

Examining Career Patterns of Football Bowl Subdivision Directors of Athletics

by

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Abstract

The career path to become a collegiate athletics director is an area of interest to young professionals who seek this position. This study examined Football Bowl Subdivision Directors of Athletics within Division I of the National Collegiate Athletics Association. This study focused on several AD characteristics to include educational attainment levels, degree concentrations, racial and gender demographics, and the career focus each held. The research examined three variables; current position (a), previous position to becoming AD (b), and the position held before that (c). The research design involved a social network analysis of data collected from university websites and surveys returned by athletics directors. Data representing each ADs characteristics were then loaded into UCINET social network software. The software program produced socio grams from the data entered that consisted of various nodes to represent each athletics director, the relations between them, and the strength or weakness of those relations in regard to which attribute was under examination.

The findings of the study were in agreement with previous research in which athletics directors were found to be well educated. When looking at the previous titles athletics directors held, the research found the previous trend of assistant athletics director and associate athletics director being the two most prominent titles before becoming an AD had been replaced by the positions of associate athletics director and senior associate athletics director. The areas of degree concentration for AD's had also shifted somewhat since earlier literature on the subject. Many modern day athletics directors had more of a business focus. The study also looked at the

various areas within and outside of the traditional athletics career paths and found that those too had changed as the profession progressed.

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“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” Luke 12:48
(KJV)

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the career paths of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Directors of Athletics. Social network analysis software was used to examine trends and similarities in the career and educational paths of athletics directors. The study sought to identify the common elements of career progression and degree attainment that could act as an empirically-derived “road map” to assist those interested in studying for or pursuing careers in athletics administration. In major college athletics today there are approximately 128 FBS athletics programs (National Collegiate Athletics Association, 2013). The career progression a person may take to become an athletics director (AD) varies by individual. The literature about the careers of athletics directors within the NCAA is scarce. Vacancies in the AD position are highly competitive, so it is vital to those seeking this position to have an understanding of the necessary qualifications.

The AD is the senior officer in charge of the athletics program at a college or university. At larger schools, athletics departments are complex organizations and it is therefore essential that the AD be equipped to deal with a myriad of business and personnel decisions in order to grow and advance the athletics program. There are many skills and attributes that an AD must exhibit in order to be successful at leading a department. Communication skills with both internal and external constituents, as well as the ability to raise money successfully in support of the athletic mission are essential (Schneider & Stier, 2005). Another skill needed by the AD is the ability to recruit, hire, evaluate, and retain talented administrators. They also must hire head coaches to lead the various sports programs. The ability to develop donors and corporate

partnerships has become paramount because it represents financial support in addition to the revenue generated by ticket sales or financial support from the university (Schneider & Stier, 2005).

Statement of Research Problem

Currently, if an aspiring professional would like to know how to become a college athletics director, there is little if any established path to do so. Moreover, there is no college degree that certifies one for an ADs position. There are institutions that offer degrees in sport administration or management, which typically include courses in athletics facilities management, accounting, communications, and marketing. However, even those degree programs are hard pressed to fully identify a path that will lead a graduate to being named an AD. While the profession of college athletics administration identifies its leaders in mostly ambiguous ways, this study investigated the most likely common paths and similarities of experience for those in this career field.

In the early days of modern collegiate athletics, ADs were selected by hiring retired or former football coaches (Berg, 1990). College presidents often chose former coaches because they had inherent knowledge about sport and the demands placed on coaches and players. Moreover, former coaches were familiar with the calendar cycles of sports programs and could recruit and hire other coaches. The former coach serving as athletics director also provided the president and fan base with a familiar face they were comfortable with as department head. This practice of hiring former coaches was also conducive with development and fundraising efforts. However, times have changed and with ever increasing public scrutiny and mammoth athletic budgets in the tens of millions and more, the AD position requires an individual with more business acumen and training than in past eras (Berg, 1990). The modern day athletics director

is very dissimilar from their coaching counterparts. Today the majority of athletics directors have degrees with a background in business (Sperber, Yiannakis, & Melnick, 2001). The financial impact college athletics has on a university in terms of a department's ability to generate millions has also shifted the focus to individuals with a variety of other skills not viewed as relevant in the early days of athletics administration (Bravo et al., 2012).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the career paths of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) level athletics directors. The goal is to create an empirically derived "road map" to better inform new professionals and improve their chances of becoming an AD.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: What are the educational attainment levels of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ2: What are the types of positions previously held by current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ3: What are the demographics (race, gender, age) of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ4: What are the similarities in career patterns of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

Limitations of Study

This study was limited to the one hundred twenty-eight (128) Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) programs within the NCAA. The conferences that make up the FBS subdivision are American Athletic Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten Conference, Big 12

Conference, Conference USA, Mid-American Conference, Mountain West Conference, Pac 12 Conference, Southeastern Conference, and Sun Belt Conference.

Assumptions of Study

Data used in this study were taken directly from two sources.: the online biographies each athletics director has at his or her institution's website and a questionnaire submitted via email to the athletics director. Therefore, it is assumed that all the information contained therein was truthful. The conclusions of this study should be limited to Division I Athletics Directors in the subdivision of FBS. Generalizability should be limited to those directors in the FBS.

Significance of Study

The importance of this study was in its ability to identify the career paths of today's athletic directors. This study attempted to provide information for professionals in athletic administration who are interested in becoming athletics directors.

To be considered ready for the post of an athletics director there is no set degree field or plan of study. Moreover, the popularity of college athletics has increased the number of people who wish to make a career in this area. There are numerous colleges and universities that offer degrees in sports management and sports administration across the country. None of these institutions or programs, however, guarantees that completing a certain degree will lead to a job as an athletics director.

The career paths of today's athletics directors vary widely, which makes it hard to determine the most viable path to the ADs chair. This study will categorize the most recent jobs and titles held by current FBS athletics directors to provide a social network analysis of their collective career paths. As a result, this study will identify the career tracks that have led current athletics directors to their posts. Along with the most common career paths, the study will also

be able to identify any irregular career paths. For example, there have been cases where presidents have promoted an individual to the AD position who is not a career athletic administrator (Berg, 1990). Some presidents of colleges and universities have searched within private industry and business to locate a head for their athletics unit. Today's FBS athletics department is a multi-million dollar enterprise and the set of skills needed to successfully run such a complex organization likely requires more than status as a former student-athlete, coach, or administrator.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions of terms will assist with clarifications of the context throughout this study:

Athletics Director (AD): The athletics director is the highest ranking department head within this unit. Responsible for all budgets, hires of coaches, facilities, development, other assets, and the strategic plan for the department.

Career Path: The defined path a person takes as they progress in a given field or occupation involving one or a series of moves progressing up the rank of the profession.

Division 1-A Athletics Directors Association: Formed in 1986 this is the professional organization for collegiate athletics directors. Its mission is to “create prescribed standards to administer the business of intercollegiate athletics, while addressing specific concerns and trends evident in our profession today.” Division 1-A changed its name to FBS.

Executive Associate Athletics Director/Senior Associate Athletics Director/Associate Athletics Director/Assistant Athletics Director: The various titles of rank within the senior-most staff of an athletic department. These individuals are often in charge of various units,

coaches, and elements of the strategic plan in support of the athletic director and the overall mission of the department.

Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS): Formerly named Division 1-A, this title is now reserved for those institutions with football programs that are eligible for post-season competition in bowl games and also by allocating more money to financial aid for its student-athletes.

National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA): Founded in 1965, NACDA has more than 6,100 athletics administrators as members from the NCAA, NAIA, junior and community colleges. Its mission is primarily to facilitate networking among peers and professional advocacy within the business of collegiate athletics.

National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA): Formed in 1906, the NCAA is the governing body for collegiate athletics in the United States and Canada. The organization's goal is to provide equity and fairness among institutions of the three divisions that make up its membership.

Resume: When applying for positions the resume is the written summary of a person's educational accomplishments, work experience, associations, and affiliations listed for a potential employer to consider.

Senior Woman Administrator (SWA): The senior most female member of the staff within an athletic department. Often responsible for Title IX compliance and any issues specifically related to women in athletics.

Organization of the Study

The study was conducted in order to acquire information about the career paths of collegiate athletics directors within the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). This study is intended

to provide assistance to those professionals considering a career in college athletics that could lead to a position as an athletics director. It is also intended to provide useful data to those teaching in sport management programs within colleges and universities on current career trends in athletics administration. Chapter 1 introduces the study by presenting the statement of the problem, the purpose of the research, research questions, the limitations of the study, the assumptions of the study, the importance of the study, the definition of terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the related literature which looked at the current similarities in career paths of athletics directors, the essential skills necessary to become an athletics director, and the traits of the modern day athletics director. Chapter 3 addressed the procedures used in the study including an introduction, purpose and design, population and sample, the instrumentation, data collection procedures and analysis, and finally a summary. Chapter 4 presents the study findings and the interpretation of the data collected. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study, the conclusions drawn from the research, its implications, and some recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine the career paths of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Directors of Athletics. Social network analysis software was used to examine trends and similarities in the career and educational paths of athletics directors. The study sought to identify the common elements of career progression and degree attainment that could act as an empirically-derived “road map” to assist those interested in studying for or pursuing careers in athletics administration. In major college athletics today there are approximately 128 FBS athletics programs (National Collegiate Athletics Association, 2013). The career progression a person may take to become an athletics director (AD) varies by individual. The literature about the careers of athletics directors within the NCAA is scarce. Vacancies in the AD position are highly competitive, so it is vital to those seeking this position to have an understanding of the necessary qualifications.

Chapter II reviewed the literature, including a brief history of the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) and previous research on career paths of ADs.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: What are the educational attainment levels of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ2: What are the types of positions previously held by current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ3: What are the demographics (race, gender, age) of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ4: What are the similarities in career patterns of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

A Brief History of The NCAA

The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) had its beginnings as an organization in the early twentieth century. Collegiate sport was started by students as a way to escape from the memory of the Civil War (Liu & Lin, 2012). The need for some form of regulation arose as a result of an attempt by Harvard to gain a competitive advantage over rival Yale in the two universities' annual athletics contest (Camp, 1893). The advantage sought was to have a non-student participate in the annual rowing contest pitting the two universities against each other. What initially began as a way for students to keep fit soon grew into a community event with local businessmen sponsoring teams (Vanover & DeBowes, 2013). Flowers (2009) and Thwing (1906) credit the popularity and rapid growth in community interest with sports to its movement out of its intramural birth to an enterprise needing a more robust administrative oversight. This oversight would eventually come from the faculty and university administration (Flowers, 2009; Thwing 1906).

The inclusion of college athletics within higher education was always linked to its ability to fit in with the function of the overall mission of the university (Liu & Lin, 2012). Its fit within the structure of the university has also been debated since sport first appeared (Camp, 1893; Vanover & DeBowes, 2013). The popularity of collegiate sport grew at such a pace that a way to consistently regulate it lead to the formation of the NCAA in 1906 (Vanover & DeBowes, 2013). Since its formation, the NCAA has seen several changes to its structure. The NCAA's

most important and often controversial role was that of the governance of student-athletes with regards to their recruitment by institutions, eligibility to participate in collegiate athletics, and the amounts of financial aid each student-athlete could receive (Eckard, 1998). The rules of the NCAA are in place at the approval of the membership to achieve a level playing field for all institutions (Eckard, 1998). After it was founded in 1906, the NCAA in the 1920s saw the first set of bylaws formed that would help shape its core; eligibility of student-athletes, their recruitment, and financial aid bylaws governing how much scholarship money they could receive (Falla, 1981). The formal structure of the NCAA began to come together in the 1950s. New bylaws were defined and the committee on infractions was formed (Fleisher, Goff, & Robert, 1992). The 1950s also found athletics programs in violation of NCAA bylaws being subject to penalties (Fleisher et al., 1992). The decade of the 70s was the period of membership expansion and more muscle added to the NCAA's enforcement efforts (Falla, 1981). The 1980s was significant in that women were given equal opportunity to compete and earn athletics scholarships in proportion to the male programs on college campuses (Liu & Lin, 2012). The eighties also saw the powerful programs sue the NCAA over its regulation of televised football games. The Supreme Court in 1984 upheld a prior ruling by a lower U.S. District Court and paved the way for colleges and their conferences to negotiate their own television contracts (Greenspan, 1988).

Today the NCAA faces challenges to its interpretation of the term 'student-athlete' and how much they can be compensated. The Association is also in court defending its use of student-athlete likenesses and images without what many consider fair compensation for their use (Holthaus Jr, 2010). Student-athletes have also attempted to unionize in efforts to provide

better conditions for themselves in what many see as an exploitive enterprise that does not go far enough to compensate and ensure their well-being (Gould IV, Wong, & Weitz, 2014).

Today the NCAA at the Division I level comprises some three hundred plus colleges and universities, over six thousand teams, and around one hundred seventy thousand student-athletes competing in sport (NCAA.com).

Educational Attainment Levels of FBS Athletics Directors

The position of athletics director has grown in scale over the years since its early inception. The need for athletic administrators in this position to be well educated has become crucial for success (Schneider & Stier, 2005). The literature on educational levels by athletics directors is limited, but pretty concise with what areas of focus are deemed most important (Cuneen, 1992; Hardin, Cooper, & Huffman, 2013; Nielsen, 1989; Spenard, 2011; G. M. Wong, Deubert, & Hayek, 2015). Early on it was not uncommon to find the majority of athletics directors possessing a degree in physical education (Nielsen, 1989). As the demands grew in regards of responsibilities and areas of involvement, more focus was placed on athletic administration skills. The educational specializations branched out into areas of concentration in sport management and education (Nielsen, 1989). Following this trend a study conducted in 1992 by Jacquelyn Cuneen asked athletics directors to name courses they felt vital to being successful in the role of AD. Participants in the study identified numerous courses they deemed important areas of focus for graduates to be knowledgeable in (Cuneen, 1992). Schneider and Stier (2005) followed up this study with research in which university presidents gave their opinions on courses they deemed vital when considering a person for an athletics director position. Spenard (2011) conducted a study in which the data showed degrees in business lead those athletics directors who participated. Other popular areas of concentration for the ADs in

the study were political science, accounting and finance, sport administration and management, and education. When comparing levels of degrees, the study revealed that all ADs had at least a bachelor's degree, with very few athletics directors possessing only the bachelor's degree (Spenard, 2011). Athletics directors, college and university presidents, and those professionals in the business of sport also have opinions on what skills are necessary for an athletics director to be successful (Liu & Lin, 2012; Nielsen, 1989; Spenard, 2011; Swift, 2011; G. M. Wong et al., 2015). Presidents and chancellors found skills in hiring, recruitment, and retention of staff key for success in a candidate. There were also the skills of development and nurturing corporate sponsorships, financial competency to manage a large athletics budget, and the ability to be a great representative as the face of the program (Liu & Lin, 2012; Nielsen, 1989; Spenard, 2011; Swift, 2011; G. M. Wong et al., 2015).

Previously Held Positions of FBS Athletics Director

The previous positions held by athletics directors have changed as the industry and the needs of the university evolved. It was not uncommon in the early onset of athletics to find the athletics director had once been a head coach. Predominantly the position was often occupied by former football coaches (Bravo, Won, & Shonk, 2012). Presidents and chancellors at colleges and universities changed this process as the scope and demands of the athletics director position began to grow (Berg, 1990). Berg (1990) shed light on the rationale used when placing former coaches at the helm of what quickly grew into multi-million dollar departments. Athletics programs began to realize their financial potential and economic impact to the university and community back in the 1980s. Having a former coach lead the program was often comforting to a fan base that would be more accepting of a familiar individual heading up the department. The ability of the person who was leading the department as athletics director to engage wealthy

alumni and contribute to the development efforts of the university was also figured into the appointment (Berg, 1990).

After universities realized the financial impact and potential a successful athletics program could realize, the trend to name former coaches as directors began to wane. University presidents and chancellors began to look toward businessmen when the time came to name a leader. Businessmen, and in particular those with law and business degrees, began to be hired over former coaches or lifetime athletics administrators (Bravo et al., 2012). Athletics directors who participated in a study by Spenard (2011) listed being a coach prior to being named an AD as the third most chosen option.

Spenard (2011) conducted a study of the educational preparation courses athletics directors took while pursuing degrees. The study also looked at what work environment similarities the participants had in common as well. Spenard's study found that a majority of the athletics directors surveyed held the previous positions of either assistant or associate athletics director (Armstrong, 2011; Spenard, 2011). Less common but still significant, respondents totaled slightly over a quarter of the athletics directors that participated had held the positions of either senior associate athletics director, or executive associate athletics director (Spenard, 2011). Both Armstrong's (2011) and Spenard's (2011) studies were in direct agreement with research conducted prior on the positions athletics directors held before being named AD. This phenomenon was also supported in an article by Fitzgerald, Sagaria, and Nelson (1994) who early on discovered that over seventy percent of the participants in their study had previously been assistant or associate athletics directors.

Demographics of FBS Athletics Directors

Historically when people looked at the leadership of collegiate athletics departments, the research would show administrators holding masters degrees, a decade or more of experience, and in their early forties to fifty years of age (Nielsen, 1989). There still exists in collegiate athletics, despite efforts to address the problem of underrepresentation, an absence of a significant presence of women and minorities (McDowell, Cunningham, & Singer, 2009). Lapchick (2006) and DeHass (2007) also affirm the lack of athletics departments to adequately reflect the diversity found in society when collegiate and professional sports organizations are examined (DeHass, 2007; Lapchick, Bustamante, & Ruiz, 2006; Spenard, 2011). Sports has long been heralded as the one realm where the discrimination sometimes seen in society does not carry over. A demographics research comparison conducted by Eitzen and Sage (2003) confirms the stark lack of diversity in college athletics programs at the top levels of the organization.

The later research confirms and reveals a similar story when compared to societal makeup in regards to women and minorities and their numbers (McDowell et al., 2009). There is definitely a noticeable lack of diversity within the senior level management areas of the country's Division I athletics departments (McDowell et al., 2009).

Women in Collegiate Athletics

One reason given for the lack of more women in leadership positions within collegiate athletics is the practice for those in power to attribute the industry and leadership within it to masculine traits (Schull, Shaw, & Kihl, 2013). This projecting of masculine traits as desired qualifications has been carried forth within collegiate athletics and sport in general through decades. False use of imagery and other traits deemed essential for what a leader should look and act like have caused damage to the cause for many women to ascend to leadership positions

within college athletics (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008). Hovden (2000) found through research that the qualities most identified as crucial for the collegiate manager were the ability to manage and move the department forward. His research found these traits were usually attributed to men in athletics organizations and not women. This belief that certain people are more suited to hold leadership positions within an organization leads to what researchers have termed 'occupational segregation' (Cunningham, 2012).

The NCAA does research on its organization in several different categories involving student-athletes and athletics administrators (NCAA.com). One area that has garnered the attention of the NCAA is the study of its makeup in regards to gender equity (Henderson, Grappendorf, & Burton, 2011). The NCAA (2007) survey results on gender equity revealed specifically for Division 1 that the overwhelming majority of athletics director's positions were held by males. Women accounted for less than eight percent of athletics directors but held the majority of positions in life skills, often housed in the academics area (Henderson et al., 2011).

The shortage of women in collegiate athletics is not limited to the athletics director's position alone (Sander, 2011; Spenard, 2011). Cunningham and Teed (2006) found the shortage of women also present in the head coaching ranks as well. A subsequent study conducted by (Acosta & Carpenter, 2000) found the progress women had made in landing head coaching positions had only increased by 0.1%. Although female student-athletes within Division 1 of the NCAA make up fifty percent of the population, there have been as few as five women chosen to lead departments as the athletics director (Sander, 2011). Lapchick, Hoff and Kaiser (Lapchick, Hoff, & Kaiser, 2010) found more women residing at the associate athletics director level within athletics departments. Their totals there were more than thirty percent. The average age of these women was fifty years and all but five percent were Caucasian (Grappendorf, Lough, & Griffin,

2004). Over three decades have passed since women's athletics departments merged with the men and the underrepresentation of women in senior level athletics administration continues to lag behind their male counterparts (Sander, 2011). Women tend to hold mostly mid-level leadership positions within athletics while their male counterparts dominate the upper levels (Spenard, 2011).

Research conducted by Sander (2010) points out that earlier in the NCAA's Division I level, many athletics departments operated as two separate entities. There were men's and women's athletics programs, with women leading the majority of programs on the female side (Sander, 2011). The decline of women athletics directors began with the dissolution of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) (Whisenant, Pedersen, & Obenour, 2002). To keep women relevant in college athletics, especially in leadership positions, it will take help by those in power. Sanders (2011) argues the hiring process will have to change, and presidents and chancellors will have to make non-traditional decisions when choosing a leader for their athletics departments other than the traditional white male.

Not all the underrepresentation of women in collegiate athletics senior level positions can be placed on hiring practices, discrimination, or other perceived deficiencies. Sometimes the women themselves decide the position of athletics director is not for them (Grappendorf et al., 2004). Half of the women in senior level administration positions report not having any children. This has been listed as one reason why the industry might not see more female representation. Candidates who want a family or value the work/life balance more may opt to not pursue senior level athletics or athletics director positions due to the enormous demands and sacrifice it requires (Grappendorf et al., 2004).

Minorities in College Athletics

Ethnic minorities, much like women in college athletics, often find themselves underrepresented and also grouped within certain areas of college athletics (McDowell et al., 2009). A study by McDowell, Cunningham, and Singer (2008) confirmed the high presence of minorities in college athletics support areas, but seldom seen at the senior level administrative positions.

These findings will undoubtedly come as a surprise to some who will argue that the industry has minority representation when considering television coverage of sports (Eitzen & Sage, 2009). Researchers found that when famous minority athletes and coaches transition into television broadcasting and professional sports media in general, the public tends to think that the entire organization of sports resembles what they see before them. The numbers for minority professionals in athletics, especially the professional realm, is a delusion falsely given by a few minorities in visible positions. This tends to give off the aura of a more diverse organization when it does not exist, generally (Coventry, 2004).

Historically there have been many reasons given by researchers on why there exists such a disparity of women and minorities within senior leadership positions such as AD in college athletics (Cunningham, 2012). One reason given is the practice of what the research has defined as “white habitus”, or the practice of hiring those who represent the white majority to ensure the power structure remains in place at a given organization (Cunningham, 2012). Other practices that have been given credit for the absence of more women and minorities are systems of homologous reproduction, tokenism, and marginalization (Schull et al., 2013). Research also provides other reasons for the shortage of women and minorities in athletic senior level administration as the absence of stronger social networking ties by these two groups.

Cunningham (2012) found that both minority coaches and administrators did a poor job of this in contrast to their white counterparts.

What can be deemed as discriminatory practices often begin within the hiring process as concluded by a study conducted by McDowell, Cunningham, and Singer (2008). Research showed when athletics departments were in the process of hiring individuals, the practices they used to select candidates would often determine the type of candidate selected (McDowell et al., 2009). When athletics departments and the senior level administrators in charge of selecting finalists use multiple outlets to advertise the position, a more diverse pool of candidates was selected. Conversely the study showed in instances when more informal methods were used, the chosen finalists tended to be of the same race as the senior level staff in charge of the search (McDowell et al., 2009). Coakley and Pike (Coakley & Pike, 2009) point out several reasons why women in college athletic senior level positions are few. Some of the reasons Coakley discovered through research were that women tend to have fewer sport and strategic professional networks for advancement than their male counterparts. Minorities also have few, if any, senior level athletics administrators in their athletics departments, thus fewer opportunities to engage and be mentored by people that look like them (McDowell et al., 2009). An important element of minorities seeking more athletics director positions is having opportunities to be career mentored by individuals currently in those high level positions (McDowell et al., 2009). Cunningham (2012) affirms this position by adding that having a strong social network improves the chances of having career success.

Minorities must also venture out and create more cross-racial ties to be successful in collegiate athletics circles, according to McDowell, Cunningham, and Singer (2008). The lack thereof will lead to access barriers their white counterparts often rely on when searching for and

landing senior level administration positions. Athletics departments must also foster opportunities for minorities to be exposed to leadership training to open avenues of access that otherwise will continue to be “unobtainable” otherwise (Singer, 2005). Without such opportunities the workplace can fall into a type of segregation known as “affirmative inclusion” (DiTomaso, 2015). DiTomaso (2015) explains that the principle of affirmative inclusion occurs when a non-person of color has a promoter to go above and beyond to make sure that person is included within the organization at higher levels. This gives that person an advantage when job hunting.

When women do occupy senior level administrative positions within college and professional athletics, they are predominately Caucasian (Grappendorf et al., 2004). Minority women who may have to overcome sex discrimination that all women face, also sometimes must overcome racial biases as well (Grappendorf et al., 2004).

The NCAA has plenty of opportunities for both women and minorities to join the ranks of athletics directors. But with the average tenure of sitting ADs somewhere in the seven plus year range, both women and minorities will have to overcome challenges to be selected (Whisenant et al., 2002).

Career Patterns of FBS Athletics Directors

Research on the subject of athletics directors and their chosen career paths have been very limited over the years (Hardin et al., 2013). The overall educational study, career progression, and personal development a person has while pursuing the dream of being an athletics director requires patience. The end result is a process that can last decades and still not culminate in an individual obtaining a position as an AD (G. Wong, 2006). Berg (1990) also weighed in on the murky paths associated with becoming an athletics director in a journal article

that covered the different hurdles athletics directors faced administering a college athletics program. Myles (Myles, 2005) also found that to become an athletics director is often a challenge due to the nature of the rules in place. Myles concludes there really aren't any defined rules and this further hinders a person's efforts to become an AD (Myles, 2005). The ongoing challenges ADs face today have been present much longer than many think. The complexity of the athletics directors position has been covered by earlier research on the subject (Berg, 1990). The desire to have athletics directors who are more experienced in business has been credited with the shift in the career profiles of current athletics directors (Whisenant et al., 2002). This need to have administrators in charge of athletics departments with the expertise to be effective has been emphasized by higher education since the early evolution of departments (Berg, 1990; Williams & Miller, 1983).

Early in the development of the position of athletics director, it was not uncommon to find a former coach appointed to fill this spot within the university (Snider, 2004; G. M. Wong et al., 2015). The selection of coaches to head up athletics departments was often a reward for an outgoing face of the program. Research shows that departments were seldom the multi-million dollar organizations they are currently. Further the continued growth of college athletics departments has spawned other issues now seen as key to success that made appointing a former coach less acceptable (Snider, 2004). This movement away from the former coach as athletics director is also supported by research conducted by Wong, Deubert, and Hayek (2015). Experience in business and the ability to manage what is essentially a multi-million dollar corporation has figured heavily into the selection of athletics directors over the years. There is also increased attention given to athletics departments by local and national media (Hardin et al.,

2013). This attention has placed more importance and examination by outside parties on each decision made by an athletics director (Hardin et al., 2013).

The trend to move away from selecting those who have extensive backgrounds in collegiate athletics in favor of individuals who are more business-orientated has not been seen as a good or necessary development by everyone (Snider, 2004). Snider (2004), in a conversation with then University of South Carolina's Athletics Director Mike McGee, expressed his concern with the trend. In McGee's opinion the trend would lessen the number of leaders in the business, which he theorized were found more within the coaching ranks. The move away from coaches being promoted to athletics directors would also lesson their abilities to move into the front offices of athletics departments (Snider, 2004). Wong (2006) conducted a study on career paths in which he surveyed twenty-one Division 1 athletics directors. Thirteen had participated as student-athletes while in college (G. Wong, 2006).

There are studies in favor and against the move to selecting athletics directors, favoring the candidates with business backgrounds (Swift, 2011). A study conducted by Swift (2001) consisted of ten athletics directors who all agreed that having the business background was key to their understanding of the sometimes complex structure of a college athletics department. Having experience in the areas of development, human resources, and revenue generation were given as key abilities by the participants (Swift, 2011).

Although research has shown the position of the college athletics director to differ from some traditional careers in its method of selections, it does share the same career cycle as most occupations. Athletics directors and their prior careers within college athletics departments will also have entry, retention, and exit phases as other careers experience (McDowell et al., 2009).

Research has narrowed the athletics director path to a series of tracks that are common to positions held prior. These tend to be participating in college athletics as a student-athlete, being a member of the coaching profession, primarily having served in athletics administration, and finally the track of business leader (G. Wong, 2006). Other researchers have theorized that the path is actually a five-step process that includes the position of high school coach as well (Fitzgerald, Sagaria, & Nelson, 1994). Fitzgerald, Sagaria, and Nelson (1994) found that of the aforementioned paths to becoming an athletics director – the previous experiences as a student-athlete or collegiate coach – led in terms of the most common path. Wong (1990) has been on record for some time as saying the paths listed as most common to becoming an athletics director are not a guarantee. He emphasizes that due to cultures at universities among the presidents and chancellors and the institutions themselves, paths will differ. The one thing that seems to differentiate college athletics from other levels of sports is the qualities in its leader that each campus might be looking for. It can vary greatly due to campus culture from one university to the other (Berg, 1990).

The lack of research on the athletics director position and the high level of interest in athletics has led to questions aimed at finding out about the day to day responsibilities the position requires (Hardin et al., 2013). The job of AD is one of the most sought after within the university structure, and there is a growing interest in learning about the skills needed to direct what is often one of the largest units on campus. Athletics departments often employ a large number of staff and student-athletes. The interest in research on the position is also centered around the fact many departments now have multi-million dollar operating budgets (Hardin et al., 2013). It is the growth in revenue and overall responsibilities that has led to the shift more recently from hiring coaches and administrators to business professionals (Snider, 2004; G. M.

Wong et al., 2015). Financials and the added pressure to field competitive teams has also contributed to the shift in qualifications for athletics directors (G. M. Wong et al., 2015).

The Modern Athletics Director

The template for what the modern athletics director would eventually develop into was probably started when the University of Michigan hired Don Canham to lead its athletics program (Sperber, Yiannakis, & Melnick, 2001). Canham was a veteran track and field coach, but was also a successful businessman. It was under Canham's leadership that the football program began to average over 100,000 fans per game (Sperber et al., 2001). Michigan football currently still holds the record for most consecutive games with over 100,000 fans in attendance. Canham used his business skills in marketing, promotions, and fund-raising during his 21 years as athletics director to transform the Michigan program into an industry leader for which he is still regarded today as one of the best.

Today the modern day athletics director will face several issues and trends athletics directors did not deal with in the past. One such issue is that of the search firm being a part of many hiring practices (Bravo et al., 2012). This is one difference college athletics is relying more on today than in the past within certain searches for athletics directors. Due to the media exposure, financial implications, and the pressure and demands of the position, athletics directors need to have more skills than ever before to be considered viable candidates (Snider, 2004). Job descriptions for the modern day athletics director have become very broad by design. Presidents and chancellors are looking for candidates that can be successful in a diverse university setting and have the skills and knowledge to ensure the overall success of the department (Lattinville & Speyer, 2013). Research has identified key areas of skill and knowledge the successful athletics director will possess. These skills include knowledge of the looming landscape and current

issues in higher education and sport, the financial acumen to manage a massive athletics budget, effective communication skills, and the ability to develop donors and corporate sponsorships (Lattinville & Speyer, 2013). Lattinville et al. (2013) further explain that due to the expectation for the athletics department in many cases to be self-sustaining, this has also increased the pressure for today's AD.

The economic impact of a big time athletics program is measured in the hundreds of millions for some of the larger, more well-known departments in FBS Football (Bravo et al., 2012). This amount of financial impact on a state budget can, in some cases, be several times over what a local industry provides, as well as the employees big time college athletics sustains (Snider, 2004).

Within the NCAA and university itself, the modern athletics director will find him or herself dealing with a myriad of issues their earlier counterparts did not have to consider or address as often (Wolverton, 2007). One such issue is that of the NCAA's Annual Participation Rate (APR) that, if not adhered to, can cause an athletics department to lose scholarships, practice time, and post season participation for programs in severe violation (Wolverton, 2007). Wolverton (2007) believes a great deal of time will be spent on decisions regarding admissions analysis as it refers to student-athletes who must remain eligible to avoid costly penalties associated with having low APR scores. In the same vein, the athletics director of today will also face more scrutiny and increased standards in regards to academic issues.

Ticket sales and the need to generate revenue even in Olympic sports will be an issue many athletics directors have to balance. The need to have full stadiums will have to be weighed against over-burdening fans with ticket prices (Wolverton, 2007).

Wolverton (2007) believes many athletics directors will be forced to cut sports due to the increasing financial pressures and costs to run big time college programs. Todd Turner, former AD at the University of Washington and now search consultant, said once, “The days of adding a men’s program are virtually gone” (Wolverton, 2007). Athletics directors today must also be savvy enough to expand the search for new streams of revenue beyond traditional sources, while maintaining the current sources they already have (Lattinville & Speyer, 2013).

Athletics directors today will have their personal lives and credentials more closely scrutinized due to the increased media attention often present on college athletics programs (Kidwell Jr, 2004). Kidwell (2004) notes that in certain instances the competition is so fierce to land jobs in college athletics that individuals may lie about certain accomplishments to make themselves stand out from others. Presidents and chancellors and all senior-level athletics administrators must be sure of the background of individuals they are selecting to lead their programs. The harm that can be inflicted by getting a hire wrong due to issues of fraud are too great (Kidwell Jr, 2004).

One of the more complicated aspects today’s modern day athletics director will face in some cases is the conference realignment issue. The opening decade of the twenty-first century in Division I college athletics has seen universities switch conference affiliations at an alarming pace (Groza, 2010). During this timeframe some seventeen percent of the athletics programs that sponsor football in the Football Bowl Subdivision of the NCAA have changed their conference affiliations, according to research conducted by Groza (2010). As athletics departments dedicate more financial resources to its football programs, which have the ability to make great returns on the investment, the research has shown those donors capable of making donations are stepping forward (Litan, Orszag, & Orszag, 2003). Although the modern day athletics director must

always have an eye on development and fundraising as a main avenue to grow his or her athletics program, the research still considers ticket sales the top source of funding (Fulks, 2009).

The football programs at FBS level schools account for a huge portion of the departments' expenses but they also bring in the most revenue in most cases (Groza, 2010). Their continued ability to stay at this division and compete with the larger schools is predicated on the NCAA's requirements for institutions at this level. To remain an FBS program in good standing, once every two years, and on a rolling basis, every university must maintain an actual paid attendance figure of fifteen thousand in actual or paid attendance for its contests at home (NCAA, 2013).

Smaller institutions within the NCAA continue to see the gap between the financially able and the programs that struggle get even wider. In 2014, the NCAA voted to grant autonomy to five conferences, basically allowing them to make their own rules regarding certain issues that involved student-athlete scholarships, meals, health insurance, agents, and other student-athlete welfare issues as necessary. The group soon came to be known as the "Power Five" within the NCAA organization (NCAA.com).

As referenced earlier, the athletics director of today will also face increasing pressures from legal issues pushed by the student-athlete's desire to be more fairly compensated for the use of their images and likenesses (Edelman, 2014). This issue has resulted in one landmark case, O'Bannon v. NCAA, in which a former student-athlete sued the NCAA for the use of his likeness and image years after his collegiate career had ended (Edelman, 2014). The suit was on behalf of all student-athletes, alleging that upon graduation they should receive payment for any continued use of their images for commercial purposes. Along with the ruling was an immediate injunction against the NCAA from precluding its member institutions from providing up to

\$5,000 annually to student-athletes in the sports of men's basketball and football. The courts also granted schools the right to offer grants-in-aid up to the full cost of attendance when scholarships were offered to student-athletes (Edelman, 2014).

Following what most are considering a watershed moment for the organization, the NCAA and athletics departments of the universities it comprises, are trying to figure out what this will mean exactly going forward (Gould et al., 2014). According to the decision rendered by Judge Claudia Wilkin, the NCAA's restrictions of player compensation for use of their images and likenesses violated provisions of the Sherman Act. Specifically, the provisions that preclude unreasonable restraint of trade were being violated by the NCAA when they prohibited compensation to student-athletes for the use of their images (Gould et al., 2014). The NCAA and schools are now searching for clarifications as to their obligations and the costs of this case now and into the future.

The athletics directors in charge of departments today also got another glimpse into the future of collegiate athletics when a group of student-athletes from Northwestern University got together and considered their options if they unionized (Gould IV et al., 2014). The National Labor Relations Board ruled that student-athletes at Northwestern were employees and could therefore seek unionization (Straus, 2014). At the heart of the issue again was the student-athlete situation and whether or not they were being fairly compensated, particularly in the revenue-producing sports through the amount given for scholarships. Northwestern University administration and the head football coach were not in favor of such a vote by its student-athletes. A waiting game has begun as the National Labor Relations Board (N.L.R.B.) has gone on record saying that a review of the regional N.L.R.B. will take place, which could take several months (Straus, 2014). Until that time the votes will remain locked away. If after reviewing the

case the N.L.R.B. upholds the review board's decision, the Northwestern players will be allowed to unionize whether the vote was in favor of unionization or not. If they decide to overturn the decision of the review board, the whole affair will have been in vain, as the votes will never be counted. This whole procedure is expected to finally be resolved in the coming months (Straus, 2014). These two current issues represent a few of the challenges universities and athletics directors will face as the NCAA goes through some historic changes.

CHAPTER III. METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine the career paths of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Directors of Athletics. Social network analysis software was used to examine trends and similarities in the career and educational paths of athletics directors. The study sought to identify the common elements of career progression and degree attainment that could act as an empirically-derived “road map” to assist those interested in studying for or pursuing careers in athletics administration. In major college athletics today there are approximately 128 FBS athletics programs (National Collegiate Athletics Association, 2013). The career progression a person may take to become an athletics director (AD) varies by individual. The literature about the careers of athletics directors within the NCAA is scarce. Vacancies in the AD position are highly competitive, so it is vital to those seeking this position to have an understanding of the necessary qualifications.

Chapter I introduced the study by presenting the statement of the problem, the purpose of the research, research questions, limitations of the study, assumptions of the study, the importance of the study, definition of terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter II contained a review of the related literature which looked at the current similarities in career paths of athletics directors, the essential skills necessary to become an athletics director, and the traits of the modern day athletics director. Chapter III addressed the procedures used in the study including an introduction, purpose and design, population and sample, the instrumentation, data collection procedures and analysis, and finally a summary. Chapter IV presented the study

findings and the interpretation of the data collected. Chapter V provided a summary of the study, the conclusions drawn from the research, its implications, and some recommendations for further research.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: What are the educational attainment levels of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ2: What are the types of positions previously held by current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ3: What are the demographics (race, gender, age) of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ4: What are the similarities in career patterns of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

This study was conducted using descriptive statistics and social network analysis. By using descriptive statistics, a researcher can describe and summarize research findings that might not be easily interpreted from the raw data. Social network mapping takes this a step further and allows for the visualization of data, which may allow for better interpretation of the findings in a study (Salkind, 2011).

This study utilized online biographies, resumes, and questionnaires gathered either online or in response to a request sent via email. Email responses were used to confirm biographies and supply data for any missing variables. By looking at the online biographies of FBS ADs, data for three variables was collected: (a) the current position as AD, (b) position prior to becoming AD, and (c) the position before (b). The following subsections describe the design of the social

network study, including the population of interest, instruments, data collection process, and data analysis.

Social network software, called UCINET, allowed for the visualization of descriptive statistics and used mapping to depict the relationships between the variables under study (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). Fundamental elements of social network analysis are described in the paragraphs below.

Athletics directors in this study are the social network “actors” being studied and are therefore classified as the “nodes” (Prell, 2012). The connections that nodes have with other nodes are represented by what social network analysis calls “ties.” These ties all can have a different degree of connection, which is referred to as “tie strength”. The strength of connection between ties is often associated by numbers ranging from one to five (one is considered weak and five is strong). Strength of tie connection numbers ranging from one to five were not used in this study due to the variables being measured and the numbers involved. Directional “in-degree” and “out-degree” connections between nodes are displayed using arrows. An “in-degree” relationship is used to display connections going into a node, and “out-degree” represents a connection leading out of the node (Prell, 2012).

Social network analysis has enjoyed a renewed popularity as scientists and researchers alike look for new ways to answer questions about various social processes. These social areas include the various ways individuals are tied together. Researchers are also examining the level of connectivity they share among themselves and with others (Kossinets & Watts, 2006). The study of social networks has been especially useful to research in the social sciences. Social network theory is being used widely today by researchers to explain various ties, associations, and relationships individuals and groups have within organizations (Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, &

Labianca, 2009). This way of research was popularized in an experiment where the idea of “six degrees of separation” was formulated and tested by Milgram (1967). The study took two individuals at random from a population and then used social network analysis to quickly find a common person they both shared. The theory purports that in a population like the United States, about half of the pairs of people chosen could be linked using social network analysis within two total people out from the original person (Borgatti et al., 2009). Athletics directors are all connected professionally by the nature of their roles, but the path they have taken; both professionally and academically, are likely different.

Population

The population for the study was comprised of AD’s from the 128 FBS institutions within the NCAA. The FBS subdivision consists of those top college programs that participate in post-season bowl games. The conferences that make up the FBS subdivision are American Athletic Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten Conference, Big 12 Conference, Conference USA, Mid-American Conference, Mountain West Conference, Pac 12 Conference, Southeastern Conference, and Sun Belt Conference. This population has been chosen due to the readily available information at each university’s website, and membership in the Division 1-A Athletics Director’s Association, which supplies biographic information and e-mail addresses.

Instrument

The information contained in this study was obtained directly from each institution’s athletics website with a request for information via e-mail directly to each FBS athletics director, and copied to his or her administrative assistant. This study analyzed three variables for each AD: (a) current AD position, (b) previous position prior to becoming an AD, and (c) position before “b”. Data for the three variables were entered using a matrix editor spreadsheet within the

UCINET data program (Borgatti et al., 2002). A network map, which is a collection of data points and connecting lines that showed relationships between all FBS ADs was produced. By inspecting the way various nodes and connections were clustered using UCINET software, the researcher was able to produce a variety of graphical representations and constructs. These data were used to describe and discuss the pathways to the ADs position.

Data Collection

The contact information for all FBS ADs was gathered using the NCAA's online directory of schools. The directory provided a total of 128 FBS contacts. Each AD's biography was investigated and each was sent an email invitation that contained a cover letter and an IRB approval letter (Appendix 1). The email was also copied to the administrative assistant for each AD. The email request asked the AD to complete a short questionnaire. Participants were assured the information contained in their resumes, if submitted, would be kept confidential. All information used for the study would be reported in aggregate and no individual would be identified in the survey results. The initial email invitation was emailed in Fall 2015. The online biography for each AD was utilized to supply or confirm data for the three variables. This protocol often included tracing the career path back to previous athletics positions at former institutions.

Two weeks after the initial email, a follow-up email was sent to those who had not responded to the initial invitation. The second email invitation included another copy of the cover letter and IRB approval form for the study. The cover letter was edited to reflect the second invitation (Appendix 2). Data was collected for all 128 athletics directors in the survey population.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a social network software package called UCINET. UCINET software can show a variety of relationships between and within networks. The software depicts graphically the strong or weak associations among nodes. Data were keyed into the program using the format of the embedded excel spreadsheet (see Table 1). Previous positions were examined to see what commonalities existed among ADs as each progressed professionally to the final AD position.

The analysis produced a collection of data points and lines connecting the participating ADs. A social network graph was created by the software and showed nodes and connections based on the data. These node clusters and intersecting lines were then used to produce a graphical representation or an empirically-derived “road-map” used to discuss the pathways that different individuals have to the AD position. The road map is based on the data set in Table 1. The columns represent each AD and the rows list the previous positions for each.

Table 1

Matrix Spread Sheet (in Excel format) from UCINET

ID	AD1	AD2	AD3	AD4	AD5	AD6	AD7	AD8	AD9	AD10	AD11	AD12	AD13	AD14
Athletic Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Executive Assoc. AD	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senior Associate AD	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Associate AD	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Assistant AD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Director	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assistant Director	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coordinator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Business Office	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Private Business	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
Compliance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Event Opts	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Academics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Development	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Alumni Affairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Legal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coaching	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Marketing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Ticket Office	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

Socio-grams showing the ties (previous positions held) between nodes (athletics directors) were generated using several filters within UCINET. To make the data more illustrative, the software is used to convert the matrix spread sheet into a socio-gram. Socio-grams are also called network graphs and are used visualize a social network. With this software, a network can be visualized in many ways depending on the focus of a study. Examples of socio-grams follow with Figure 1 showing the professional areas of concentration for a small sample population of FBS ADs.

Figure 2 uses a UCINET analysis that measures the degree of relative closeness each node has to one another. The positions that are shared most often between all ADs in the graph will be larger than those nodes with the fewest associations.

Figure 3 similarly uses a UCINET analysis called spring embedding. Nodes that have the fewest ties among the sample population will be located farther from those nodes that share the most common ties. Nodes that have no current tie among the sample population would appear at the top left of the socio-gram and not connected to the graph at all.

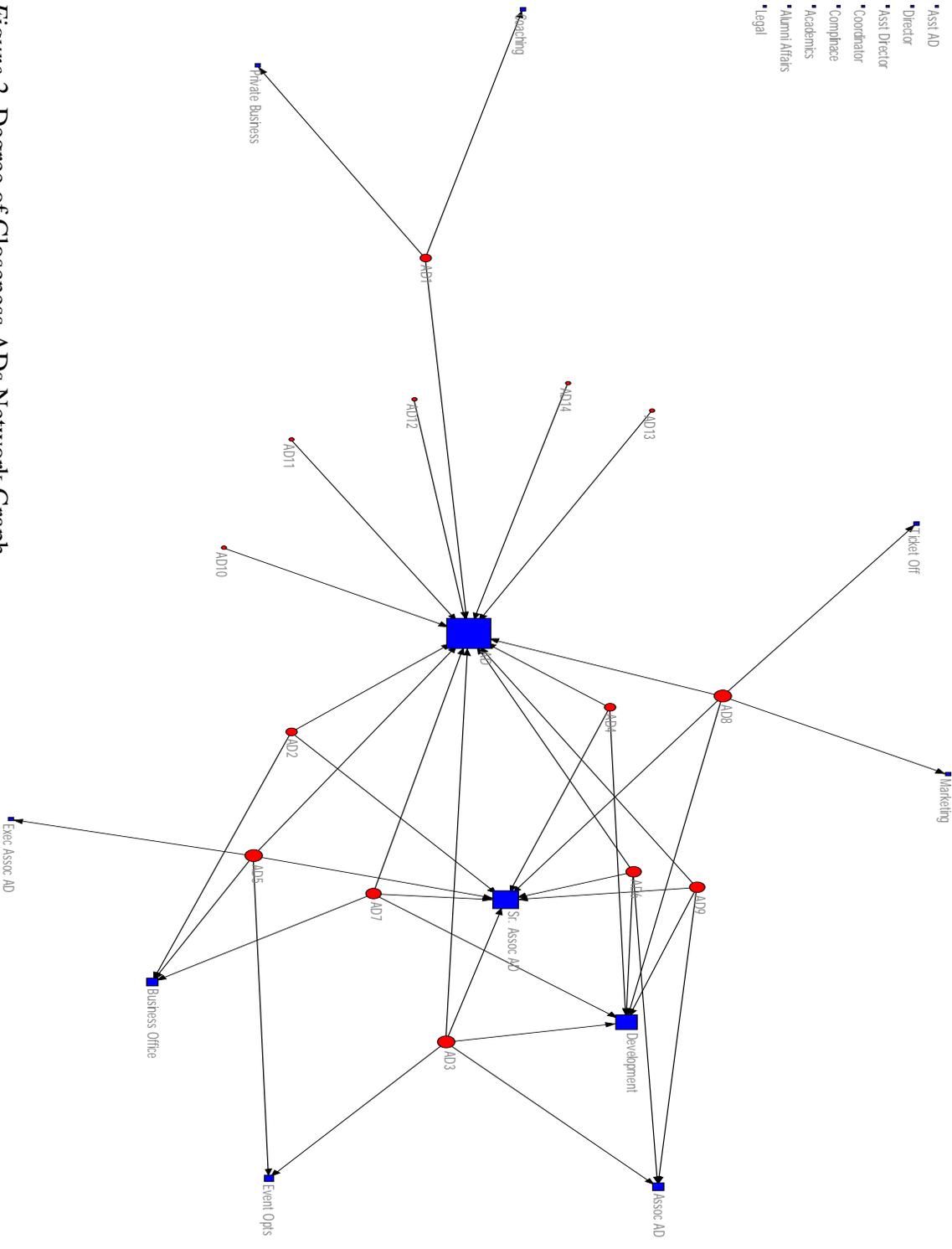


Figure 2. Degree of Closeness ADs Network Graph.

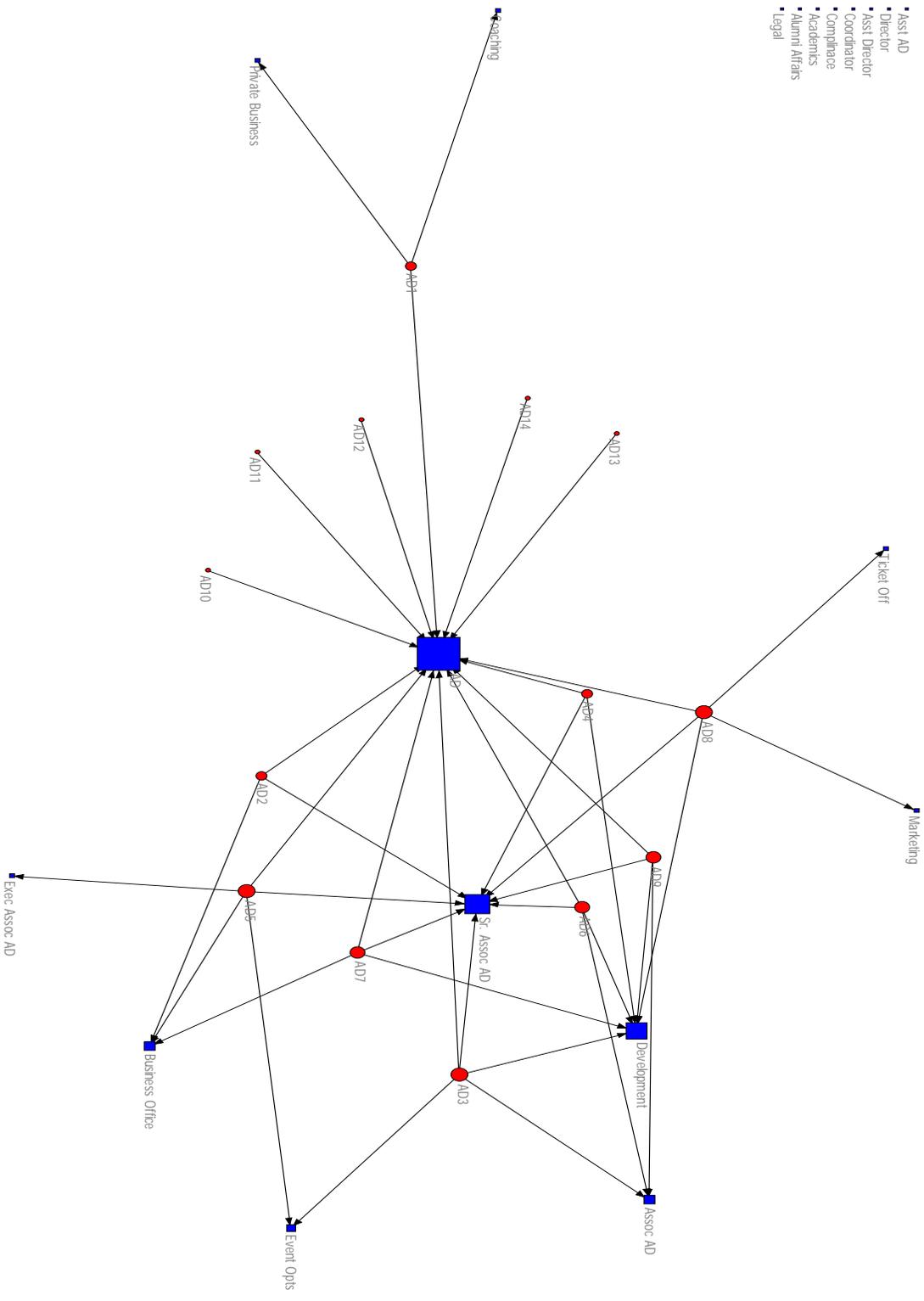


Figure 3. Spring Embedded Graph.

In this Figure 4 reproduction of the social network graph showing ADs, the nodes are sized relative to the number of direct connections they have. The more connections a particular node has the bigger it appears and conversely the smaller the number of connections the smaller the node. This and other referenced analysis provide a visual depiction of the descriptive statistics used in this study to answer questions about the career paths of FBS athletics directors.

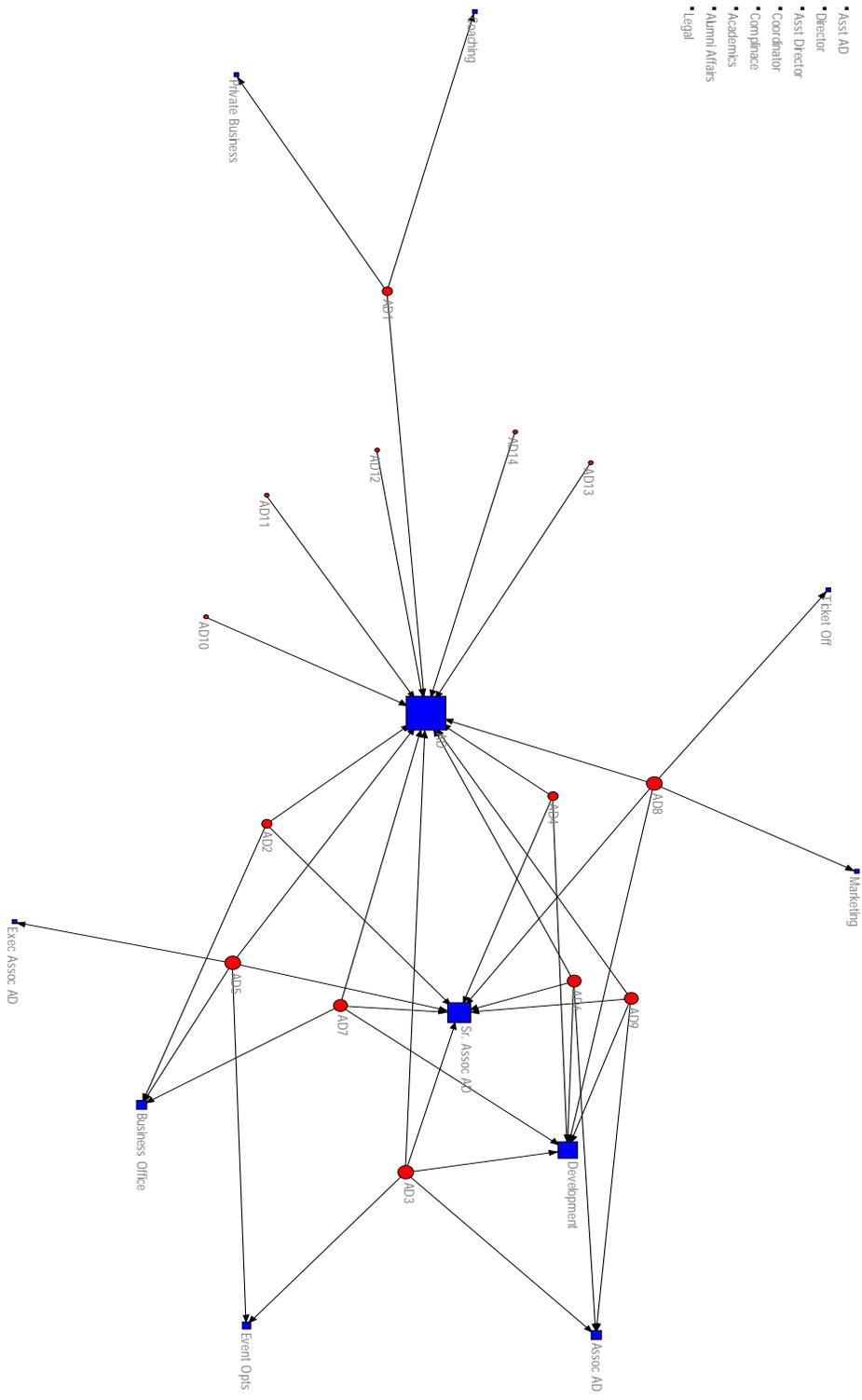


Figure 4. AD Degree Centrality.

CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

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RQ4: What are the similarities in career patterns of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

Results

Using data compiled from online biographies and questionnaires, the educational pathways for all 128 ADs in the FBS were coded and entered into social network analysis software. Table 2 shows the number of schools and conferences. The study used the data collected to identify similarities in the educational and career paths of the athletics directors in the study.

This study analyzed three variables: (a) current position, (b) previous position, and (c) and position held previous to position “b”. The compilation of the data produced a social network graph with data points and connections. Data were entered into the social network

analysis software package UCINET and the basic socio-gram was rendered showing the entire network.

Table 2

Sample of the FBS Schools and Conferences They Represent Used for This Study (NCAA 2015)

Conference	Number of Universities in Conference
ACC	14
American	12
Big 12	10
Big Ten	14
Conference USA	13
Independent	3
MAC	13
Mountain West	12
Pac-12	12
SEC	14
Sun Belt	11
Total	128

RQ1: What are the educational attainment levels of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

Data collected from school websites and email responses were entered into spreadsheet software using a spreadsheet called an adjacency matrix. The matrix contained 128 rows representing each AD in the study and a column representing four degree choices. Table 3 shows an example of the adjacency matrix used to map the findings for the educational attainment.

Table 3

Adjacency Matrix Format

	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate	Juris Doctorate
AD1	1	0	0	1
AD2	1	1	0	0
AD3	1	1	1	0

Every FBS AD (100%, n=128) possessed a bachelor's degree making this a minimum expectation in order to be considered for the position. The percentage of FBS ADs who held a master's degree was more than two-thirds (68%, n = 87). Fewer than 10% of FBS ADs held doctorates (7%, n = 9), and slightly more held a juris doctorate (9%, n = 11).

Total Network Graph

Using the social network analysis software UCINET (2002), Figure 6 was created showing the degree attainment network graph.

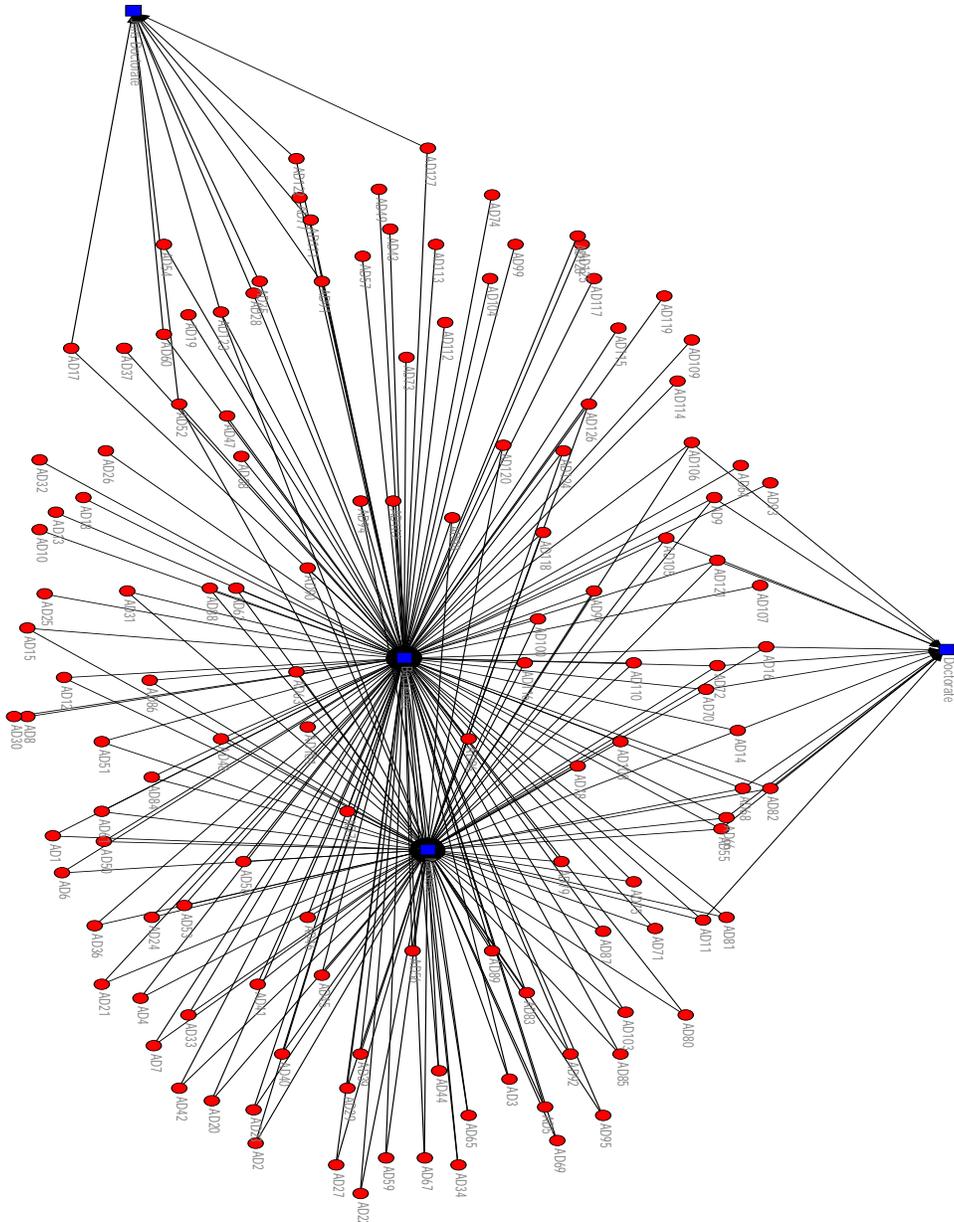


Figure 5. Total FBS Degree Full Socio-Gram for Athletics Directors Degrees Held.

Degree Concentrations

The areas of degree concentration were also examined in the study. Among the FBS ADs (n = 128) in the study, 36 individual degrees were grouped together among similar concentrations to reduce the number. Further aggregation resulted in a final list that resulted in broad degree concentrations.

Table 4

Areas of Bachelor's Degree Concentration for FBS ADs in Division I Athletics

Degree Concentration	Other Included Areas of Concentration
Sport Administration	Athletics Administration Recreation Administration Sport Communications Sport Management
Business	Accounting Business Business administration Business Finance Economics Finance
Education	Educational Leadership Educational Policy English Higher Education Administration History Human Development Physical Education Political Science Psychology
Counseling	Behavioral Management Social Work Sociology
Engineering	Industrial Management
Marketing	
Communications	
Public Administration	
Juris Doctorate	

Figure 6 depicts the network graph showing the degree concentrations for athletics directors in the study. Table 10 gives the demographic percentages for areas of concentration.

Edgelist

Next, ADs were coded into an edgelist format for input into UCINET. This format represents ties among the different ADs or actors as a set of rows with each representing a common tie. The rows each have two columns showing nodes that have a tie. Table 5 gives an example of the edgelist format with labels embedded for the network graph and for use in k-core analysis.

Table 5

Edgelist with Labels Indicating Relations among Actors per Row

Education	Sport administration
BS	Juris Doctorate
Counseling	Education

K-Core Analysis

The k-core analysis in UCINET considers all nodes in a matrix, all of whom are connected to a number (N-K) of each other. Each node must be tied to every other node in order to be included in in the k-core analysis. A k-core analysis of the degree concentrations produces the Figure 7 network graph. The single blue node (communications degree) is an example of the k-core level with the least number of connections among the other educational concentrations.

In the resulting grouping of degrees, it can be determined that the concentration “Communications” is one node that has the least number of connections to the other nodes, thus making the transition from communications to athletics director a less viable pathway than they others.

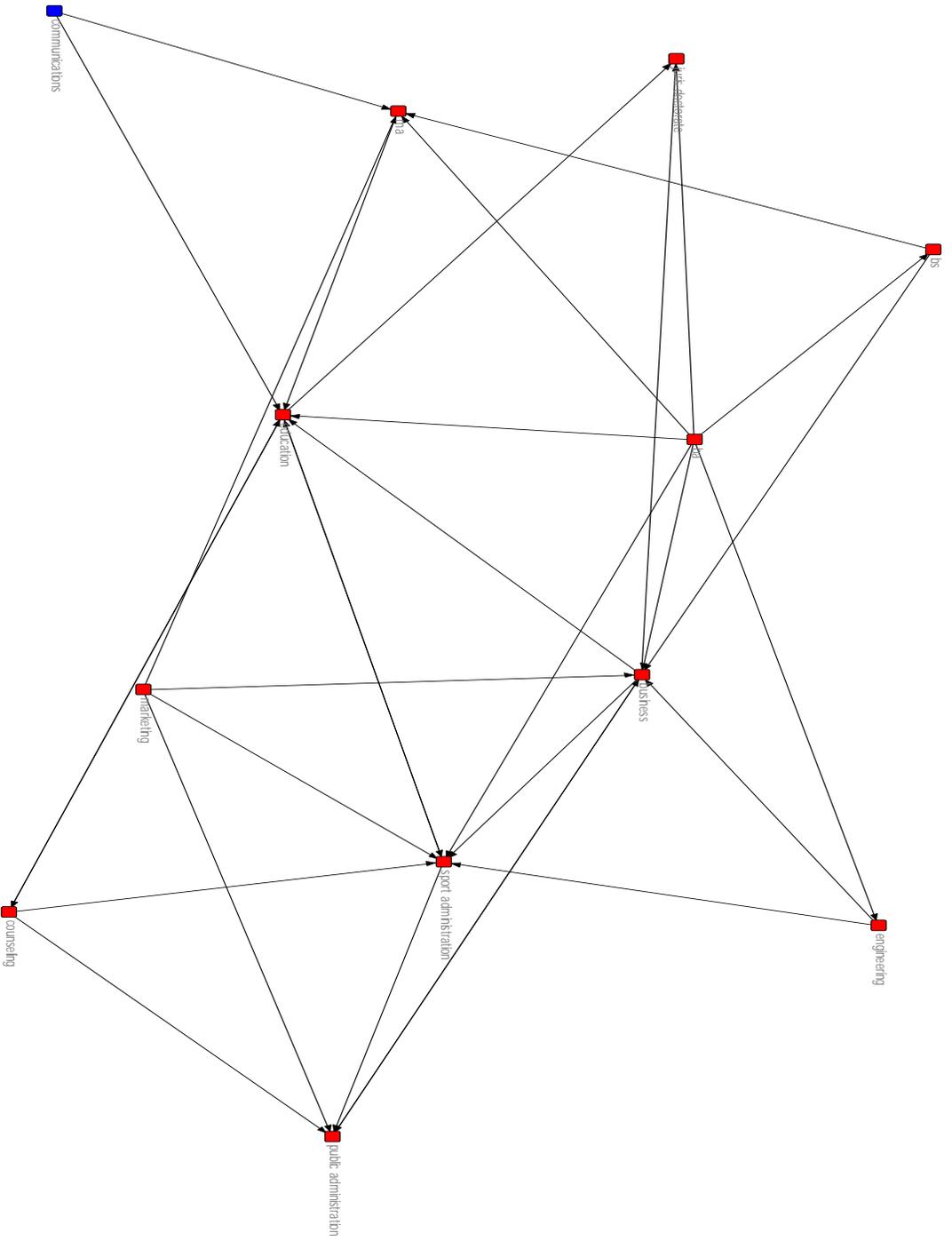


Figure 7. Degree Concentration with K-Core Analysis.

Blocks and Cutpoints Analysis

The second analysis of the degree concentration involved looking for blocks and cutpoints (Figure 8). This method of analysis looks for nodes where if they were removed would leave the graph divided into two or more parts that were no longer connected. Those nodes are called cutpoints. If a node also cuts off other nodes from the graph, then it is considered a block.

The analysis of AD degree concentrations produced a graph with only one graph that included all the degree concentrations and no cutpoints.

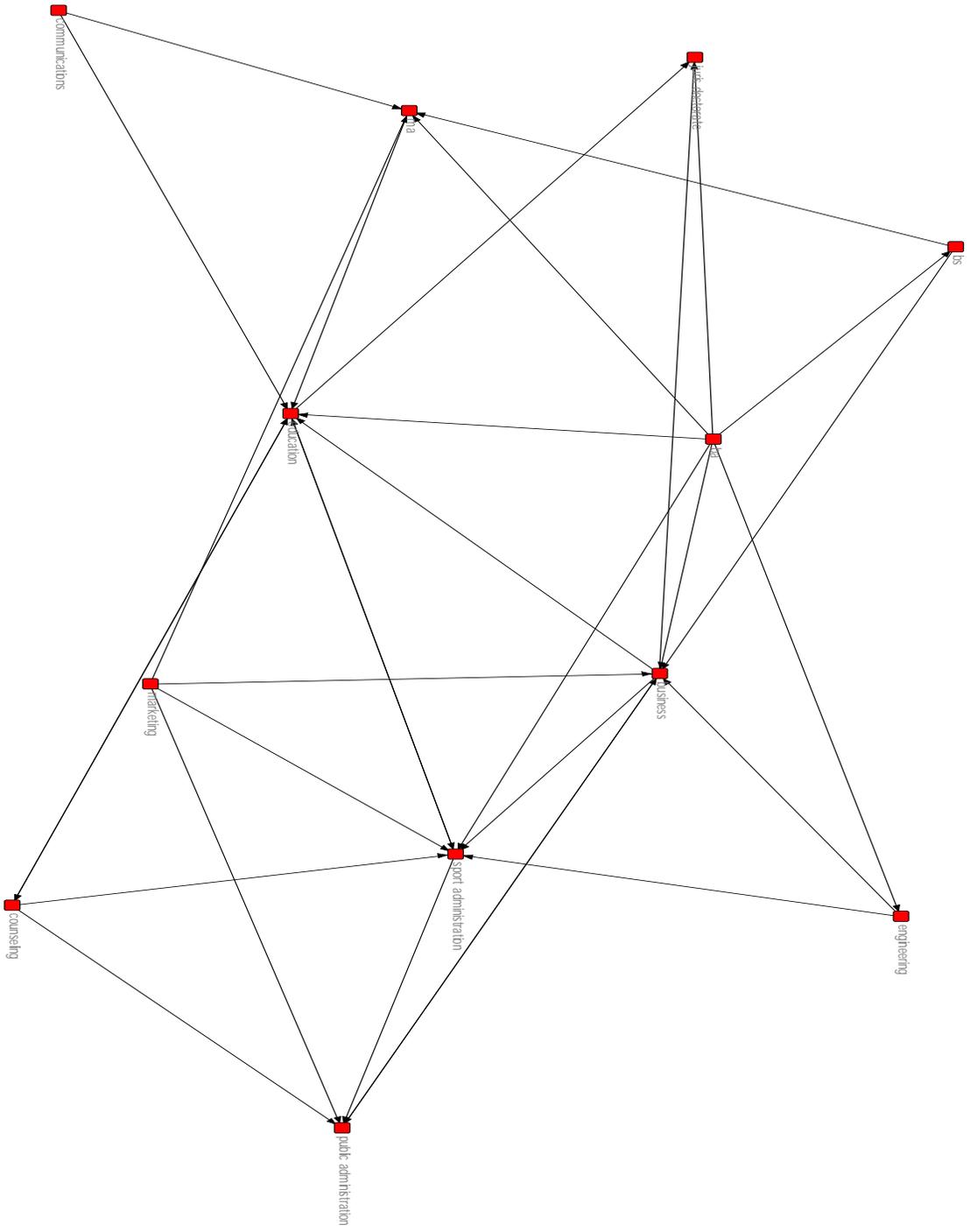


Figure 8. Blocks and Cutpoint Analysis for Degree Concentration.

Research Question 2: What are the types of positions previously held by current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

Data in regard to the research question on previous positions held by the ADs were organized using a spreadsheet array. Table 7 shows the resulting frequency counts and percentages.

Table 7

Previous Position Titles for FBS Athletics Directors before Becoming AD

Title	Number (n=128)	Percentage
Senior Executive AD	2	1.6%
Executive Associate AD	14	10.9%
Deputy AD	8	6.3%
Senior Associate AD	37	28.9%
Associate AD	27	21.1%
Assistant AD	10	7.8%
Director	2	1.6%
Coach	4	3.1%
Other	24	18.8%

In addition to the information in Table 7, a network graph illustrating the different clusters of previous positions held by ADs is depicted in Figure 9. The data show three key titles with previous positions. Senior Associate AD was the most commonly held position prior to being named AD with 28.9% (n = 37). The title of Associate AD was second, just slightly

Research Question 3: What are the demographic characteristics (race, gender, age) of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

From a sample of Power 5 ADs, eighty-seven percent (n = 58) of power 5 athletics directors were white males. Because demographic data isn't readily available for all FBS schools, a sample of Power 5 (ACC, Big 10, Big 12, Pac 12, SEC) institutions was used. Minority males in the same population only accounted for nine percent (n = 6). Women athletics directors were only represented by four percent (n = 3) in the study. There were no minority female ADs in the population. Table 8 shows demographics of the FBS Power 5 AD population.

Table 8

Demographics of FBS Power 5 AD Population

Power 5 ADs In Study	Total Number	Percentage
Minority Females	0	0%
Minority Males	6	9%
White Females	3	4%
White Males	67	87%
Total	76	100%

Research Question 4: What are the similarities in career patterns of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

Data collected on study participants regarding previous position held just prior to becoming an AD produced a list of thirty-six (n=36) different expertise areas. These areas of expertise were further aggregated into 22 nodes in order to make the network graph more useful

for identifying the type of position held. Collapsing categories was performed in accordance with Chapter 3 methods.

Table 9

Previous Position Titles for FBS Athletics Directors before Becoming AD

Title	Number (128 total)	Percentage
Senior Executive AD	2	1.6%
Executive Associate AD	14	10.9%
Deputy AD	8	6.3%
Senior Associate AD	37	28.9%
Associate AD	27	21.0%
Assistant AD	10	7.8%
Director	2	1.6%
Coach	4	3.1%
Outside Athletics	24	18.8%

With regard to the question of what previous career patterns those FBS athletics directors in the study had before becoming an AD, the network graph in Figure 10 is presented. The graph in total is both clustered at the center and has several nodes that protrude out from the center of the closest set of nodes. The data was input into social network software by way of the edgelist format as illustrated earlier in Table 5.

K-Core Analysis

K-core analysis of the titles of FBS ADs produced the network graph in Figure 11. The k-core technique revealed several groups of nodes that were more closely related and nested together within the network. The closest group to that of the position of “AD” were the familiar titles associated with most athletics careers. Interestingly, there were several titles that would normally be considered to be part of this “clique”, but were outside of the group. The position of Senior Deputy AD is one example title in this category. However Senior Deputy AD is a relatively new title within college athletics. As individuals continue to progress in athletics administration, this title may become more common in the profession. Altogether the sociogram shows three different sets of nodes that are closely related when considering like career paths for the athletics directors in this study. The second group closest to the final position of AD are those identified by the nodes NCAA, Sr. Deputy AD, Pro Sports, and Law. Those furthest away, with the lowest k-core score, are the nodes conference office, broadcasting, outside athletics, associate manager, and professor.

Blocks and Cutpoints

Several cutpoints and blocks were identified. This function in the software takes the entire socio-gram and identifies those parts of it that would become disconnected if a particular node and those related to it were taken out of the graph altogether. As noted before the “block” is that portion that is disconnected from the socio-gram, and the “cutpoint” is that individual node itself that connects that portion of the graph to the rest of the socio-gram.

This analysis was used to generate the network graph depicted in Figure 12. This resulted in six ($n = 6$) nodes identified as cutpoints that would split the socio-gram into multiple graphs if those nodes were taken out. The blocks or those portions of the graph that would become separated if taken out were Senior Associate AD and Assistant Director, Administration and Professor, Law and Broadcasting, NCAA and Conference Office etc.

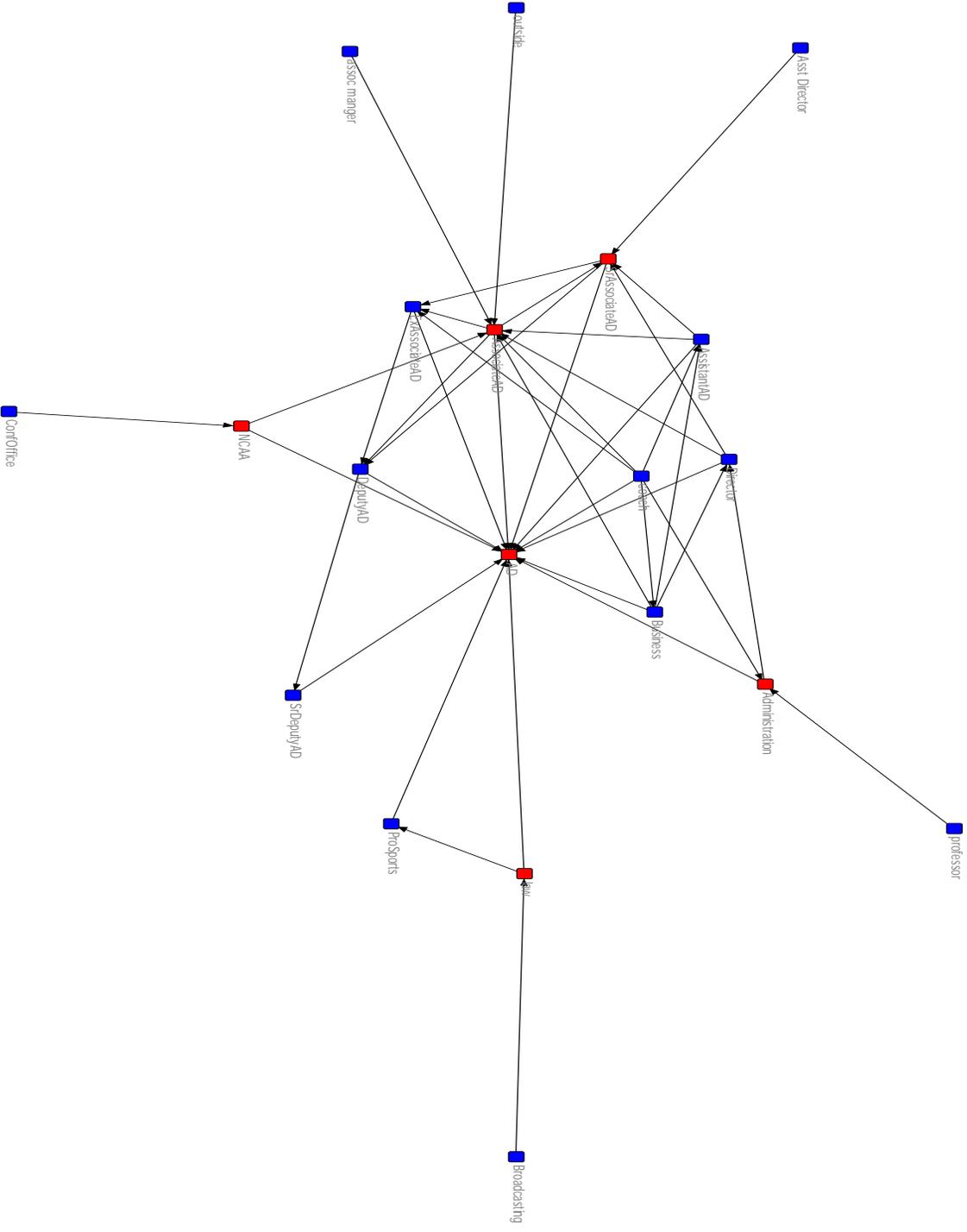


Figure 12. Previous Position to AD Blocks and Cutpoint Analysis.

Strength of Tie

The analysis performed by the social network study as shown in Figure 13 identified the strongest ties among positions on the way to AD. This analysis is done by directing the social network software to increase the size of the connecting lines that tie each node together by its strength to the ADs position. Those positions more often held prior to becoming an AD will have stronger tie lines than those held by fewer in the study. An inspection of the network graph determined that having the previous title of Senior Associate AD and Associate AD were the strongest ties to becoming an athletics director. It is also noted that the position of Deputy AD and Executive Associate AD also are strong. The one tie outside athletics that has a strong association with the athletics director's position is the Business category. Those who come from this career field also had a strong showing among the ADs in the study.

Area of Focus

The final analysis produced a network graph that can be used to answer the most popular question often asked when a person wants to know what area they should focus on to become an AD. The areas of focus for the sample population of 128 FBS athletics directors was entered into a spreadsheet in the edgelist format. Table 10 gives percentages held in each area of focus for the athletics directors in the survey population for the position prior to being named AD (position b), and the position prior to that (position c).

Table 10

Area Concentrations for FBS ADs at Position C and B

Area of Focus	Position C Totals	Percentage	Position B Totals	Percentage
Development	32	25%	37	29%
Internal Operations	5	4%	34	27%
External Operations	2	2%	16	13%
Academics	3	2%	0	0%
Operations	7	5%	6	5%
Marketing	15	12%	6	5%
Professional Sports	5	4%	6	5%
Coaching	18	14%	3	2%
Compliance	2	2%	1	1%
University Administration	2	2%	2	2%
Business Office	15	12%	3	2%
Finance	2	2%	2	2%
Conference Office	3	2%	0	0%
Ticket Office	5	4%	1	1%
Attorney/Law	4	3%	4	3%
Media Relations/Sports Info	2	2%	1	1%
Private Business	4	3%	2	2%
Facilities	2	2%	2	2%
NCAA	0	0%	1	1%
Broadcasting	0	0%	1	1%
TOTAL	128	100%	128	100%

The UCINET software performed a k-core analysis on the area each athletics director in the FBS population group held before they became an athletics director. The analysis revealed a graph in which three sections based on their closeness to the “AD” position were plotted. The main group of positions closest to the athletics director’s position are identified with the nodes in red. This particular group had more connections among each other than the remaining sets of nodes colored in blue and black.

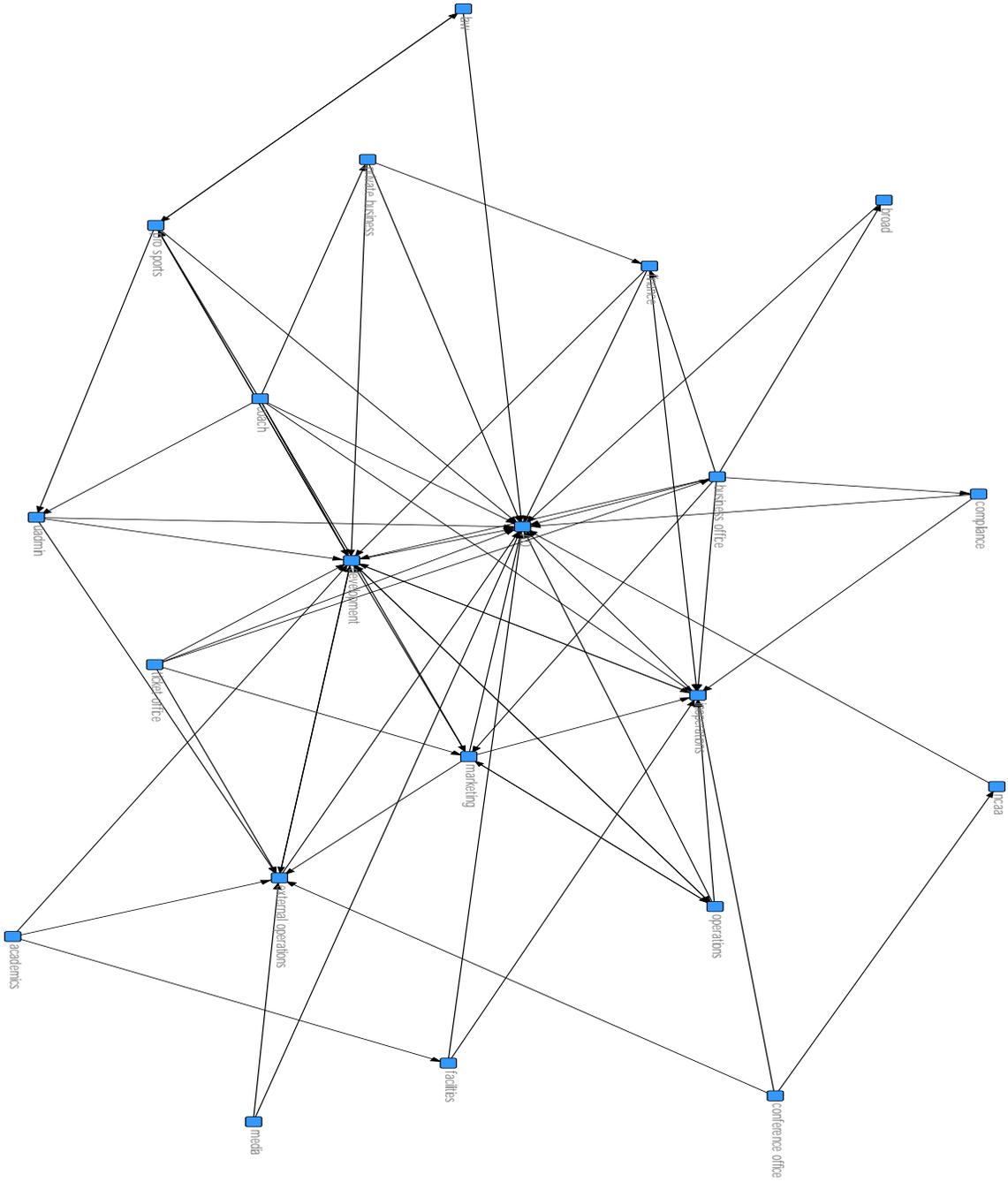


Figure 14. Previous Position to AD Area of Focus Concentration Full Socio-Gram.

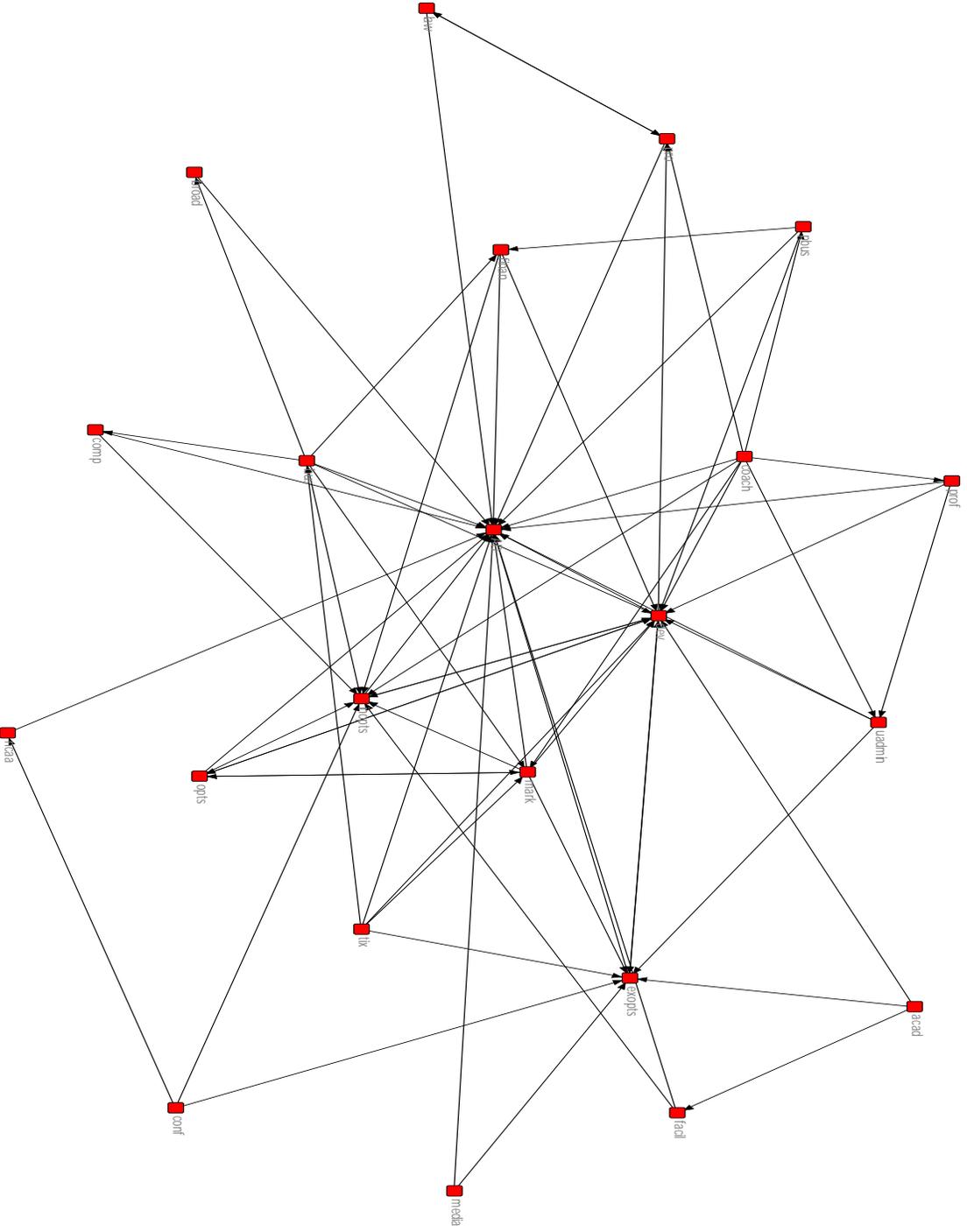


Figure 16. Previous Position to AD Area of Focus Blocks and Cutpoints.

The analysis on this network graph in relation to cutpoints reveals a graph in which the software does not identify a single cutpoint. There are no nodes that can be taken out of this graph that would divide it into multiple graphs.

Tie Strength

Again, using the software analysis that looks at strength of tie, or the paths that most often lead to the AD position, Figure 17 is generated. The resulting network graph clearly identifies development as the strongest tie. The other areas that most often lead to the position of athletics director were those positions labeled as internal operations, and external operations.

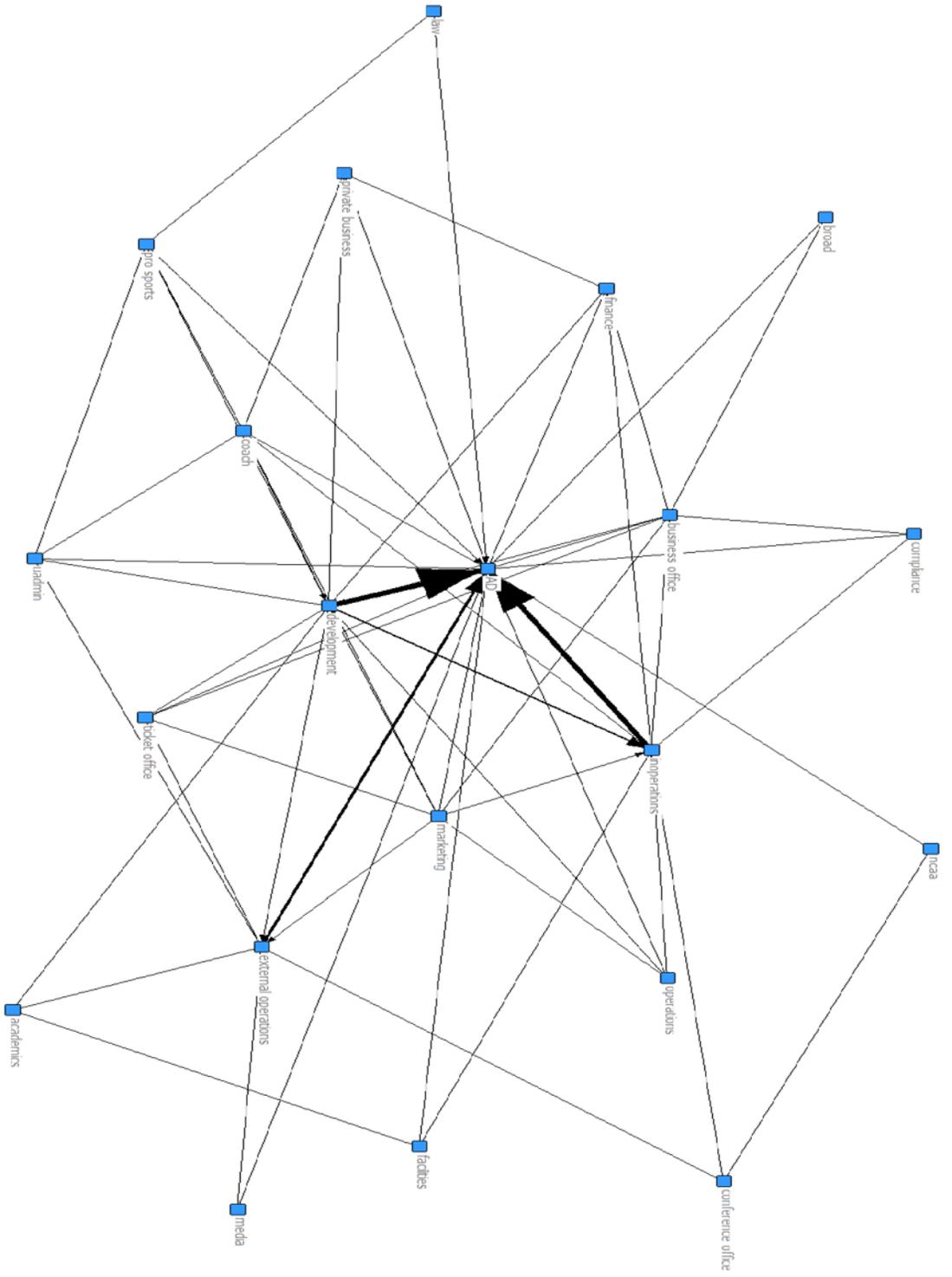


Figure 17. Strength of Tie for Position Held Directly before Becoming AD.

CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the career paths of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Directors of Athletics. Social network analysis software was used to examine trends and similarities in the career and educational paths of athletics directors. The study sought to identify the common elements of career progression and degree attainment that could act as an empirically-derived “road map” to assist those interested in studying for or pursuing careers in athletics administration. In major college athletics today there are approximately 128 FBS athletics programs (National Collegiate Athletics Association, 2013). The career progression a person may take to become an athletics director (AD) varies by individual. The literature about the careers of athletics directors within the NCAA is scarce. Vacancies in the AD position are highly competitive, so it is vital to those seeking this position to have an understanding of the necessary qualifications.

Chapter I introduced the study by presenting the statement of the problem, the purpose of the research, research questions, limitations of the study, assumptions of the study, the importance of the study, definition of terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter II contained a review of the related literature which looked at the current similarities in career paths of athletics directors, the essential skills necessary to become an athletics director, and the traits of the modern day athletics director. Chapter III addresses the procedures used in the study including an introduction, purpose and design, population and sample, the instrumentation, data

collection procedures and analysis, and finally a summary. Chapter IV presents the study findings and the interpretation of the data collected. Chapter V presents an interpretation of the study findings from the social network analysis performed on the sample athletics director population of football bowl subdivision ADs in the national collegiate athletic association's Division I. Additionally, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study are provided.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: What are the educational attainment levels of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ2: What are the types of positions previously held by current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ3: What are the demographics (race, gender, age) of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

RQ4: What are the similarities in career patterns of current Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors?

Summary of Findings

In order to examine the career paths of football bowl subdivision (FBS) directors of athletics (ADs), a social networking study using UCINET and Netdraw was conducted. The data for the study was retrieved using the online biographies that each athletics website offered and from returned survey questionnaires. The data was analyzed by using combinations of adjacency matrices, along with edgelist with embedded labels in the areas of degree attainment, and career path.

The first question in this study related to the educational attainment levels of the sample football bowl subdivision athletics directors. The study found every AD in the sample population had at least a bachelor's degree (100%); 68% percent also had also obtained a master's degree.

The second question in the study related to the previous positions each athletics director held before being named AD. The study revealed that the title of senior associate athletics director was the most commonly held title prior to being named AD. Out of the sample population of one-hundred twenty-eight ($n = 128$), 28.9% held this title. The second most popular title FBS ADs held in the study was that of associate athletics director with twenty-seven ($n = 27$) or twenty-one percent (21%) holding this title prior to becoming athletics director.

The third question in the study related to the demographics of the FBS ADs. A sample of this population was surveyed from the "Power 5" group that includes the ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12, and SEC. The data revealed that white males were the largest population represented in this group of athletics directors. White males accounted for 87%. White females, in contrast, were 4%. The representation for minority males in the study was 9%. Minority females were conspicuously absent from the sample population of Power 5 ADs.

The fourth question related to the career positions athletics directors in the FBS division held just prior to becoming an AD. The study revealed twenty-two ($n = 22$) different areas of focus for the sample population. That included positions within college athletics and some positions outside collegiate athletics. An analysis using the strength of career ties to the AD position revealed that "Development" was the most common position held among FBS ADs. The positions of "External Operations" and "Internal Operations" also had very strong ties in the network analysis just before being named AD.

Conclusions

The research on athletics directors and the career paths they have chosen prior to becoming an AD is very limited. At the FBS level of the NCAA, which contains the majority of its top programs, this holds especially true. The review of each ADs educational, demographic variables, and career paths chosen provided empirical explanation of the journey to the AD position.

The educational attainment of athletics directors studied here adds information to the literature in which the college major of physical education was most common (Nielsen, 1989). As the industry of collegiate athletics advanced and the duties and responsibilities of the position of AD grew in scope and nature, so too did the educational specializations of athletics directors (Nielsen, 1989). It was determined that due to the growth of collegiate athletics and the duties and responsibilities demanded to head an athletics department, athletics administrators would need to be well educated in order to be successful (Schneider & Stier, 2005).

This study found for the sample population of FBS ADs that all had a bachelor's degree at minimum. In addition, of the one hundred twenty-eight ($n = 128$) that were examined in this study, eighty-seven ($n = 87$) or sixty-eight percent had earned a post-baccalaureate degree. This study, similar to the findings in a study conducted by Schneider and Stier (2005), suggests that the position of athletics director requires an individual with academic credentials. The findings in this study concluded as did a similar study by Spenard (2011) that all athletics directors had at least a bachelor's degree. This study also found the most popular areas of degree concentration for athletics directors in the population of FBS ADs were in political science, accounting and finance, sport administration, management, and education (Spenard, 2011).

In the past, athletics department heads were likely to be former football coaches (Bravo, Won, & Shonk, 2012). This was done for a number of reasons. The former football coach was often a trusted member of the campus community and a familiar face to the alumni, whom the department relied on for support (Berg, 1990). Having the former coach as the head of athletics was also seen as a way to help the fundraising efforts of the department (Berg, 1990). Due to the complexity and financial success of the larger athletics programs, the trend to hire former coaches to lead departments began to wane. A trend toward hiring businessmen and life-long athletics administrators began to emerge (Bravo et al., 2012).

This study supports the statements asserted by Berg (1990) about the dwindling of former coaches as heads of athletics departments. Similar to Berg (1990), the study on FBS athletics directors found only four ($n = 4$) out of the entire population of one hundred twenty-eight athletics directors surveyed were former coaches. Data from this study also found as did Bravo et al. (2012) that life-long athletics administrators and those in business were the majority of the current FBS group of ADs. Similar to the findings of other studies conducted by Armstrong (2011) and Spenard (2011), this study also found the title of associate athletics director among the leading positions held prior to becoming an AD. However, unlike those same studies (Armstrong, 2011; Spenard, 2011), the title of assistant athletics director was no longer one of the leading titles and had been surpassed by the title of senior associate athletics director.

The demographic characteristics of collegiate athletics has been the subject of numerous studies (DeHass, 2007; Lapchick, Bustamante, & Ruiz, 2006; Spenard, 2011). Sports has long been seen as an area where race, socio-economic disparities, and discrimination were largely absent. However, a research study conducted by Eitzen and Sage (2003) found a glaring lack of diversity of race in collegiate athletics at the head of departments. Unfortunately, the case for

women in athletics administration is also bleak (Henderson, Grappendorf, & Burton, 2011). A survey of the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA, 2007) found that at the Division 1 level in which the football bowl subdivision (FBS) is a part, women represented less than eight percent (8%) of athletics directors. A later study conducted by Sander (2011) found as few as five ($n = 5$) women leading athletics departments, even though their population of student-athletes was half. Still further, the representation of ethnic minorities in collegiate athletics administration can be even more complex due to their high visibility (Sage, 2009). A study by Coventry (2004) found the presence of minorities in areas of the professional broadcasting and sports media can often lead viewers to falsely assume that the industry is more diverse than it actually is. A study conducted by McDowell, Cunningham, and Singer (2008) concluded ethnic minorities are underrepresented within collegiate athletics administration at upper levels.

This study also found women with a very minute showing among athletics directors. Women were found to only number three ($n=3$) in the total population of FBS ADs. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of athletics directors' positions were occupied by males (96%). The findings of this study were similar to the study conducted by McDowell, Cunningham, and Singer (2008) in which ethnic minorities were uncommon in the upper levels of athletics administration. In this study ethnic minority males within the FBS numbered only six ($n = 6$) and there were no minority females.

Research about the careers of athletics directors and their paths to the position is limited (Hardin, et al., 2013). Similar to Hardin et al. (2013), this study found a shortage of research on the subject of athletics directors and career paths. This studies survey of career paths of FBS ADs concurred with Wong, (2006) and Berg, (1990) in finding that athletics directors had experience prior to becoming AD in areas of coaching, athletics administration, and business.

Moreover, findings from this study found similar career paths that Whisenant and colleagues (2002) reported in more business centered areas of focus. Development was the most popular concentration of athletics directors in this study prior to becoming an AD which resembles findings by Swift (2011). The overall findings of this study also resembled conclusions (Wong, 2006) made with regard to career tracks of athletics directors coming from coaching, athletics administration, and business.

Implications

Career Paths

The observation of career paths in the study revealed a definite pattern of positions held prior to becoming an athletics director (position b), and the position held before that (position c). The dominant representation for the sample population of athletics directors was a group that included development, internal operations, and external operations. The common tie all three of these areas share is they all fall into the business category of athletics administration. The leading area in which the current athletics directors in the study were concentrated when named was development. Almost a third (29%) held positions in this area when they became ADs. The areas of internal and external operations are also two areas within college athletics that have many business functions to the positions as well. Those two positions also comprise direct knowledge of the day-to-day operations of an athletics department and often mean the person in them has supervision over key areas. Based on the research, it would be prudent for professionals who would like to increase their chances to become an AD get experience in the area of development. Further along those lines, studies and program development geared towards sport administration would do well to make sure a major component of the curriculum in this area covered business aspects of the industry.

Conversely the research also found areas of concentration where the number of people that went on to be named athletics director was extremely low. Some of the lowest percentages were in the areas of academics, compliance, ticket office, media relations, etc. It is important to remember that prior history is not necessarily an absolute indicator of the way that collegiate athletics administration will perform in the future. It must be pointed out though, to professionals currently in or considering entering into some of these areas, the previous literature and this study found a lack of advancement to the position of athletics director from these positions.

The area of coaching was also a previous position from which many athletics directors early on in the industry had ascended to the athletics director's chair. But as previous research has stated and was confirmed by findings of this study, those numbers have declined as the industry changed more to one that values business acumen. The study found a very sharp decline in athletics directors in the FBS population that had come from the coaching ranks. Whereas the number of FBS athletics directors who were coaches in the prior to previous position "c" were present in the study, those who were coaches prior to being named athletics director were far less. The percentages of coaches in the "c" position was fourteen percent (14%). The number of FBS ADs that were coaches before being named athletics director (position b) was only two percent (2%). This would make the probability currently in the industry of advancing from a coach to athletics director unlikely. For young professionals seeking an athletics director position who are currently coaches, it would suggest a strong need to have experience in other areas such as those that lead among the survey population. For practitioners and those in education, it would provide a word of caution to students on the coaching path who also would aspire to become an athletics director in the future. The results of

the previous literature and the study in no way suggest that any path is impossible, but some paths will clearly be more challenging than others.

Previous Titles

An investigation of types of positions held by titles was also a focus of this study. The literature in this area previously identified the titles of assistant and associate athletics director as the most common titles current athletics directors had before being named AD. Similarly, this study found the title of associate athletics director still as one of the leading titles the athletics directors in the study held prior. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the 128 FBS ADs in this study were associate athletics directors when they assumed the chair. The ranks of those who held the assistant athletics director title previously had waned somewhat. The most commonly held title found in this study was that of senior associate athletics director. This title was previously held by twenty-eight percent (28%) of the ADs in the study prior to assuming the chair. This shift in title is due to career progression in the industry and the need to promote and further define the degree of increasing responsibilities within athletics departments. In addition to the somewhat newer titles of senior associate athletics director and executive associate athletics director not found in high degree in the previous literature, there are senior-level athletics administrators with titles of deputy athletics director. For young professionals in the industry, knowing the ranks of positions that have spawned the majority of athletics directors can offer a guide to the level of duties one generally would need to become an athletics director. The progression of titles from assistant to associate, to senior associate, to executive associate, and so forth were found to be the natural progression among the survey population.

Education

Confirming the previous research literature, this study also found the population of athletics directors to be a well-educated group. Every AD held at least a bachelor's degree. Further, sixty-eight percent (68%) obtained a master's degree of some sort. The FBS ADs in this study as a percentage of the group also held doctorates (7%) and juris doctorates (9%). For the professional who aspires to become an athletics director, an advanced degree would almost seem a requirement. This study concurred with previous research finding most of the athletics directors in the sample population with degree concentrations in sports administration, business, and education. For practitioners and those in education knowing the degree fields from which a current group of athletics directors obtained degrees will help in the advisement and guidance of students when planning courses of study.

Demographic Characteristics

The findings in this study were similar to previous studies on the subjects: the dominance of white males and a shortage of women and minorities among the ranks of senior-level administrators. This study found white males accounted for eighty-seven percent (87%) of the sample population, while women and minorities together accounted for the other thirteen percent (13%). This study found no representation for minority women within the population of FBS ADs. This study also looked at the age of a portion of the sample population that resided within the Power 5 group of schools. The average age for the fifty-five ($n = 55$) athletics directors was 54 years. For professionals in the industry or those who seek to join the industry these findings will agree with the previous literature in declaring the road to athletics directorship can be a long one. It also provides a chance for senior administrators like a university president or provost to

see how the landscape of collegiate athletics has not changed as much as reports in the popular press may purport.

Recommendations for Future Research

A review of the skills and qualifications that presidents and trustees consider important for an athletics director in collegiate athletics, especially for schools in the FBS division, could provide further insight to what degrees and career paths are deemed most important to the profession. Since presidents and trustees often make the final decision on the selection of an athletics director, this information would be invaluable. A study should be conducted to determine if there is a general consensus among presidents and others on what skills signal a person's readiness to be an AD. This study could also provide an opportunity for presidents to offer opinions and suggestions on ways to increase the numbers of women and minorities in the industry. A study of this type could also provide an opportunity to those who wish to speak on the subject of why they might or might not hire a woman or person of color to lead a particular department.

An investigation of whether or not working for a particular athletics director improved the chances of that person also ascending to an AD's position would also expand the literature on athletics directors. Moreover, a similar study investigating if presidents tend to hire ADs from Power 5 conferences more than the other athletics conferences would also expand the knowledge base in this area. The review could look into whether there is a thought that working at a Power 5 institution provided a higher level of preparation when compared to the challenges one would encounter at a smaller conference or school.

A study of the social networking maps of women and minorities within collegiate athletics when compared to their white counterparts would provide an opportunity to expand the

literature. A review of this sort would also help look for reasons for underrepresentation of these groups in senior-level positions within athletics. Looking into whether whites tend to have the same mentors and affiliations compared to senior-level women and minorities could provide little known insight into reasons their numbers might lag behind when athletics directors are hired.

A review into the rise and influence of search firms into the process of hiring athletics directors and senior level athletics administrators would definitely add to the literature. A study on whether search firms are truly just managers of the process or have influences on outcomes could be examined. Also a look into whether the same individuals are recycled and thus given an advantage over someone not in the system could be researched.

And finally, the progress of those non-traditional hires in recent years of athletics directors from outside athletics administration could be studied. A review of how they have fared in regards to the success of those hires and the changes they've brought on the industry of collegiate athletics could be pursued. This could provide valuable insight into the nature of successes and failures these individuals have faced as "outsiders".

Summary

The profession of collegiate athletics has undergone numerous changes over the years. Athletics directors were often former coaches, and almost exclusively white males. Familiarity with alumni was a leading factor for most university presidents when selecting a leader for the athletics unit. The financial capabilities of sport to generate substantial revenue soon followed with the continued growth and interest of athletics among spectators. This growth soon led presidents and trustees to look for a more robust business background in athletics directors going forward.

The athletics directors of today are a well-educated group with many having backgrounds and degree concentrations that focus on business principles. The diverse responsibilities and issues athletics directors encounter requires the ability to address more complex issues than previous ADs faced. The outlook for women and ethnic minorities, while still lagging way behind their white male counterparts, has made minimal gains. As the profession continues to grow and evolve, presidents who hire athletics directors will have a more diverse pool of candidates to choose from. The educational preparation of today's senior level athletics administrators is similar in that they all tend to have advanced degrees. Their experience in various areas of administration have placed many on the same level when preparing to become an athletics director. It has been stated many times during this study that the pursuit of the AD position is not an exact science and can take many years if ever to obtain. But for each new athletics director who takes the chair going forward, he or she will face a myriad of issues and challenges their counterparts in early athletics administration did not encounter.

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APPENDIX 1

IRB Approval Letter and Initial Email



**ATHLETICS
DEPARTMENT**

Auburn Athletics Department
P.O. Box 351
Auburn, AL 36831-0351

**INFORMATION LETTER
for a Research Study entitled**

"The Road Most Traveled, an Examination of Career Paths of FBS Athletics Directors"

You are invited to participate in a research study to identify the most common career paths by Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Athletics Directors. The objective of this research study is to provide young professionals and sport management programs with a look at the modern day path to athletic directorship. The previous positions held by participants along with degrees held will be compared using social networking software to provide a current snapshot of FBS athletics directors in regards to titles, duties, and degrees held in common.

The study is being conducted by David D. Mines, Associate Athletics Director in the Auburn University Department of Athletics. You are invited to participate because you are the athletics director of record at your institution.

Your participation is completely voluntary and participants will not be compensated monetarily. An electronic copy of the results can be obtained upon request from participants once the study is complete. If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to provide a redacted copy of your most recent resume. The study will focus on previous positions held with duties and the degrees participants hold. Your total time commitment will be less than 10 minutes.

The risks associated with participating in this study are minimal. Any data obtained in connection with this study will not be tied directly to an individual person or institution. Any information gathered will be used to examine the professional career experiences participants share in common on the way to athletic directorship. This information is mostly public already as your biography appears on the athletics websites of your previous and current institutions. The request for your resume will aid in verifying the information that is public concerning your career path. To help minimize the loss of any identifying information, please redact your address, phone number, and institution from the resume. The information needed for this survey will be your professional title(s) and duties held prior to being named AD, and your degree history. All resumes will be stored on a secure server and locked away in a secure file within the department.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact David D. Mines at (334) 844-9141 minesdd@auburn.edu or Dr. Maria Witte, Advisor at (334) 844-3078 wittemm@auburn.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844-5966 or email at IRBAdmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

Thank you,

David D. Mines, Associate Athletics Director
Auburn University

**AUBURN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD for RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
REQUEST FOR EXEMPT CATEGORY RESEARCH**

For Information or help completing this form, contact: **THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE**, 115 Ramsay Hall
Phone: 334-844-5966 **e-mail:** IRBAdmin@auburn.edu **Web Address:** <http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs/index.htm>

Revised 2/1/2014 **Submit completed form to IRBsubmit@auburn.edu or 115 Ramsay Hall, Auburn University 36849.**

Form must be populated using Adobe Acrobat / Pro 9 or greater standalone program (do not fill out in browser). Hand written forms will not be accepted.

Project activities may not begin until you have received approval from the Auburn University IRB.

1. PROJECT PERSONNEL & TRAINING

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI):

Name David Mines Title Associate AD Dept./School Athletics
 Address 392 South Donahue Drive AU Email minesdd@auburn.edu
 Phone 334-244-9141 Dept. Head Jay Jacobs

FACULTY ADVISOR (if applicable):

Name Dr. Maria Witte Title Professor Dept./School EDFLT
 Address 4012 Haley Center, Auburn University
 Phone 334-844-3078 AU Email wittemm@auburn.edu

KEY PERSONNEL: List Key Personnel (other than PI and FA). Additional personnel may be listed in an attachment.

Name	Title	Institution	Responsibilities
<u>Dr. Joni Lakin</u>	<u>Asst. Professor</u>	<u>Auburn University</u>	<u>Research Methods</u>
<u>Dr. David DiRamio</u>	<u>Assoc. Professor</u>	<u>Auburn University</u>	<u>Social Networking Analysis</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

KEY PERSONNEL TRAINING: Have all Key Personnel completed CITI Human Research Training (including elective modules related to this research) within the last 3 years? YES NO

TRAINING CERTIFICATES: Please attach CITI completion certificates for all Key Personnel.

2. PROJECT INFORMATION

Title: The Road Most Traveled: an Examination of Career Paths of Football Bowl Subdivision Athletics Directors

Source of Funding: Investigator Internal External

List External Agency & Grant Number: _____

List any contractors, sub-contractors, or other entities associate with this project.

List any other IRBs associated with this project (including those involved with reviewing, deferring, or determinations).

FOR ORC OFFICE USE ONLY			
DATE RECEIVED IN ORC:	_____	by _____	APPROVAL # _____
DATE OF IRB REVIEW:	_____	by _____	APPROVAL CATEGORY: _____
DATE OF ORC REVIEW:	_____	by _____	INTERVAL FOR CONTINUING REVIEW : _____
DATE OF APPROVAL:	_____	by _____	
COMMENTS:	_____		

From: David Mines
Sent: Tuesday, November 10, 2015 1:34 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Invitation to participate in study of FBS Athletics Directors' career paths
Importance: High

Dear [REDACTED]

I am conducting a study on the career paths of FBS Athletics Directors. The literature on this subject is scarce and your participation will help immensely. This study will add to the body of knowledge available for sport management programs, and the young men and women who have an interest in the business of college athletics.

Participation in this study only requires you to email me a copy of your resume. Please redact your name, address, and any phone numbers that may appear on the document. The only information sought for this study are the titles, duties, and degrees you have obtained on the way to becoming a Director of Athletics.

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from November 1, 2015 to October 31, 2018 (Protocol #15-287 EX 1511). I have attached the official approval letter from the Auburn University Office of Institutional Research. It is my hope that you will take the time to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

David D. Mines
Auburn University
392 S Donahue Drive
Auburn, AL 36849-0351
(o) 334.844.9141
(f) 334.844.9171

“The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been.”
—Henry Kissinger

APPENDIX 2

Second Email

From: David Mines
Sent: Thursday, December 3, 2015 4:22 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Invitation to participate in study of FBS Athletics Directors' career paths- 2nd Notice
Importance: High

Dear [REDACTED]

After hearing from several Athletics Directors or their administrative assistants, I've learned most AD's do not keep an updated resume on hand. This made participating in the study on FBS Athletics Directors difficult even though they wanted to. Taking this into consideration, I have amended my request for information to a five (5) question survey that should take no more than a few minutes to fill out. Additionally, the information can also be filled out by an administrative assistant. And the survey is still anonymous as well.

Please find the research approval documents and questionnaire attached. If you chose to participate you can either just email your responses or fax directly to my office without a cover sheet to 334-844-9171.

If possible please send the information back by Friday, December 18th

Thanks for your consideration,

APPENDIX 3

FBS Athletics Directors Questionnaire

STUDY on FBS Athletics Directors' Career Paths Questionnaire

1. Before being named Athletics Director I held the title of _____?

Deputy Athletics Director Executive Associate AD Senior Associate AD

Associate AD Assistant AD

other _____

1A. I worked primarily in the area of:

Academics Development Business Office Private Industry Coach Compliance

Facilities Marketing Media Relations University Admin University Professor

Conference Office Ticket Office NCAA Office Operations Finance Law

Other _____

2. Prior to the position listed in question #1, I held the title of :

Deputy Athletics Director Executive Associate AD Senior Associate AD

Associate AD Assistant AD

other _____

2A. I worked primarily in the area of:

Academics Development Business Office Private Industry Coach Compliance

Facilities Marketing Media Relations University Admin University Professor

Conference Office Ticket Office NCAA Office Operations Finance Law

I have the following degree(s):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Please either email back to minesdd@auburn.edu or fax without cover page to 334-844-9171.