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
13 or more	378	24	325	21
10 - 12	514	32	516	32
7 - 9	438	28	480	30
4 - 6	215	13	226	14
0 - 3	47	3	45	3
Total (N = 1592)	1592	100	1592	100

Three survey questions pertained to time allocated to the position through questions that examined length of contract and the participant's perceived percentage appropriated to athletic department tasks. A frequency distribution revealed 53% of athletic directors operate on a 12-month contract and 31% operate with a 10-month

contract that typically coincides with the 10-month school calendar year (Table 4). The data also showed that 43% of respondents reported that 100% of their time is allocated by their school for athletic department activities; 15% state 76 – 99%; and 19% disclosed that 50 – 75% of the day is allocated for athletic department activities. Based on the data reported, 58% of all athletic directors are allocated a minimum of 75% of the school day in activities related to the athletic department. According to the data, 43% reported 100% of their day is allocated to athletic director activities; however, as previously noted only 21% reported only having athletic director duties throughout the school day. Minor additional duties that were reported by participants such as before/after school duties, bus duty, or study hall may not be considered as a part of the school day. Therefore, this discrepancy reported in the data is in part due to what is allocated in the contract versus what happens in actual practice.

The final time-related survey question asked respondents to report a range of weekly hours spent on athletic department activities. A frequency distribution disclosed that 11% worked 41-50 hours/week; 24% spent 51 – 60 hours/week; 21% put in 61 – 70 hours/week; and 12% reported over 70 hours/week (Table 8). Therefore, 68% of respondents spent 40 or more hours weekly performing athletic director tasks, which is congruent with the 64% that reported serving as a full-time athletic director. Additionally, based on the data, over half of athletic directors in the United States (57%) work 50 or more hours each week. A frequency analysis comparison was done comparing weekly hours spent in athletic director activities and employment status. The results found that 85% of full-time athletic director spend 50 or more hours each week in athletic department activities. Conversely, 45% of part-time athletic directors spend 50

or more hours each week in athletic director activities while 40% report spending less than 40 hours each week in the athletic director role.



Table 8

*Athletic Director Weekly Time Commitment*

Time Commitment (Hours)	Frequency	Percent
70+	196	12
61 – 70	327	21
51 – 60	380	24
41 – 50	170	11
31 – 40	166	10
21 – 30	222	14
11-20	112	7
0 – 10	19	1
Total (N = 1592)	1592	100

Four survey questions corresponded to personnel assistance provided for athletic directors. Participants were asked if they received clerical assistance or an assistant athletic director. If participants answered *yes*, they were then directed to indicate the extent of weekly hours the assistance provided. A frequency analysis indicated that of the 60% of athletic directors that had a clerical assistant, 45% reported that position is full-time (40+ hours each week). Additionally, 28% of all athletic directors noted they employed an assistant athletic director. Of those that reported the assistant director position, the majority (63%) indicated that position offered less than 30 hours of assistance weekly (Table 9).

Table 9

*Assistance Provided to Athletic Director*

Hours	Clerical Assistant		Assistant Athletic Director	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1-15	211	22	172	39
16-30	157	17	108	24
31-40	155	16	27	6
Fulltime (40+)	428	45	138	31
Total	951	100	445	100

Note. The total is based on the number of athletic directors' positive response to clerical assistance (951) and/or assistant athletic director (445).

**Research Question 1c.**

Research question 1c was: How do functions and practices for athletic directors vary according to NFHS geographic region? The survey instrument contained one question that corresponded to athletic oriented responsibilities. Based on previous research as described in Chapter 2, there are a number of identified skills that are considered necessary in order to proficiently operate an athletic department. Participants rated each of the 26 items ranging from essential, very important, average importance, minimal importance, not important, and not applicable. An overall frequency distribution of topics rated essential or very important was compiled to include all eight NFHS regions, as well as an individual composite of each NFHS region. In Table 10 the overall frequency distribution revealed that the top five responsibilities rated by athletic directors were communications (97%), budget operations (93%), player eligibility (93%), hiring coaches (93%), and scheduling (91%). A comparison across the NFHS regions demonstrated relative consistency of those five topics rating highest amongst the eight regions. Communications rated first among seven of the eight regions. The next three

skill areas tied at second with 93% each: budget operations, player eligibility, and hiring coaches. Budgeting ranked in the top five in six of the eight regions. Player eligibility and hiring coaches were both consistently ranked in the top five amongst all eight regions. Scheduling also placed top five in five of the eight sections.

Overall rankings that round out the top ten responsibilities were facility management (89%), parent relations (88%), and a three-way tie at 88% of personnel management, discipline of coaches, and community relations. Facility management was ranked consistently in the top ten amongst all eight regions. Parent relations rated in the top ten among seven of the eight regions; region 2 it ranked 13<sup>th</sup> (82%). Personnel management ranked in the top ten in six of the eight regions; region 5 it ranked 12<sup>th</sup> (86%) and in region 8 at eleventh (81%). Disciplining coaches also held top ten standing with six of the eight regions; region 4 ranked 12<sup>th</sup> (86%) and section 5 ranked at eleventh (87%). Community relations ranked top ten in five regions; in sections 1, 6, and 7 it ranked twelfth. Although transportation missed the top ten by one percentage point (86%), five of the eight sections ranked it as a top ten responsibility. The data indicates slight variances signified in the top ten essential responsibilities as reported by athletic directors. However, the data also provides evident consistencies amongst the top eleven topics being ranked at a minimum of 63% in all NFHS regions' top ten lists.

Table 10

*Percentage of Athletic Director Responsibilities Perceived as Essential and/or Very Important*

Skills	NFHS Section								
	Overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Communications	97	97	97	97	96	99	94	96	97
Player eligibility	93	94	91	95	91	91	92	93	97
Hiring coaches	93	94	94	92	95	92	94	92	94
Budget operations	93	94	94	96	90	91	95	83	98
Scheduling	91	92	93	80	94	98	89	88	95
Facility management	89	87	87	91	89	90	89	82	90
Parent relations	88	87	82	92	89	91	90	88	88
Personnel management	87	88	88	88	87	86	94	83	81
Discipline (coaches)	87	87	87	92	86	87	91	84	82
Community relations	87	85	87	91	90	89	88	80	88
Transportation	86	93	84	84	83	88	81	85	92
Personnel evaluation	84	86	81	85	83	86	92	78	79
Discipline (athletes)	82	84	83	86	94	82	77	81	77
Referees	79	75	77	76	87	90	84	72	78
Field maintenance	78	82	80	81	75	72	80	79	75
Equipment management	78	83	84	78	73	80	80	74	70
Sports medicine	72	66	77	80	67	73	89	62	68
Public/Media relations	68	62	71	73	72	68	79	52	57
Community-shared facilities	59	59	59	48	56	67	57	56	68
Booster club	55	48	65	61	58	51	61	46	52
Orientation programs	49	41	51	57	46	46	60	55	44
Marketing and promotions	44	30	48	66	45	38	53	38	33
Fund raising	44	24	50	65	47	32	43	51	44
Athletic apparel	44	48	52	55	36	38	56	42	36
Corporate sponsorships	36	16	41	63	37	28	51	29	29
College coach connections	25	25	33	41	15	16	26	21	17

**Research Question 1d.**

Research question 1d of this study was: To what extent do athletic directors engage in managerial and leadership functions and practices of the athletic department? The survey contained one question that corresponded to additional leadership positions held at the school. Participants were asked to indicate other assigned responsibilities within the scope of their day. Table 6 shows a frequency analysis of other responsibilities indicated by 32% of athletic directors who assumed additional leadership roles in their school through the positions of: assistant principal (15%), assistant principal combined with other responsibilities (11%), department chair (4%), and superintendent or principal (2%). Based on the data, one of three athletic directors identified with positions of leadership at their schools in areas other than athletics.

Four questions pertained to personnel assistance provided for athletic directors. Participants were asked if they received assistance through clerical aide or an assistant athletic director. A frequency analysis indicated that of the 60% of respondents had a clerical assistant and 28% of all athletic directors noted they employed an assistant athletic director (Table 9). Based on the data relating to assistance provided, an interesting observation emerges, a minimum of 60% of athletic directors are required to manage staff other than athletic coaches.

The survey contained three questions related to the respondent's involvement with strategic leadership within the athletic department. A frequency distribution disclosed that 97% of respondents provided strategic leadership to the athletic department. Based on the data, respondents indicated that within the athletic department: 43% of athletic directors established operating procedures; 37% developed current practices; 35%

generated the department philosophy; 31% developed departmental policies; 29% generated the overall vision of the athletic department (Table 11). Furthermore, participants also indicated they held extreme or significant influence over the strategic leadership areas: current practices (78%), operating procedures (77%), overall vision (77%), and departmental policies (73%). Therefore the data collected indicates that three out of four athletic directors influenced leadership within the athletic department, while one out of three athletic directors had direct involvement in areas of strategic leadership.

Table 11

*Percentage of Athletic Director's Perception of Establishment of Current Athletic Department Vision, Philosophy, Procedures, and Practices*

	<u>Pre-Established</u>	<u>School District</u>	<u>School Administrative Development</u>	<u>Athletic Director</u>	<u>Athletic Director &amp; Coach</u>
Operating procedures	20	9	12	43	15
Practices	21	7	11	37	24
Philosophy	19	7	9	35	29
Policies	20	13	14	31	22
Overall vision	18	7	10	29	34

Note. The table is based on the number of athletic directors' positive response to providing strategic leadership to the Athletic Department (1549)

The last group of questions pertained to the respondent's management and evaluation of athletic staff. The survey results found that 97% of athletic directors supervise athletic staff members and 89% provide their staff with evaluations. Additionally, the results denoted that 78% of athletic directors manage and 61% evaluate 20 or more staff members within the athletic department. A frequency analysis (Table 12) revealed that athletic directors managed 75% or more of athletic staff members most often in emergency protocol (78%), athletic staff meetings (75%), athlete safety (75%), and developing an appropriate playing environment (70%). According to the results, 25% of respondents indicated that they spent 10 or more hours a week in personnel management. Participants were asked to indicate the measures by which they evaluated the athletic staff. An overall frequency distribution was compiled to include all eight NFHS regions, as well as an individual composite of each NFHS region. Table 13 revealed that organizational abilities (72%) was the top measure used by athletic directors to evaluate athletic staff. A comparison across the NFHS regions conveyed consistency that organizational abilities was the number one evaluation measure most frequently used by athletic directors across the United States. Additional measures highly ranked overall were administrative abilities (66%) and school/district criteria (63%); these were consistently reported as top three measures in seven of the eight NFHS regions.



Table 12

*Percent of Staff Managed in Athletic Areas for Athletic Directors*

	100	75 - 99	50 - 74	25 - 49	10 - 24	Less Than 10	None
Emergency protocol	62	16	8	5	3	4	2
Attend athletic staff							
meetings	62	13	6	5	5	6	3
Athlete safety	55	20	10	6	4	3	2
Playing							
environment	51	19	11	7	4	5	3
Game day							
operations	41	20	11	9	6	7	6
Team academics	41	14	13	7	7	9	9
Team behavior	35	15	15	11	8	10	6
Positive team							
culture	31	16	15	11	9	9	9
Athlete readiness	19	10	10	9	9	16	27
Practice plans/game							
preparations	16	6	7	6	9	20	36
Conducting practice	16	5	6	6	8	19	40
Strength training	14	7	7	7	9	19	37

Table 13

*Percent of Measures Athletic Directors Use to Evaluate Athletic Staff and Coaches*

Measures	Overall	NFHS Section							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Organizational abilities	72	78	73	69	74	69	79	63	74
Administrative abilities	66	67	68	63	68	62	76	57	68
School/district Criteria and standards	63	72	66	54	66	59	71	47	65
Initial job description	55	53	59	53	57	55	56	49	57
Formal self assessment	48	45	47	48	51	54	49	39	46
Team academic Performance	32	32	31	38	29	25	39	35	34
Player evaluation/satisfaction	31	32	30	26	30	32	29	42	25
Team athletic progress	29	26	31	41	30	23	40	21	26
Assessed as colleagues	27	27	32	29	28	24	29	23	25
Player eligibility	26	27	24	28	25	20	39	29	25
Team athletic Achievement	17	14	21	26	17	10	31	15	9
Parent input	14	10	15	13	13	13	17	21	12

## Research Question 2

The second research question was: What is the source and level of compensation of athletic directors? The survey contained two questions that corresponded to salary based on employment status. The first question asked full-time participants to select a salary range; the second question required part-time participants to select the salary range that represented the athletic director portion of their salary. A frequency analysis of full-time respondents indicated that 15% of athletic directors are paid \$70 – 79,999; 18% receive \$80 – 89,999; and 28% make \$90,000 or higher (Table 14). Therefore, based on the data collected, 61% of full-time athletic directors across the United States receive a salary of \$70,000 or more. In stark

contrast, the frequency analysis also revealed salaries reported by part-time participants were significantly lower. Based on the data reported, 571 part-time respondents (36%) indicated that 26% of athletic directors receive less than \$5,000 while 29% report their salary between \$5,000 – 9,999. The results indicated that 55% of part-time athletic directors in the United States are paid less than \$10,000 annually for the athletic director position.

Table 14

*Salary Range for Full- and Part-Time Athletic Directors*

Full-Time Athletic Director			Part-Time Athletic Director		
Salary	Frequency	Percent	Salary	Frequency	Percent
Less than 30,000	29	3	Less than 5,000	149	26
\$30,000 – 34,999	11	1	\$5,000 – 9,999	168	29
\$35,000 – 39,999	24	2	\$10,000 – 14,999	63	11
\$40,000 – 44,999	24	2	\$15,000 – 19,999	41	7
\$45,000 – 49,999	35	3	\$20,000 – 24,999	26	5
\$50,000 – 54,999	59	6	\$25,000 – 29,999	15	3
\$55,000 – 59,999	50	5	\$30,000 – 34,999	17	3
\$60,000 – 64,999	57	6	\$35,000 or more	92	16
\$65,000 – 69,999	100	10			
\$70,000 – 79,999	153	15			
\$80,000 – 89,999	186	18			
\$90,000 or more	283	28			
Total	1011	100		571	100%

The survey contained three additional questions related to supplemental income where participants responded first by answering *yes* or *no*. If the respondent answered *yes*, the survey offered a follow up question for the respondent to indicate details of the supplemental source. In addition to receiving a yearly salary, participants indicated receiving external funding (2%), stipends (57%), and non-monetary supplements (8%). Respondents who received this supplemental income indicated specific sources of funding for each category (Table 15).

Table 15

*Supplemental Funding*

Type of Funding	Frequency	Percent
External	24	2
Stipends	908	57
Non-monetary supplement	120	8
Total (N=1592)	1592	100

Note. Percent based on total positive responses for each indicator.

The first question asked participants to designate if any portion of their athletic director salary was funded by external sources. Of the 1592 total participants, 24 (2%) responded that a portion of their salary was funded by external sources. The mean results of external sources of funding were \$50,000 from fundraising and board associations; \$21,000 from athletic booster clubs; \$10,500 from private donor or corporate sponsors; \$10,000 from driver education funds; and a mean of \$27,000 were from unspecified sources.

The second question asked participants to indicate if they received any stipends in addition to their regular athletic director salary. Based on the results, 57% of respondents indicated they received a form of stipend as athletic directors with cell phone (40%) and mileage/travel (76%) stipends as the primary responses. Additional responses included professional development (5%) and after hours or extra hours pay (12%). Other responses were given that represented less than 1% of the participants that receive stipends.

The third supplemental income question asked participants to denote if they received any non-monetary compensation or allowances from external sources. The survey results found that 8% receive non-monetary compensation in the forms of travel or meals (35%), apparel (33%), automobile (18%), phone (15%), and other (3%).

### Research Question 3

The third research question of this study was: How are athletic directors supervised and evaluated by school and district administrators? The survey instrument contained six questions that pertained to the supervision and evaluation of athletic directors. In two questions participants were asked if they were supervised or evaluated and responded by answering *yes* or *no*. A frequency analysis disclosed 57% of athletic director activities were supervised and 84% report that a school administrator evaluated their performance. Two additional questions asked participants to describe the school administrator responsible for supervision or evaluation. A frequency analysis revealed that the school principal or head of school is the primary supervisor (67%) or evaluator (65%) of athletic director activities and performance (Table 16).

Table 16

#### *Supervisors and Evaluators of Athletic Directors*

Title	Supervisor		Evaluator	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Principal/Head of school	802	67	868	65
Superintendent/President	239	20	339	25
Assistant Principal/Head of School	112	9	95	7
Assistant Superintendent	11	1	23	2
Other	26	2	20	1
Total	1196	100	1345	100

Note. The total is based on the number of athletic directors' positive responses to supervision (1196) and/or having an evaluation (1345).

#### Research Question 4

A fourth question asked participants how often their performance was evaluated. Participants were instructed to choose from the following multiple-choice items: (1) weekly, (2) monthly, (3) yearly, (4) after each sport season, and (6) other. A frequency analysis of the respondent's answers indicated that 88% of athletic directors received a yearly evaluation (Table 17).

Table 17

*Frequency Of Athletic Director Performance Evaluation*

	Frequency	Percent
Yearly	1196	88
Other	65	5
Close of sport season	51	4
Monthly	32	2
Weekly	12	1
Total	1356	100

Note. The total is based on the number of athletic directors' positive response to evaluation (1356).

The final question asked participants to select the measures used by school administration to evaluate their performance. According to previous research, there are a number of identified topics of athletic director evaluation. Therefore, the survey offered 17 items based on previous research. An overall frequency distribution was compiled to include all eight NFHS regions, as well as an individual composite of each NFHS region. In Table 18 the overall frequency distribution revealed that the measures school administrators frequently used to evaluate athletic directors were administration and organization (67%), working with others (66%), solving problems (66%), staff management (65%), community involvement

(59%), ethical behaviors (58%) and attending athletic events (55%). A comparison across the NFHS regions conveys consistency that those seven evaluation measures were the most frequently used by school administrators across the United States.

Table 18

*Evaluation Measures for Athletic Directors' Performance*

Skills	NFHS Section								
	Overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Administration & Organization	67	65	69	62	70	66	73	62	77
Working with Others	66	63	70	64	68	67	66	61	70
Solving Problems	66	62	68	68	68	67	66	62	70
Staff Management	65	60	71	64	67	64	67	61	70
Community Involvement	59	57	61	52	61	59	56	52	65
Ethical Behaviors	58	54	61	58	60	64	58	56	58
Attending Athletic Events	55	52	57	55	60	53	50	47	57
Initial Job Description	50	43	53	40	51	50	43	41	49
Athlete Safety	47	49	47	52	51	49	48	47	56
School/District Criteria	36	31	42	30	41	36	32	28	34
Staff Behaviors	35	35	37	37	37	34	42	35	27
Athlete Satisfaction	23	25	24	23	20	23	21	25	20
Team Academics & Eligibility	19	19	17	27	18	19	20	18	17
Fundraising	10	6	14	14	10	6	10	13	3
Athletic Department Achievements	10	7	11	17	10	10	14	8	5
Adversarial proceeding	7	5	10	5	9	9	10	6	7
Athletic Department Progress	7	4	7	11	7	4	8	5	7

Note. Measured in percent of responses on survey.



### **Summary**

The findings were based on the research questions that examined the roles, functions, practices, salaries, evaluations, and preparation tracks of current athletic directors in the United States. Descriptive statistics were used to assess a detailed description of the athletic director position in the United States. The data was compiled using a series of frequency analyses.

The findings indicate that most current athletic directors hold a Master's degree, are licensed teachers, and have a long background in teaching. Conversely, many do not hold state or national certifications and most athletic directors have little experience in athletic administration prior to securing the position of athletic director.

Athletic directors need to possess leadership and management skills, strong organizational and administrative abilities, and good communication skills. They are influential and essential in strategic leadership aspects of the athletic department, supervise and evaluate staff, and oftentimes hold additional leadership roles within the school. In many instances, the principal is the school administrator who supervises and evaluates the athletic director position.

The trend of contracting full-time athletic directors in 12-month positions outweighs part-time positions and full-time salaries are significantly higher than a part-time salary. The findings indicate that most schools offer 20 or more varsity programs for the athletic director to oversee. Many athletic directors report high volume workweeks that exceed 50 hours. However, findings demonstrate a trend of providing athletic directors with clerical aides or assistant athletic directors. Athletic directors at smaller schools with less than 650 students are far more likely to coach in addition to

serving as an athletic director when compared to their counterparts at large schools with a population that surpass 2,000 students. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of these findings, draw conclusions and make recommendations for future study.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study presents a descriptive examination of the common functions, practices, leadership responsibilities, salaries, educational requirements, and qualifications of high school athletic directors in the United States. The study also includes a comparison across the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) geographic regions in areas of athletic director responsibilities, measures used to evaluate coaches, and the supervision and evaluation of athletic directors' performance. The descriptive demographic information and criteria related to the athletic director position were measured through a survey developed with the direction and cooperation of the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association. This discussion includes the research question results, a summary of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

### **Discussion of Results**

This study began with the hypothesis that the high school athletic director position had undergone recent and significant changes, moving closer to the focus and function of college and university athletic directors. The first central research question in this study examined the current primary roles, functions, and practices performed by athletic directors. Due to the complexity of this central question, four sub-questions were created to address the multiple aspects of this fundamental question.

*What are the current levels of academic preparation and experience for the position of the athletic director* is the first sub-question of the study. Within the past two decades, new trends have emerged in the preparation requirements of athletic directors. Previous literature reveals that the vast majority of athletic directors held bachelor's

degrees and a small percentage obtained a master's degree. The results of this study suggest an entirely different picture, finding that most athletic directors have a master's degree. Additionally, the requirement of a teaching license to secure employment as an athletic director is much lower now than noted in the literature less than a decade ago. A study conducted by Case (2010) disclosed that 87% of athletic directors were required to have a teaching license for employment as an athletic director. However, this study found that 57% of athletic directors are held to that same requirement. Although obtaining a teaching license is a lesser requirement, over half of today's athletic directors report having more than a decade of teaching experience. The discernible shift in preparatory requisites validates the conclusion that a significant change has occurred in the academic background and preparation of the athletic director.

The findings consistent with the literature denote that health, physical education, and recreation (HPER) majors remain at the forefront of undergraduate degrees, while those in athletic administration remain consistently low. Over two-thirds (70%) of the respondents majored in HPER at the undergraduate level. Rouff (2007), Whisenant, Miller, and Pedersen (2005), and Stier and Schneider (2001) also reported that HPER was the most common undergraduate major reported by athletic directors. Additionally, most athletic directors have some level of coaching experience, and there remains no specific certification requirement for employment as an athletic director. The NIAAA offers multiple accredited certifications, which provide athletic directors the opportunity to stay relevant and effective while leading the athletic department. Additionally, the NFHS provides accredited coaching certifications. Although most athletic directors no longer coach, these certifications help athletic directors maintain a connection and understanding

of the coaches they supervise. One point of interest and emerging concern is the lack of significant prior athletic administration experience of athletic directors. According to present and past studies, the highest population of athletic directors have minimal experience, whereas those with significant experience are marginally represented. Nearly two-thirds (61%) of athletic directors reported having no prior athletic administrative experience before their current position. Studies by Hoch (2000) and Stier and Schneider (2001) show similar results where over half of the athletic directors have less than six years of experience. The consistent turnover rate evident in the findings of this study and those in the literature creates a lack of continuity for athletic departments. With the perpetual issue surrounding inexperienced athletic directors at the helm of the department, it is reasonable to conclude that on-the-job training is the typical preparation method for athletic directors. These results pose an important point for further study to examine the requirements, frequency, and availability of professional development specific to the area of being an athletic director.

*How do current high school athletic directors define the employment status of the high school athletic director position* is the second point of interest the central question examines in this study. The results of this study reveal a drastic overall increase (64%) in full-time athletic director positions. Earlier studies conducted by Gaddis (2013) and Whisenant and Pedersen (2004a) revealed that 15% of athletic directors oversee athletic department activities in a full-time capacity. This study confirms a significant increase of full-time positions resulting from the extensive list of responsibilities required of modern-day athletic directors. The findings also show that schools with higher student enrollment employ more full-time athletic directors (64%) than do schools with less than 650

students (32%). One explanation for this difference is the higher number of staff, students, and sports larger schools offer than smaller schools. This study supported the findings of an earlier study (Anderson, 1999) detailing the typical workweek exceeds 50 hours for most athletic directors, and a full-time, 12-month contract is the common employment status. Additionally, most full-time athletic directors reported spending 50 or more hours in athletic director responsibilities, compared to 45% of part-time respondents. These results present an interesting dynamic of expectations for part-time athletic directors – nearly half of those working under part-time parameters are fulfilling the same workload as their full-time counterparts. The literature designates coaching as a specific component of the athletic director job description. However, the findings illustrate a new trend indicating a decrease in the coaching responsibilities assigned to athletic directors primarily at larger schools. The transitions evident in the employment status are partially impacted by school enrollment and corroborate the proposition that a change in the athletic director position has occurred.

The study supports the findings of Martin and Dias (1999) and Whisenant and Pedersen (2004a, 2004b) with the continued propensity for athletic directors to function in multiple positions within the school; however, this study shows the amount of time spent in athletic director activities is on the rise. The evolution of athletic director responsibilities is one reason for the rising shift in job focus. The evidence of split positions offers one viable explanation for the continued high percentage of athletic directors that possess teaching licenses. Additional survey questions examined an area in the literature: clerical aides and assistants provided to athletic directors. The results affirm that most athletic directors are provided clerical aide, while assistant athletic

directors are less common, signifying a new role-development in high school athletics. A study by Anderson (1999) showed similar results. As the literature reveals, nearly 8 million student athletes participate in high school sports every year. The growth in the number of sports available at the high school level, coupled with the increase in the number of athletes competing in high school, has expanded the workload faced by the typical athletic director prompting the changing employment trends found in this study.

*How do functions and practices for athletic directors vary according to NFHS geographic region* is the third area the central question examines. This study agreed with the literature citing communication skills as the number one competency for athletic directors in seven of the eight regions (the final region ranked communication second by one percentage point).

Budget operations and hiring coaches are upward trends related to the business of athletics across all eight regions. A study by Whisenant and Pedersen (2004a) proposed that sporting events are categorically shifting into the business realm. This shift requires the athletic director to possess the ability to act as a business expert in an athletic arena, which the findings agree. The degree to which athletic directors are managing budgets was likely not conceived by the literature a decade ago.

Studies by Hoch (2010) and Schroeder & Brasfield (2013) reveal that athletic directors in past years often had limited involvement in hiring coaches. The findings of this study show the selection and hiring of a coaching staff have shifted from principals to athletic directors. Tied to this trend is the responsibility of personnel management found in both the literature and the findings of this study. The results also support the literature with each region placing a priority on the following competencies: player

eligibility, scheduling, facility management, parent and community relations, and transportation. This study's comparison across regions shows continuity in the essential functions and practices exercised by athletic directors.

*To what extent do athletic directors engage in managerial and leadership functions and practices of the athletic department* is the final sub-question related to the first research question that looks at current primary roles, functions, and practices performed by athletic directors. Hoch (2010), Stier (2001) and Stier and Schneider (2000) reveal that athletic directors assume other positions in the school as teachers, coaches, or school administrators in addition to their athletic responsibilities. Although the findings of this study point out that attention to athletic responsibilities is on the rise, this study also agrees with the literature revealing that over a third of athletic directors still assume additional positions of leadership within the school. In the athletic director role, a leader influences the activities of the athletic department, whereas a manager governs the functions of the athletic program. Toma (2013) views the athletic department as the most visible component of a high school, so it is encouraging to see the upward trend of athletic directors moving away from multiple roles into a defined leadership position for the athletic department. Both the literature and this study emphasize the tremendous influence of athletic directors as they provide leadership and management to coaches, assistants, athletic staff, and students. The literature indicates that effective leaders need to be able to balance both the leadership and management components of an organization. The findings of this study also support the literature that the central role of the athletic director is to provide leadership and direction to the athletic program. Based on this study, it is clear that athletic directors hold considerable influence over practices,



procedures, vision, and departmental policies. Additionally, it is increasingly evident in these findings that athletic directors' management duties have expanded as they supervise and evaluate a more extensive athletic staff. These findings show an upward trend in the expectations of blended leadership and management present in most athletic directors positions.

*What is the source and level of compensation of athletic directors* is the second major area of inquiry of this study. The literature affirms that athletic director positions, in the past, were primarily part-time and total salaries were pieced together based on multiple duties. However, the trend toward increased full-time positions has also tended to create increased salary levels. The investigation by Case (2010) found the average salary was \$50,000 for full-time athletic directors. The findings in this study illustrate both a drastic increase and a significant contrast in compensation between full-time and part-time athletic directors. Over half of full-time athletic directors report salaries exceeding \$70,000 annually. Conversely, over half of part-time athletic directors receive less than \$10,000 compensation for athletically related responsibilities. The significant discrepancy in pay is alarming considering most athletic directors are accountable for similar, daily athletic department responsibilities regardless if they are full-time or part-time. The salary imbalance between full and part-time offers one explanation for the inordinate amount of turnover evident by the number of athletic directors with minimal prior administrative experience. Additionally, there is a disparity between the educational advances made in preparation for the position aligning with increases in pay for part-time athletic directors. Another noteworthy finding is stipends for incidentals as an additional funding source for athletic directors. Over half of the respondents reported

that it is a common trend for athletic directors to receive stipends for cell phone, mileage, and travel expenses. Based on these findings there is an apparent lack of emphasis placed on appropriate compensation fails to position and retain highly qualified athletic directors at the high school level.

*How are athletic directors supervised and evaluated by school and district administrators* is the final research area of this study. The results of this study are congruent with the literature indicating that the school principal or head of school remains the primary supervisor of the athletic director. However, it appears that the role of supervision and evaluation is shifting slightly away from the principal to other full-time school administrators. Only half of athletic directors report being routinely supervised by a school administrator; however, most are evaluated yearly.

The findings of this study indicate the primary areas administrators use to evaluate athletic directors are administration and organization, working with others, problem solving, staff management, community involvement, ethics, and attending athletic events. By contrast, the literature offered two criteria of effectiveness for athletic director success. One measure highlighted the need for organization and management skills (Whisenant and Pedersen, 2004a) while the second yardstick placed a substantial emphasis on ethical behaviors (Stier and Schneider, 2000). The findings of this study appear to blend the opposing concepts of leadership versus management. Although these results emphasize many of the essential evaluation characteristics expressed in the literature, there is a blend and hierarchal shift in the priority of these measurements. The emphasis in the current study shows a shift from ethical traits to stress the business components of the position. The athletic director position has morphed in complexity,

requiring a shift in the standards of evaluation and expectations for school administrators to follow suit.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to develop a descriptive collection of common functions, practices, leadership responsibilities, salaries, educational requirements, and qualifications of high school athletic directors in the United States. This study shows that the job description and responsibilities of athletic directors are dynamic. The shift from past expectations that has occurred incorporates more responsibilities evolving from the increased interest and enthusiasm for high school athletics. Athletic directors are typically contracted for ten to twelve months and work often extends beyond the hours of a standard workweek. They have advanced educational backgrounds, in the form of master's degrees and typically maintain a teaching license. One aspect of the position that is decreasing is the expectation to coach sports teams. Unmistakably, the responsibilities of the athletic director position are growing in complexity with the expectation to blend communication skills, ethical leadership, and business management. Unfortunately, the trend illustrated in this study shows athletic directors initially lack the training and preparation to address the varied components of the position and must acquire the skills on the job. These new responsibilities, coupled with limited experience, make it imperative that the principal continues to work closely with the athletic director to develop continuity within the athletic department for an efficient and successful program. Administrators must also hire, develop, and retain quality individuals for arguably the most visible component of a high school – the athletic department.

### **Recommendations and Ideas for Future Research**

Three areas for future research emerged from this study.

First, the data collected may be useful beyond simple description and comparison. Currently, depending on school district, the job description for the high school athletic director position is either non-existent or inconsistent. The data shows athletic directors are contracted under varied employment positions within the school. Depending on the contracted position the athletic director holds, some athletic department job responsibilities may not be supported as a part of the employed position. These inconsistencies between athletic director position title and responsibilities expose athletic directors, schools, and districts to potential legal liabilities. This research can be utilized to develop a detailed profile of athletic director responsibilities. The data reveals responsibilities consistent on a national scale, which can be used to establish a baseline job description. An established job description has an impact on multiple levels: it can provide school administrations with guidelines for hiring athletic directors; allow athletic directors to serve in an established position potentially reducing the legal liabilities for themselves or school districts; provide sport administration programs or certifications with specific information to target as a course of study; allow students who aspire to become athletic directors the opportunity to make constructive career decisions. Additional studies are recommended to examine variations based on school size (athletic class) across states and regions.

Second, data from this study reveals that a substantial number of athletic directors lack prior athletic administration preparation and experience. The results reveal that 61% of current athletic directors have never held a position in athletic administration before

their current position and only 13% have more than ten years of experience as athletic directors. Furthermore, the research also reports that fewer than 10% of respondents have an academic background in administration or possess any specific certifications relevant to the athletic director position. This data can be used as guidance to target specific professional development needs or to establish certification requirements for new or aspiring athletic directors. Additional studies are recommended to investigate the excessive turnover evident in the number of athletic directors with limited prior experience. Further studies can also explore the frequency, availability, and professional development requirements specific to athletic directors. A final suggestion for future research would compare the effectiveness and success of athletic directors that possess NIAAA certifications against those without certifications.

Third, four of the six most frequent evaluation measures reported by the data are related to business administration, yet the research shows that most athletic directors possess undergraduate degrees with majors lacking business or administration components. This study reports that 33% of athletic directors have degrees in HPER compared to 10% with degrees in business degrees and 4% in administration. The data also reveals these as the measures school administrators consistently use to evaluate job performance nationwide. This data is useful to help school administrators create consistent measures used for athletic director evaluations. Future studies are recommended to compare the job effectiveness between athletic directors with business or administration degrees with those who hold degrees in other courses of study.

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## APPENDIX A

## Survey

**Athletic Director Survey**

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1) **The following questions are about your EMPLOYMENT STATUS.**

**During the course of the regular school day, what percent of your time is allocated by your school to the role of athletic director? Choose one.**

- ☐ 100% (full-time AD)
- ☐ 76-99%
- ☐ 50-75%
- ☐ 25-49%
- ☐ 1-24%

2) What is the length of your yearly contract? **Choose one.**

- ☐ 10 month
- ☐ 12 month
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3) **Which of the following positions best describes your primary employment contract for the 2015-2016 school year. Choose one:**

- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Athletic Director
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



4) Please answer if you are a **FULL-TIME** athletic director. If you are **NOT** a Full Time Athletic Director, please indicate and move to Question 5.

Please indicate your 2015-2016 total annual salary. Select one range that represents your athletic director's base salary.

- ☐ Not a FT Athletic Director (move to Question 5)
- ☐ Less than \$30,000
- ☐ \$30,000-34,999
- ☐ \$35,000-39,999
- ☐ \$40,000-44,999
- ☐ \$45,000-49,999
- ☐ \$50,000-54,999
- ☐ \$55,000-59,999
- ☐ \$60,000-64,999
- ☐ \$65,000-69,999
- ☐ \$70,000-79,999
- ☐ \$80,000-89,999
- ☐ \$90,000 or more

5) You indicated you are **NOT** paid as a full-time athletic director. Please indicate your **2015-2016 Athletic Director salary** (do not include teaching, coaching or any other additional salaried responsibilities). Select one range that represents your AD stipend.

Example: Assistant Principal = 40,000

Athletic Director = 15,000

Total = \$55,000 **(The A.D. salary to report is \$15,000)**

- ☐ Less than \$5,000
- ☐ \$5,000- 9,999
- ☐ \$10,000 - 14,999
- ☐ \$15,000 - 20,999
- ☐ \$20,000 - 24,999
- ☐ \$25,000 - 29,999
- ☐ \$30,000 - 34,999
- ☐ \$35,000 or more

6) Please indicate your other assigned responsibilities within the scope of a regular school day. Select all that apply.

- ☐ Superintendent
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principal
- ☐ Department Chair
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Counselor
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7) Do you currently have coaching responsibilities in addition to being an athletic director?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8) Please indicate the following for each sport you coach:

A) Position (head coach, assistant coach, strength coach)

B) Gender (male, female)

C) Sport

Example: Head Coach Girl's Basketball

9) In your role as athletic director, are your activities supervised directly by a school administrator?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10) Please identify the title of the school administrator who supervises you. Choose one.

- ☐ Superintendent
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principal
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11) In your role as athletic director, is your performance evaluated by a school administrator?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12) Please identify the title of the school administrator who evaluates you. Choose one.

- ☐ Superintendent  
☐ Principal  
☐ Assistant Principal  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

13) How often is your performance evaluated? Choose one.

- ☐ Weekly  
☐ Monthly  
☐ Yearly  
☐ After each sport season  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14) Please indicate the measures used by the school administrator to evaluate your performance as athletic director. Select all that apply.

- ☐ Your performance is compared to written standards or criteria of athletic directors for your school or district  
☐ Your performance is based in part on your management of your athletic staff/personnel  
☐ Assessment of your performance is influenced by the behaviors of your athletic staff  
☐ Your performance is based on the athletic departments achievement (i.e. team's successes, overall wins-losses, conference rank, playoffs, number of championships)  
☐ Your performance is compared to progress in athletic departments achievements (i.e. score margin in games this season vs previous season, wins-losses of this year vs. previous seasons, improvement in conference ranking, further playoff progress, etc)  
☐ Your performance is based in part on team/athlete academic performance and eligibility  
☐ Your performance is based in part on administrative and organization competence  
☐ Your performance is compared to the initial job description for the position  
☐ Your performance is based in part on fund-raising and/or corporate sponsorships  
☐ Your performance is based in part on maintaining athlete safety  
☐ Your performance is based in part on athlete satisfaction  
☐ Your performance is formally assessed as an adversarial proceeding  
☐ Your performance is based in part on your ethical behaviors or characteristics (example: honesty, trustworthy)  
☐ Your performance is based in part on successfully working with others  
☐ Your performance is based in part on working with community members/groups  
☐ Your performance is based in part on your visibility at athletic events  
☐ Your performance is based in part on your ability to solve problems related to athletics  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15) The following questions are about your TIME COMMITMENT

Estimate the number of hours you spend each week (Sunday through Saturday) in your job as athletic director (do not include other responsibilities such as teaching, administrative or coaching). Choose one.

- ☐ 0-10
- ☐ 11-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 61-70
- ☐ 70 or more

16) How many different male varsity sports teams did your school offer during the 2015-2016 school year? Choose one.

- ☐ 0-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 7-9
- ☐ 10-12
- ☐ 13 or more

17) How many different female varsity sports teams did your school offer during the 2015-2016 school year? Choose one.

- ☐ 0-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 7-9
- ☐ 10-12
- ☐ 13 or more

18) The following questions are about JOB ASSISTANCE.

Are you currently provided with clerical assistance for your duties as athletic director?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

19) Please indicate the extent to which you are provided clerical help. Choose one.

- ☐ 1-15 hours/week
- ☐ 16-30 hours/week
- ☐ 31-40 hours/week
- ☐ Fulltime (40+ hours/week)

20) Are you currently provided with an assistant athletic director?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

21) Please indicate the level of position of the assistant athletic director. Choose one.

- ☐ 1-15 hours/week  
☐ 16-30 hours/week  
☐ 31-40 hours/week  
☐ Fulltime (40+ hours/week)

22) The following questions are about your LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Do you currently provide strategic leadership to the athletic department? (Examples are athletic department policies, procedures, philosophy, vision, etc).

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

23) **Select the statement that best describes how the *current* overall vision, philosophy, policy, procedures and practices for the athletic department were established. Select ONE response for EACH item.**

	Pre-established and maintained	District developed	School Administration developed	Athletic Director developed	Athletic Director AND coaches developed together	Coach/Program developed	Coach developed with input from players/parents	DON'T KNOW
The overall vision for the future of my school's athletic department is/was generated by:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The athletic department philosophy is/was generated by:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current athletic department policies are/were developed by:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current athletic department procedures are/were developed by:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current practices in place in my school's athletic department are/were established by:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The athletic department operating procedures are/were developed by:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24) **Select the statement that best describes your influence on the *current* overall vision, philosophy, policy, procedures and practices for the athletic department. Select ONE response for EACH item.**

	Extremely Influential (I solely created what is currently used)	Very Influential (I helped create and/or significantly modify what is used)	Somewhat Influential (I have made slight modifications to what is used)	Not Influential (I have had no input on what is currently used)
The overall vision for the future of my school's athletic department	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current athletic department policies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Current athletic department procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current athletic department practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The athletic department operating procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25) **Do you currently perform management/supervision tasks to oversee members of the athletic staff/coaches?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No



26) Please indicate the number of staff members/coaches you manage. Choose one.

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-14
- ☐ 15-19
- ☐ 20 or more

27) Estimate the number of hours you spend in total personnel management each week. **Choose one.**

- ☐ Less than 1
- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 2-4
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 6-8
- ☐ 8-10
- ☐ 10 or more

28) Please indicate the proportion of staff you manage in the following areas. When answering, please consider all of the coaches you manage. Select ONE answer for EACH item.

Areas I manage my staff in are:

[illegible]

29) Please indicate the **frequency** that you supervise/manage your staff's activities in the following areas. When answering, please consider **all** of the coaches you manage. **Select ONE answer for EACH item.**

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	I do not supervise this activity
Developing practice plans/game preparation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conduct practice/Provide Instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conducting strength and conditioning activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Game day operations and competition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending staff-AD meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overseeing team academics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overseeing team behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessing athlete readiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring safe playing conditions/equipment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing an appropriate playing environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing a positive team culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Implementing emergency protocol	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30) Do you currently evaluate members of the athletic staff/coaches?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

31) **Please indicate the number of staff members/coaches you must evaluate. Choose one.**

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-14
- ☐ 15-19
- ☐ 20 or more

32) **Estimate the number of hours you spend in total personnel evaluation proceedings.**

(The first dropbox will indicate hours the second dropbox will allow you to indicate a time period.)

Example:

First drop down menu: 4-6 hours      Second drop down menu: monthly

Please indicate the number of hours you spend in a given time period.

Please select one: Less than 1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours, 4-6 hours, 6-8 hours, 8-10 hours, 10-20 hours, 20-30 hours, 30-40 hours, 40+ hours

Please select one: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly, After the completion of the season, As Needed

33) **Please indicate the measures you use in the evaluation of your staff. Select all that apply.**

Staff Member performance is:

- ☐ Compared to written standards or criteria of coaches for your school or district
- ☐ Based on level of team's athletic achievement (i.e. wins-losses, conference rank, playoffs, championships)
- ☐ Compared to progress in team's athletic achievement (i.e. score margin in games this season vs previous season, wins-losses of this year vs. previous seasons, improvement in conference ranking, further playoff progress, etc)
- ☐ Based on team academic performance
- ☐ Based on individual player eligibility
- ☐ Based on administrative competence
- ☐ Based on organizational implementation
- ☐ Compared to the initial job description for the position
- ☐ Influenced by formal self-assessment document
- ☐ Influenced by parental evaluation or booster input
- ☐ Influenced by player evaluation/satisfaction
- ☐ Formally assessed as colleagues

---

34) **The following questions are about YOUR SCHOOL**

What state is your school located in?

- ☐ Alabama
- ☐ Alaska
- ☐ Arizona
- ☐ Arkansas
- ☐ California
- ☐ Colorado
- ☐ Connecticut
- ☐ Delaware
- ☐ Florida
- ☐ Georgia
- ☐ Hawaii
- ☐ Idaho
- ☐ Illinois
- ☐ Indiana
- ☐ Iowa
- ☐ Kansas
- ☐ Kentucky
- ☐ Louisiana
- ☐ Maine
- ☐ Maryland
- ☐ Massachusetts
- ☐ Michigan
- ☐ Minnesota
- ☐ Mississippi
- ☐ Missouri
- ☐ Montana
- ☐ Nebraska
- ☐ Nevada
- ☐ New Hampshire
- ☐ New Jersey
- ☐ New Mexico
- ☐ New York
- ☐ North Carolina
- ☐ North Dakota
- ☐ Ohio
- ☐ Oklahoma
- ☐ Oregon
- ☐ Pennsylvania
- ☐ Rhode Island
- ☐ South Carolina
- ☐ South Dakota

- ☐ Tennessee
- ☐ Texas
- ☐ Utah
- ☐ Vermont
- ☐ Virginia
- ☐ Washington
- ☐ West Virginia
- ☐ Wisconsin
- ☐ Wyoming
- ☐ District of Columbia

35) What district is your school located in?

36) Which of the following best describes the location of your school?

- ☐ Rural
- ☐ Suburban
- ☐ Urban

37) Which of the following best describes your school district?

- ☐ City
- ☐ County
- ☐ Large county with urban and suburban schools

38) What is the student enrollment of your high school? Choose one.

- ☐ Less than 650
- ☐ 651-1000
- ☐ 1001-1550
- ☐ 1551-2000
- ☐ 2001-2500
- ☐ 2501-3000
- ☐ 3001-3500
- ☐ 3501-4000
- ☐ 4001-4500
- ☐ 4501-5000
- ☐ 5000 or more

39) What is your school's athletic classification in football and basketball?

40) The following questions are about YOU

Please indicate your undergraduate major.

41) What is the highest degree you have earned? Choose one.

- ☐ Bachelor Degree
- ☐ Master Degree
- ☐ Doctoral Degree
- ☐ Specialist
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

42) Please indicate the type(s) of license(s) you currently hold in your state. Select all that apply.

- ☐ Teaching
- ☐ Counseling
- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

43) Please indicate the type(s) of athletic director certification(s) you hold at any level. Select all that apply.

- ☐ NIAAA Provisional Certified Athletic Administrator Certificate
- ☐ NIAAA Certified Athletic Administrator
- ☐ NIAAA Certified Master Athletic Administrator
- ☐ I do not hold any athletic administrator certifications
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Add State Level Certifications Here:

44) Are you required to have a teaching license to be considered for employment as an athletic director at your school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

45) Prior to becoming an athletic director in your school district, how many years of experience did you have in the following

Please choose from the following options: 0, 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-11, 12 or more

Teaching	_____
Varsity Coaching	_____
JV Coaching	_____
College or Professional Coaching	_____
Athletic Director	_____
Administrator (other than AD)	_____

45) **The following optional demographic information is about YOU**

**What is your gender?**

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female

46) **What ethnicity do you identify with? Choose one.**

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native  
☐ Asian  
☐ Black or African American  
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
☐ White  
☐ Multiracial  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_





Transportation

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

48) What was your total athletics annual budget provided by your school for 2016-2017?

49) What was the range of fundraised dollars your department collected for the 2016-2017 school year?

- ☐ Our athletic department does not fundraise
- ☐ Less than \$5,000
- ☐ \$5,000-9,999
- ☐ \$10,000-19,999
- ☐ \$20,000-29,999
- ☐ \$30,000-39,999
- ☐ \$40,000-49,999
- ☐ \$50,000-59,999
- ☐ \$60,000-69,999
- ☐ \$70,000-79,999
- ☐ \$80,000-89,999
- ☐ \$90,000 or more

50) What were the total operational costs for your athletic department during 2016-2017 school year?

51) **The following questions pertain to ADDITIONAL SALARY**

**Is any portion of your salary provided by non-school district external funding sources (i.e. boosters, corporate sponsorship allocations, etc)?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

52) If yes, please indicate the following:

Annual amount \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of corporations \_\_\_\_\_

53) Do you receive any additional stipends as an athletic director (i.e. mileage reimbursement, phone stipend, etc)?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

54) If yes, please indicate the stipend(s) you receive.

55) Do you receive any NON-monetary compensation from external funding sources (i.e. clothing allowances, food allowances, vehicle allowances, etc).

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

56) If yes, please indicate the non-monetary allowances you receive.

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent

#### **Informed Consent**

#### **Functions, Practices, and Leadership Responsibilities of High School Athletic Directors in the United States**

**You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by Tammy L. DeCesare, a UNC Charlotte Doctoral Student, as partial fulfillment of the completion of a dissertation in Educational Leadership. The purpose of this study is to develop a comprehensive representation of compensation roles, daily practices, leadership responsibilities, educational requirements, evaluations, and other qualifications of high school athletic directors in the United States. Participation should take approximately 10 – 14 minutes to complete. Your responses are valuable to learning more about the athletic director in today's modern athletic environment!**

#### PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

#### BENEFITS & RISKS

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses are valuable to learn more about the compensation, qualifications, expectations, requirements and evaluation for today's athletic director. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. You will not be asked any identifying information during this survey. Your responses will be treated as confidential and will not be linked to your identity. Your survey answers will be stored initially with SurveyMonkey.com in a password protected electronic format. Data will later be downloaded and stored on an encrypted hard drive.

#### CONTACT

If you have further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, contact the Office of Research Compliance at (704) 687-1871 or [uncc-irb@uncc.edu](mailto:uncc-irb@uncc.edu). If you have questions concerning the study, contact Tammy DeCesare, at (704) 497-9953 or by email at [tdecesar@uncc.edu](mailto:tdecesar@uncc.edu), or my Responsible Faculty Dr. David M. Dunaway at (704) 687-8857 or by email at [dmdunawa@uncc.edu](mailto:dmdunawa@uncc.edu).

**You may print a copy of this page. If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and freely consent to participate in the study, click the "CONTINUE TO SURVEY" button.**

## APPENDIX C

### Letter of Endorsement

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From: **Phil Rison** <[PhilRison@niaaa.org](mailto:PhilRison@niaaa.org)>  
Date: Mon, May 8, 2017 at 6:48 AM  
Subject: Letter of Endorsement  
To: Tammy DeCesare <[tammy.decesare7@gmail.com](mailto:tammy.decesare7@gmail.com)>

Tammy, thank you for your outstanding work on the survey, we are most appreciative of the time you have spent to design a survey that can gather the full impact of data in serving as an athletic administrator at the interscholastic level. We plan to utilize your survey the week of May 15-19, 2017. We have found that Athletic Administrators during the end of the year are better served and involved in the end of the year responsibilities that the survey rate is higher. Again thank for your research and development of this survey and for allowing the NIAAA to utilize it will our members.

Good luck in your future endeavors.

Phil Rison, CMAA  
Associate Executive Director  
National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association  
[9100 Keystone Crossing, Suite 650](#)  
[Indianapolis, IN 46240](#)  
[317-587-1450 ext. 203](#)  
[philrison@niaaa.org](mailto:philrison@niaaa.org)  
[www.niaaa.org](http://www.niaaa.org)  
[@niaaa9100](#)

