The impact of organizational culture on the academic success of Historically Black College and University athletes: A case study

Ralph Charlton

College of William & Mary - School of Education

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THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS
OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ATHLETES: A CASE
STUDY

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
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Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Ralph Charlton
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THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ATHLETES: A CASE STUDY

by

Ralph R. Charlton

Approved July 2009 by

Dorothy E. Finnegan, Ph.D.
Chair of Doctoral Committee

Michael F. DiPaola, Ed.D.

R. Brian Crow, Ed.D.
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Abstract

Increasing the graduation rates of student athletes is one of the more visible NCAA academic goals. Overall student-athlete graduation rates have improved significantly among many institutional members. However, Historically Black College and University (HBCU) student-athlete graduation rates lag considerably behind. Although the NCAA claims that a causal relationship exists between lack of economic resources and lower student-athlete graduation rate for HBCUs, analysis within Division I HBCUs indicates no relationship between per student academic spending and the student-athlete graduation rates. Seeking an additional explanation for graduation rates, this case study examined the organizational culture of an HBCU athletic department with an exceptionally high student-athlete graduation rate. Framework for the study is based on historical research connecting performance to culture and understanding how culture is transmitted through socialization. A modified model based on Wiedman’s (1989) undergraduate model of socialization was utilized as a conceptual framework.

Results indicate that a congruent culture emphasizing academics exists in the organization studied. Administrators, coaches, and student-athletes express a strong belief in the necessity to excel in academics and in athletics. They embrace and enact four core organizational values that serve as impetus for a positive academic culture: commitment, competition, compassion, and citizenship development. The culture originates with and is sustained by visionary leaders who ensure with purposeful design that like-minded staff socialize student-athletes into the culture. Implications for practice and future research are explored.

RALPH RICE CHARLTON

EDUCATION POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA
THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ATHLETES: A CASE STUDY
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The role of academics in intercollegiate athletics has vaulted into a visible, national issue. Exponential growth in fan, media, and business interests regarding college athletics has focused the spotlight off the field and onto such issues as academic achievement gaps for athletes and cheating controversies. For example, recent “academic improprieties” involving the Florida State football team resulted in twenty-five players being suspended for its December bowl game (Wieberg, 2007). The disgrace headlined the media across the country. Approximately 380,000 student-athletes participate at 1,028 NCAA member institutions (2007-2008 Guide for the college-bound student-athlete, n.d.). Intercollegiate budgets have risen to such controversial heights that NCAA President Myles Brand appointed a fifty-person college presidential panel to address the problem and make recommendations for fiscal restraint (Wolverton, 2006). The Wall Street Journal (Weinbach, 2007) highlighted Ohio State University’s record setting athletic budget of $109,382,222, one that translates to $110,000 per student-athlete versus three times less for the non-athlete undergraduate student (Weinbach, 2007). The NCAA makes $500,000,000 annually from its basketball tournament television contract and Bowl Championship Series payouts continue to escalate for 64 fortunate participating institutions (Wolverton, 2006). Combined with this strong spectator and financial interest in sport is the issue that college athletic programs are often the public face of an institution and can impact the perceptions of potential students (Pascarella et. al, 1999). With the intense financial growth and public attention comes scrutiny off the field. This scrutiny also has been applied to academic issues and the concept of the student-athlete.
Academic problems for student-athletes have been both a popular news item and topic for scholarly analysis since the 1970s (Pascarella et al., 1999; Adler & Adler, 1985; Baucom & Lantz, 2001). Both the NCAA and outside groups have taken the initiative to address the academic achievement of student-athletes. In response to a number of highly visible academic, recruiting and NCAA rule violation scandals, the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, formed in 1989, has advocated for the welfare of student-athletes. It has also pressured the NCAA and its members for a positive academic focus since its inception (About – Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, para. 1, n.d.). Both the previous NCAA President, Cedric Dempsey, and current President Brand set agendas that focused on improving academic success for athletes. Former President Dempsey specifically highlighted the athletic budget escalation as a cause of problems with achieving institutional academic missions (Goss, Crow, Ashley & Jubenville, 2004). Upon becoming the new President of the NCAA in 2003, Myles Brand determined that his “first principle” for “reform and advocacy” in the NCAA was to “integrate” athletics into the “academic mission” of institutions (NCAA President, para. 21).

Under Brand’s leadership, academic accountability increased as new measures for graduation rates were developed as well as an Academic Progress Rate (APR) that measures the current academic success of each team through analyses of eligibility, retention and graduation of the athletes (NCAA Backgrounder, n.d.). The NCAAs’ new Graduation Success Rate (GSR) contains more validity than the traditional federal graduation rate by accounting for transfer students who leave and enter an institution (NCAA Backgrounder, n.d.). President Brand has set an unofficial goal of an overall GSR of 80% within the next several years for NCAA athletes and
in the latest set of data proclaimed that this goal was reachable as the rate already has risen to 77% for students who entered in 1996-1999 (Trend data show, 2007).

The NCAA continues to emphasize academic reform and the latest figures have been promising. However one issue related to the academic data from the NCAA persists at attracting negative attention from the media and public. Academic gaps between African-American and White student-athletes are improving, but the differences are still significant. A recent longitudinal study reported that African-American student-athletes had improved their graduation rate by 17% over a 15 year period, but still remained behind white student-athletes by 14% (New Study Reveals, 2006). Other graduation statistics reveal significant differences between Black and White student-athlete graduation rates by institution (2007 NCAA report, n.d.).

The Problem

The President of the NCAA, Myles Brand, has voiced a widespread concern that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are disproportionately represented in the bottom of the NCAA Division I graduation rates for student-athletes and academic rankings (Carey, 2006). For student-athletes who started college in 1995-1998, half of the ten worst institutions in graduating student-athletes are HBCUs (Briggs, n.d.). A review of NCAA Division I member institutions (330 schools) indicates that HBCUs represent less than 7% of the total membership.¹

President Brand and Dennis Thomas, commissioner of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC), an HBCU conference, argue that the lower graduation rates in HBCUs are

---

¹ The 22 Division I HBCUs are in alphabetical order: Alabama A&M, Alcorn State, Arkansas – Pine Bluff, Bethune-Cookman, Coppin State, Delaware State, Florida A&M, Grambling State, Hampton University, Howard University, Jackson State, Marlyland- Eastern Shore, Mississippi Valley State, Morgan State, North Carolina A&T, Norfolk State, Prairie View A&M, Savannah State, South Carolina State, Southern, South Atlantic, Texas Southern.
primarily due to fewer economic resources to provide academic support for their students (Carey, 2006). President Brand voiced this explanation again in 2007 with the latest data concerning the NCAA Academic Progress Rates (APR) (Marot, 2007). The 2007 APR data also disproportionately represent HBCUs in the lower ratings (Marot, 2007). The problem is again attributed to lower financial resources for those institutions. However, review of Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) latest available statistics reveal a conflict with this low-income hypothesis. Just looking solely at the NCAA Division I HBCUs with no comparison to the majority white institutions, there is no correlation between per student academic spending and graduation rate for student-athletes at Division I HBCUs. Pearson correlation is not significant at the .10 level in a 1-tailed test (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Correlation between 2006 graduation success rate for NCAA Division I HBCUs and per student academic spending.
Alternative reasons have been suggested. Marty Miller, Athletic Director for Norfolk State University, attributes his institution’s bottom ten graduation rate to lack of effort from the student-athletes and a policy of open access admissions (Briggs, n.d.). Both Thomas and Miller argue that the HBCU mission of providing access to those who traditionally do not have access to higher education reduces the academic ability level of entering students to HBCUs and subsequently negatively impacts graduation rates.

Certainly economics and the academic preparedness of entering students are critical. However, what role does the actual athletic department organizational structure and philosophy play in the academic success of the student? To what extent do these HBCU athletic departments, which are producing lower academic outcomes among their student-athletes, have an orientation that is geared toward student academic success? Do the coaches, administrators, and support staff believe in, value, and support the academic experience of the student-athlete? These questions address the issue of organizational culture and how student-athletes are socialized to the organizational culture. Organizational culture is recognized as a critical factor in achieving performance and “long-term effectiveness” in organizations (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). To what extent does the organizational culture and socialization within HBCU athletic departments relate to the academic success of their student-athletes?

Not all NCAA Division I HBCUs are struggling at achieving the important mission of graduating its student-athletes. South Atlantic University (SAU) is a pseudonym assigned to an HBCU that has averaged almost 10% over the average NCAA student-athlete graduation rate for the last three years (2007 NCAA Report, n.d.). Without doubt, SAU is excelling as a sports program in general and as an HBCU program specifically. HBCUs represent 50% of the bottom twenty institutions in graduating student-athletes despite only representing 7% of the total
Division I membership. Additionally, SAU excels at graduating its student-athletes despite spending less academically per student than nine other NCAA Division I HBCUs according to the latest IPED statistics. It graduates a higher percentage of student-athletes than all nine of those HBCUs. It is obviously not economic resources that push SAU student-athletes toward successful performance in their academics. The case of SAU athletics program presented an apposite opportunity to explore the idea that organizational culture can impact organizational performance in student-athlete academic achievement. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the degree to which the socialization mechanisms within the SAU athletic program reflect an organizational culture that promotes student success and is supported by its personnel.

Research questions posed were directed at addressing the nature of organizational culture and its relation to academic performance in a HBCU athletic department as well as how student-athletes are socialized to the department culture:

1. What were the roles of administrators, coaches and peers as socializing influences on student-athletes?
   a. What were the core values, attitudes, and beliefs of those three groups as they apply to academics?
   b. How did influence differ amongst the three socializing groups?
2. How did the relationship structure between socializing groups and the student-athletes impact the transmission of organizational culture?
3. How did cultural content in the form of language, rituals, and policies impact socialization?
   a. How did cultural content appear formally and informally in the socialization process?
b. How did the nature of specific cultural content differentially impact socialization of student-athletes?

4. Were the resulting values, beliefs, and attitudes of the student-athlete toward academics from the socialization process similar to the values, attitudes and beliefs of the three groups of socializing agents?

a. What was the nature of student-athlete organizational culture as it relates to academics?

b. Which socializing influencing group had the most congruent organizational culture with student-athletes?

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand how an organizational culture can positively impact the graduation rates for HBCU student-athletes. For the last 25 years, organizational culture has been extensively studied and researched for its relationship to organizational performance. As the concept of organizational culture has developed, researchers have delved into the area of higher education to explore the relationship between organizational culture and various components of higher education including academic effectiveness. Through the analysis of the organizational culture and socialization of an exemplar positive case of an HBCU that succeeds in graduating its student-athletes at the highest level, there is a greater understanding of how and why this individual situation appears to be working. The NCAA has recognized that academic success of HBCU student-athletes is clearly an issue and the problem has inspired a financial investment by the NCAA to improve the state of affairs. Before financial resources are committed to solve the problem, it is necessary to fully understand other potential factors that can enhance academic performance of HBCU athletic departments.
Limitations and Delimitations

Utilizing a case study method presented definitive limitations. Investigating the culture of only one HBCU athletic department provided depth into that particular context, but did not allow for the exploration of comparative similarities and differences with other HBCUs. Also limiting is the recognition that the majority of HBCUs compete athletically at a different level than Division I. Of the 105 Historically Black Institutions, only 22 compete at the top NCAA level. The results of this study apply to the unique context of SAU athletics and cannot be generalized to other HBCUs. However, complete description of both methodology and results provide the reader the opportunity to evaluate possible application of any information gained from this study to other institutions.

The positive nature of the selected sample also presented limitations. Being recognized for excellence in academic success certainly may have influenced participants (administrators, coaches, and student-athletes) to perceive their culture in a positive light. However, given the success of the program, the positive nature of its participants would not be out of the ordinary. In addition, research was limited by the amount of time able to be spent immersed in the culture of the institution. It is hoped that data collection from multiple sources assisted in overcoming both time limits and potential of biased perceptions of participants.

The nature of the research problem also presented a delimiting factor. By exploring an institution that is succeeding at graduating student-athletes, the research revealed unique organizational cultural attributes that impact the success. A comparative study between an academically successful HBCU and one that is not would potentially divulge critical differences in culture and socialization that might lead to successful performance and obstacles to performance. For obvious reasons, obtaining permission to research an institution and its
reasons for not succeeding academically would be difficult and potentially uncomfortable for both researcher and institution.

Definition of Key Terms

Graduation Success Rate (GSR) - The NCAA created the Graduation Success Rate in 2004 as a student-athlete graduation rate assessment alternative to the Federal graduation rate. They consider the GSR more accurate than the federally mandated graduation rate methodology in that it counts transfers into and out of an institution.

HBCU (Historically Black College or University) - Higher education institutions established prior to 1964 whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans.

Organizational Culture - Numerous scholarly definitions abound, but for the purpose of this study Edgar Schein's oft used definition will be utilized - *A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems* (Schein, 2004). Key to the definition for this study is the agreed upon concept that attitudes, values and beliefs are the significant components of an organizational culture.

Socialization - process by which individuals acquire the attitudes, beliefs, values and skills needed to participate effectively in organized social life. (Dunn, Rouse & Seff, 1994)
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study sought to understand the organizational culture and the processes of socialization of an exemplar HBCU athletic program in graduating its student-athletes. To pursue this research an understanding of the concepts and past research involving organizational culture, socialization and organizational performance was essential. Furthermore the relationship between academics and collegiate student-athletes must be examined for possible positive and negative impacts. This literature review will ultimately reveal the concerns that supported the study’s purpose and offers justification of the need for the study.

Roots of Organizational Culture

Difficulty in understanding the development of organizational culture theory and research lies in the uncertain and ambiguous background of trying to define the concept of culture. The variety of definitions have been cited and explored by a number of authors (e.g., Ott, 1989; Martin, 2002; Schein, 2004). Cited multiple times as the ultimate example of the confusion concerning the construct of culture are Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s (1952) collection of 164 definitions of culture (Keesing, 1958; Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Fisher and Alford, 2000; Schroeder, 2003). Historically, disagreement over the concept has been significant. There is more agreement on how defining the construct became so diverse. Different disciplines have taken an interest in culture and its study and a variety of ideas about what culture is and how it should be studied have thus emerged (Ostroff, Kinicki & Tamkins, 2003). Although numerous fields have demonstrated interest in organizational culture, the study of culture arising from anthropology and sociology has influenced the field of organizational culture most significantly (Swidler, 1986; Cameron & Ettington, 1988; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Cameron & Quinn, 2006).
To understand the current state of research in organizational culture, the background in anthropology and sociology must be explored.

*Anthropological Roots*

Although anthropology first gave birth to and reared the study of culture and organizational culture, diversity of thought and debate concerning the concept and its study has been a characteristic of that discipline (Smircich, 1983; Swidler, 1986). Trice and Beyer (1993) observed that anthropologists portray “modern cultures” to be “deeply ambiguous” and contain “enormous multiplicity” (p. 8). The classic idea and beginning of the modern anthropological inquiry into culture began with exploration of preliterate societies in the mid-nineteenth century (Eagleton, 2000). The concept has since developed to explore diverse groups within and outside of institutions and organizations. This anthropological construct seeks to understand the mechanisms of “social order” and the collective patterns and experiences within lives in a group (Smircich, 1983). Hamada & Sibley (1994) explain that anthropologists seek to understand human groups “holistically” and not from a particular lens of “problems or solutions” (p. 6). Cultures are observed within their historical contexts and as a changing process. A variety of cultural components are included in this in-depth study: language, physical settings, symbols, artifacts, behavioral patterns, and social structures (Hamada & Sibley, 1994). However it is quite clear that anthropology has emerged as having several different branches of theory and approaches and the discipline’s influence on organizational culture cannot be analyzed solely as a cohesive field.

Historically, identified branches or fields within anthropology appear to be up for debate. Keesing (1958) explained that two “sub-sciences” comprise anthropology—physical and cultural. Within cultural anthropology, a relatively modern approach labeled social anthropology
addressed issues related to “culture, society and personality” (p. 5). Bohannon (1963) described four divisions of anthropology: physical, psychological, social, and cultural. Social anthropologists, who primarily in the early years of the twentieth century were British, focus on social relationships as they are enacted within culture. The analysis of the various theories and fields within anthropology only get more convoluted from there. Allaire and Firshtotu (1984) acknowledge cultural anthropology’s impact on organizational culture study and describe cultural anthropology’s approach as deriving from two main ideas into six different schools of thought (See figure 2).

*Figure 2.* Allaire and Firshtotu (1984) typology of the concepts of culture.

The main differences involved whether the cultural anthropologists based their view of the construct of culture as based in ideas of individuals or as part of the overall social system. Allaire and Firshtotu (1984) recognize eight different schools of thought related to those categories. Further review of the literature includes other labels for approaches toward culture.
study, but consistently one main term generates agreement on its definition and impact:
functionalism.

Sociological Roots

Sociology’s role regarding organizational culture is discussed in much less volume. In part, sociology primarily embraced anthropology’s general definition of culture. For instance, sociologists such as Berger and Luckmann in the 1960s, examined culture from the individual participant’s views on the social system, much like Clifford Geertz and the “semiotic” tradition in anthropology (Cameron & Ettington, 1988, p. 358). Sociological culture work, such as Selznick’s (1949) study of the Tennessee Valley Authority and Whyte’s (1943) study of gang behavior reflect past anthropological functionalist work that focuses on culture from the group perspective and the phenomena is deciphered by the researcher (Cameron & Ettington, 1988). Whyte’s Street Corner Society (1943) is seen as an exemplar piece of sociological research that was highly influential on organizational culture research through its exceptional methodology and content analysis structure (Frost et al, 1991). However Hamada & Sibley (1994) connect Whyte’s theory and background in culture research to anthropology through Whyte’s relationship to the Hawthorne studies, which Hamada refers to as the beginning of the “applied anthropology movement” (p. 10).

Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) recognized as well that anthropology is understood to be the chief influence on organizational culture study, but proposed that sociology was potentially more significant in inspiring methodological and theoretical approaches regarding the field in the twentieth century. Methods evolved from case study to multivariate statistics with a sociological approach to organizational culture as a social phenomenon (Wilkins & Ouchi). Within sociology a number of diverse styles led to central conflicts of whether organizational culture is an
independent or dependent variable and what methodological approach is best for study in the area (Wilkins & Ouchi). These conflicts applied to both anthropology and sociology. Despite a number of similarities and relationships in research methods and theoretical outlook, two key differences between the two disciplines significantly impact the nature of organizational culture study.

Sociology mostly stresses organizational culture as an independent variable, while anthropology mostly observes it to be a dependent variable (Cameron & Ettington, 1988; Cameron & Quinn, 2006). As an independent variable, culture influences the thoughts, behaviors and actions of individuals within an organization and is helpful in explaining organizational behavior and performance (Cameron & Ettington, 1988; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983). Research insisting that organizational culture is a dependent variable focuses on culture as the “object of prediction or explanation” (Cameron & Ettington, 1988, p. 360). Anthropology views cultures as organizations, while sociology views culture as one of a number of interacting traits of organizations (Cameron & Ettington, 1988). Certainly embracing the framework from one of these two influential disciplines could lead to similarities and significant differences in approach to studying organizational culture. The history of the diversity of theory and methods in study has created a complexity that makes it difficult to understand the current status of the field of organizational culture.

The Functional Approach

Although reviewers of organizational culture influence and research have categorized the various approaches according to a variety of labels and descriptions, a consistency with regards to what is considered the functionalist tradition does exist. Elements of the organizational culture have specific functions integrated and adaptive in relation to the overall culture geared
toward meeting the needs of its members (Keesing, 1958; Bohannon, 1963; Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Schultz, 1995; Hamada & Sibley, 1994). Organizational culture researchers have used the traditional functionalist approach in a variety of ways, but most have viewed culture as a way to understand the underlying belief, attitude, and value system that drives performance, efficiency, and productivity for survival (Alvesson, 1993) or that can be manipulated for specific goals or ends (Cameron & Quinn, 2006), or that as an integrated whole functions to meeting the needs of its participants (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Schultz, 1995; Hamada & Sibley, 1994). While influences on the current study of organizational culture have been diverse and at times confusing, consistency abounds in understanding the functionalist tradition and seeing culture as an independent variable that influences organizational outcomes. Organizational culture research that has examined relationships to performance has been characterized by functionalist attributes (Martin, 2002; Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

Organizational Culture’s Impact on Performance

Although the term “organizational culture” is first attributed to Pettigrew in 1979 (Southall, 2001), it exploded in the popular business vernacular two years later as four influential and best selling books claimed the concept was critical to overcome America’s business and economic woes (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). These initial works utilized intensive case study examinations to derive a theory of how culture could contribute to the success of America’s most financially productive companies (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Facing criticism concerning the reliance on qualitative research and the subjective nature of organizational culture, researchers developed typologies and models to quantify culture components and how they specifically impacted areas of organizational productivity. Eventually research and theory regarding how organizational culture affects
performance evolved from an examination of for-profit businesses to other organizational types, such as higher education and athletics. The result is a body of work that reflects an intense academic and popular fascination with a hard to define construct labeled as critical for economic and organizational success. The efforts at understanding organizational culture’s relationship to performance have also produced intense conflict about what exactly comprises the concept, how to measure and evaluate it, and whether it can actually be measured.

The Big Four

The impetus for the discussion on organizational culture and its relationship to performance is generally considered to be the publication and success of four books: Theory Z by Ouchi (1981), The Art of Japanese Management by Pascale and Athos (1981), In Search of Excellence by Peters and Waterman (1982), Corporate Culture by Deal and Kennedy (1982) (Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Denison, 1990). These four works were connected through common concerns about American business productivity and Japanese success. They held their solutions for American business in common as well. Centering on the “soft” side of management through culture, personal development and shared values and breaking away from the business school “rational” approach were the directions prescribed to right the sinking ship. The books were only slightly different in their approach to demonstrating the power of what Peters and Waterman (1982) called a paradigm shift from the rational approach. The explanations for their commonalities came from being part of the same circle of academic and business related research. American business appeared to be desperately seeking solutions and the timing was perfect for the topic as there was room enough for four popular books that espoused organizational culture as the primary key to economic success for business organizations.
This germinal literature base on the relationship between organizational performance and culture evolved from the same research on the success of Japanese business and the characteristics of excellent American companies from McKinsey Consulting. Naturally there was a common ground for the original theories. Japanese businesses were experiencing an economic boom, eclipsing American growth by as much as 400% according to Ouchi (1981). All but Deal and Kennedy (1982) advocated for Japanese national culture and subsequent business culture that involved a focus on people, shared values, interdependence, and teamwork as the management keys. Creating meaning for employees through a culture of shared values was an ensuing theme. Common throughout was the qualitative research method with its related data collection. After utilizing economic criteria to develop a sample of model successful companies, case study methodology was used to identify the critical characteristics of the companies. The similar methodology and connection to McKinsey led to similar sample companies and certainly was also a contributing factor to the common ground of theory on organizational culture and performance.

Although not as strongly emphasized, a number of organizational culture concepts developed as themes important for later research and theory. The idea of a strong culture is directly addressed by everyone but Pascale and Athos (1981). Strong culture for the other authors meant that excellent companies had developed a consistent culture that emphasized their values and beliefs across all aspects of the organizations. The question of whether strong culture is necessarily required for organizational success emerged as a significant theme for research in the area. Related to the concept of strong culture was the acknowledgement of subcultures within an organization that contribute to a strong or weak culture, but in any case must be managed appropriately for the good of the company culture. Deal and Kennedy (1982) provided
the most in-depth exploration of this idea, emphasizing that effective managers recognize and empower subcultures. Subcultures and their relationships to the overall organization also developed as a topic for future research.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) and Ouchi (1981) supplied the initial typologies in organizational culture and how they relate to positive or negative performance. Although acknowledged as strictly qualitative in this instance, it became an important line of inquiry for exploring quantitative measurement of culture and relatedness to success. Finally these works clearly identify culture as an independent variable that can be identified and managed in achieving organizational goals. Social scientists clearly labeled case studies like these four as functionalist in approach (Martin, 2002; Alvesson, 1993). This approach provided a contrast and debate for culture researchers who focused on personal meaning, process and symbolism rather than content and achievement.

Obviously something clicked with these books. American business wanted solutions and the Japanese were winning. Organizational culture appeared to be the obvious answer based on the results of examinations Pascale and Athos (1981), Ouchi (1981), Peters and Waterman (1982) and Deal and Kennedy (1982). The popularity and attractiveness of the concept supplied the momentum for extensive research into how it could more acutely be investigated, measured and applied in business and within other organizations.

*Qualitative Research in Culture and Performance*

*Business Organizations*

Like the initial literature on the topic, continued exploration of organizational culture and performance involved case study research that resulted in various prescriptions on how leaders can assess and change culture to be more effective and productive. Schein (2004) and Wilkins
and Ouchi (1983) strongly advocated for ethnographic methods such as observation and immersion in the organization. Organizational cultures were recognized to be individual and contextual and thus, could not be absolutely measured and assessed. Wilkins and Ouchi described three types of cultures based on economic principles of exchange: clan, bureaucratic, and market. Depicting three cultural types, they argued that efficiency in an organization occurs when the type matches the business environment.

An often cited scholar in organizational culture, Edgar Schein (2004) geared his theory to formation and analysis much more than previous mentioned theorists. He emphasized understanding how the culture developed from within and without. The key for understanding organizational culture was to comprehend the “basic underlying assumptions” (p. 26). These unconscious, implicit assumptions are what governs the strategies, norms, behaviors, processes, physical structures that result and are an expression of the culture. These assumptions develop from deep and accepted concepts relating to how people perceive truth, reality, and the nature of time, space, human nature and activity, as well as human relationships.

Like Deal and Kennedy (2000), he also emphasized the critical role of leaders in creating, changing and role modeling culture. Schein was unique because of his emphasis on understanding the locus of culture rather than the content. Clearly comprehending those basic underlying assumptions is paramount. Schein did not address culture’s impact on performance in detail other than to say culture is a powerful force, and culture change must be specifically connected to enhancing aspects of performance. His three-level organizational culture framework of artifacts, espoused values and beliefs, and underlying assumptions appear to be influential and has been used as framework in other qualitative work (Schroeder & Scribner, 2006).
Other qualitative research work both endorsed and negated the initiatives from the four original popular books. Akin and Hopelain (1986) propose the idea of a culture of productivity. They concluded that qualities of legibility (clear meanings in work processes), coherence, and open-endedness must be present to have a culture of productivity. These qualities of clarity, shared values, goals, and flexibility with a focus on people are also championed by Peters and Waterman (1982) and Pascale and Athos (1981) for example. In this strain of the literature, authors provide managers with steps to develop this culture.

Barney (1986) took the opposite and more critical stance of organizational culture and performance theory. “Superior financial performance” is the success criteria for organizations and three conditions were given as necessary for culture to be a factor. The culture must have content that is economically valuable, rare, and unable to be imitated so the competition could not repeat it and take away competitive advantage. Barney explained that culture change can not be prescribed and performance-related culture is often the unique result of history and environment.

As organizational culture evolved from the initial popular literature, qualitative methods were utilized and determined preferable by the researchers. The original works were both supported and criticized. Values and people-focused culture were seen as positive for performance, but culture related to performance was also seen as dependent on the business environment. Literature touting a solitary culture that would improve business success is not considered plausible.

Higher Education

Exploring organizational culture as a variable that impacted performance using qualitative frameworks has not sparked as intense an interest in higher education. Available
research mostly focused on creating original frameworks to assess culture on campuses through case study methods. Clark (1970) conducted germinal research on higher education structured as a case study for three elite private liberal arts colleges and identified the organizational factors that helped the institutions develop prominence and distinctiveness. Clark’s study is cited as being influential in the overall sociological functionalist tradition of organizational culture research (Cameron & Ettington, 1988). He determined a number of conditions as causes for the institutions’ positive results: willingness to change, effective leadership, distinctive academic programs, committed faculty, and external support groups. Collectively, these conditions created an organizational saga for the elite institutions, engaging all stakeholders and eliciting pride and leading to numerous positive benefits and effectiveness for the organizations. Like other qualitative studies relating culture to performance, Clark faced criticism for a small sample that lacked generalizability and ambiguous concepts that would be difficult for practical application (Gaff, 1972).

Tierney (1988) cited anthropological roots as a base for studying culture in a college setting like a “traditional anthropologist would study a particular village or clan” (p. 4). Six “essential concepts” needed to be investigated to assess a college or university culture: environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy, leadership (p.8). Tierney’s concern for higher education performance and culture included the impact of culture on decision making as well as the problem of fragmentation and group conflicts. Diagnosing the culture and subcultures of an institution are important to reducing those conflicts. Like other business research in this realm, he intimated that different cultures will work in different settings and research framework must be an “iterative” process. (p.18). Kuh, Arnold, and Vesper (1991) associated culture with student learning as part of a larger study on variables that impact
learning. They hypothesized that a simple linear model of “operational environment + cultural environment + student involvement” equaled student learning outcomes (p. 7). Qualitative case studies of thirteen institutions revealed six cultural variables that were significant components of overall campus culture: location, status and relationships between groups, pedagogical styles, student life philosophy, strength of culture, and multiculturalism. They found that culture had a bigger impact on larger, residential campuses, but offered several caveats about the validity of that component of their research. Like many others, they suggested that culture was a comprehensive and complex phenomenon and subsequently difficult to understand and manage.

Magolda (2000) narrowed culture research in higher education to one component. The campus tour as a ritual was examined to understand how ideal beliefs and values of the institution were transmitted to potential students. Magolda expressed concern at this ritual as he found the promotion of the idealized student to conflict with some of the espoused values of the organization. Qualitative work in culture, higher education, and performance has varied in depth and breadth and has raised intriguing ideas for further exploration. However, these frameworks discussed appear to be limited and not to have been developed past their initial creation.

Sport Organizations

Linking organizational culture to sport organizations has not been a popular topic for researchers (Schroeder & Scribner, 2006). Qualitative research regarding athletics has generally covered culture as a sub-topic, but has not been linked to a specific culture theory. In a longitudinal study of a collegiate men’s basketball team, Adler and Adler (1985) employed the idea of an athletic culture that included social isolation related to negative academic attitudes and outcomes. They referred to a peer subculture characterized by anti-intellectual and anti-academic attitudes (Adler & Adler, 1985, p. 246). Bowen and Levin (2003) contemplated the
same theme through anecdotal evidence of an athletic culture that leads to isolation and negative attitudes toward academics. Implicit in both works was the idea that subcultures of intercollegiate student-athletes contain behaviors and values that impact academic performance. Qualitative research has found the opposite culture in female student-athletes as their values embraced an academic orientation (Riemer, Beal & Schroeder, 2000). However, the concept of organizational culture was not fully operationalized in this limited research. The authors assume that the reader understands the concept and that culture naturally impacts the academic performance of student-athletes.

Organizational culture theory related to business performance was adapted by Scott (1997) for application to intercollegiate athletic organizations. Making the assumption that bureaucratic cultures are typical in intercollegiate athletics, he argues that performance within these organizations would be better served by adopting a clan-like culture. The recommendations on changing the culture to improve performance pervade many of the concepts from early theorists like Deal and Kennedy (1982) and Peters and Waterman (1982). Leaders can manage culture successfully by developing a shared philosophy and values, analyzing and understanding the culture and subcultures, selecting personnel who are a cultural fit, and reinforcing positive culture through rewards.

Schroeder and Scribner (2006) utilized Schein’s organizational framework of artifacts, espoused values and underlying assumptions to understand the culture of an athletic department at a small Christian college. Their focus was to understand the relationship of the subculture of athletics to overall institutional culture especially within the context of the religious values. They found that the religious culture adopted by athletics influenced personnel selection and
decision making. Hence, the presence of a strong, positive culture produced success in the performance of the department.

Overall, qualitative research regarding organizational culture and performance has taken off in several different directions with some common themes. Research in the area of business and financial performance has been the primary focus as it was in the initial popular discussions of organizational culture. Research and theory after the original Big Four books discussed, branched off into the approach that organizational culture is complex, and one formula can not be prescribed for each organization. Culture does impact performance, but is unique to the context and environment. The number of different components and variables involved in culture are not necessarily agreed upon by theorists. Leaders could have an impact on organizational culture, but it was very difficult to manage and most of the research asserted the key was to assess the culture and subcultures and make every attempt to understand its structure.

**Quantifying Organizational Culture’s Impact on Performance**

Reaction to criticism and concerns about the inability of organizational culture to be definitively identified and linked to performance has created frustration in the business community (Fisher and Alford, 2000). The result was a number of attempts at empirical research and models that organizations might use to prove culture is linked to outcome. The models could then be used to understand and change culture to be more effective and competitive. Two related empirical models have emerged as significant in quantitative research in the area of organizational culture and performance.

Denison (1990) described a culture and effectiveness model that centered on four central concepts. If, according to Denison, the concepts were embraced by organizations, they would lead to success on financial measures including sales and return on investment. Denison further
divided the four concepts into four points of reference. An *external focus impacts issues of adaptability and mission*, while an *internal focus connects to mission issues and consistency*. *Change and flexibility* are also used to group adaptability and involvement while *stability and direction* connected the concepts of mission and consistency. Surveys of 35 organizations from different industries indicated that the higher the organization scored on all four components, the better the financial performance.

Cameron and Quinn (2006) have devised an organizational culture assessment model that resembles Denison in three key ways. It has evolved and been validated through extensive research. Utilizing their instrument, the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), enables organizational comparisons and indicates relationships to effectiveness. Their framework is based on conflicting values related to stability versus flexibility, and internal versus external control. Cameron & Quinn, (1999) assert that organizational culture is related to performance. Their framework centers on diagnosing and then implementing change in organizational culture. The competing values framework focuses on identifying four culture types related to the organization and its various components. Two continua of competing values form quadrants that result in the four different culture types. The typologies from competing values resulted from research and analysis of what determines effective organizations. *Hierarchy, Market, Clan and Adhocracy* are their four culture types, which match theories from organizational science, management theory as well as individual cognitive and organizational behavior. The types were distinctly different from each other in environment, values, leadership and effectiveness criteria.

Based on their research, the majority of organizations have a dominant culture type. High organizational performance relies on congruence "between the dominant culture of the
organization and its leadership styles, management roles, human resource management, quality management, and effectiveness criteria” (Cameron & Quinn, 1999, p. 54).

Other efforts at quantitatively linking culture to performance in business appear to be limited to instruments developed for the specific study only (Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Garmendia, 2004; Petty, Beadles, Lowery, Chapman & Connell, 1995). Kotter & Heskett (1992) and Garmendia (2004) were also limited in relying on persons outside the companies to evaluate the organizational culture. Their results contrast with other research and theorists regarding strong culture. They found that strong culture was not necessarily related to success and weak culture was not inevitably related to failure. Unlike Denison and Cameron and Quinn, their models and instruments did not develop beyond the single studies.

The Denison model and competing values framework do present compelling depth in empirically observing organizational culture and its relationship to performance. The models are compelling enough to have enticed both higher education and sport researchers to employ these models in search of applications of culture and performance research in settings other than business.

Quantitative Research and Higher Education

The competing values framework emerged as the model of choice in higher education research on culture and performance. Cameron and others have done extensive research connecting the competing values framework with an organizational effectiveness scale for higher education he developed in 1978. The scale contains nine dimensions: student educational satisfaction, student academic development, student career development, student personal development, faculty and administrator employment satisfaction, professional development and quality of the faculty, system openness and community interaction, acquisition of resources, and
organizational health (Cameron & Freeman, 1991). Cameron and Freeman (1991) conducted a large scale study finding that culture type was a much better predictor of effectiveness than cultural congruence or strength. The culture types were associated with the effectiveness domain that most related to the culture. For example, clan cultures were most effective in morale areas of effectiveness. Cameron and Freeman (1991) suggested the necessity to be aware of different cultures within the organization and capitalize on the strengths related to the areas of effectiveness. Employing the same data, Fjortoft and Smart (1994) were able to also determine how the variable of mission agreement interacted with culture type and academic effectiveness. They reiterated Cameron and Freeman’s contention that culture types can be effectively understood and managed to enhance organizational effectiveness on the college and university campus.

Smart (2003) and Smart, Kuh, and Tierney (1997) utilized the competing values framework and Cameron’s higher education effectiveness scale to examine organizational culture aspects of two-year colleges. Smart et al. (1997) researched three sets of variables and how they impacted organizational effectiveness as well as each other. They found that external environment (financial health, enrollment size), culture types, and decision approaches all impacted effectiveness. Interactions among the variables included finding that different culture types exacerbated negative or positive impacts of the external variables. For instance, poor financial health of the institution can be counteracted by an adhocracy culture. Smart (2003) researched the link among perception of culture type complexity, leadership complexity and organizational effectiveness in two year colleges. He suggests that an institution that was more balanced with a mix of the four cultural types combined with a leader, who exhibited behaviors from the four types, will be more effective. This collection of studies revealed a valid,
significant base of work connecting the competing values framework to higher education performance. The theoretical approach appears to be developing in complexity with interacting variables that can be associated with culture type and effectiveness.

**Sport and Quantitative Research**

Quantitative studies in sports are very limited. Cultural assessment tools, including Denison's model and the competing values framework, have been utilized to analyze possible relationships among organizational culture, leadership and organizational performance. Transformational leaders' impact on culture within sport organizations has been one interest (Weese, 1995; Wallace & Weese, 1995). High transformation leaders correlate with strong culture and a greater emphasis on four types of "culture building" activities: customer orientation, managing change, coordinated activities and coordinated teamwork. These activities are strongly linked to organizational success according to Wallace and Weese (1995). Colyer (2000) employed the competing values framework to determine culture type and congruence within subcultures and overall sport organizations. According to Colyer, different culture types within organizations generate a tension between volunteer and professional management structures. Colyer concluded that counter cultures would negatively impact performance; thus, leaders must understand and analyze subcultures within the organization. Bailey (2007) conducted the only quantitative assessment of an intercollegiate athletics department. She found a significant correlation between positive culture traits and organizational effectiveness components. The four culture traits of involvement, adaptability, mission, and consistency were rated as connected to outcomes of cohesion, affective commitment and performance. All of the quantitative culture and sport studies are initial attempts at showing the relevance of the assessment instruments and are limited by the use of small samples.
Perhaps the validity of the notion that a unique culture exists within athletic organizations can be seen in a presentation title from a recent prestigious Intercollegiate Athletics Forum in New York City sponsored by Street and Smith’s *Sport Business Journal*. A panel, “Athletic Department Culture and the Influence on Student-athlete Behavior”, consisted of the NCAA Vice President of Education Services and the athletic directors from the Universities of Maryland and Missouri (Fifth Annual Intercollegiate Athletics Forum, n.d.). Despite the popular recognition of culture and its impact in athletics, research has been scarce and inconsistent in methodology and direction. It mirrors the study of organizational culture in general. Difficulty in defining and measuring the construct and its impacts presents obstacles in establishing depth and direction in research, although culture is clearly recognized as a significant variable in the operation of a sport organization.

**Criticism and Controversies**

The literature on organizational culture and performance provides promise and hope that culture can be identified, managed, and changed so that organizations could benefit financially, in addition to areas of employee satisfaction and innovation. Dampening the enthusiasm however is a significant collection of criticism and debate concerning this line of research. Negative response that materialized swiftly after the initial four popular books on the subject appeared and “the culture wars” continue (Martin, 2002, p.15). To Martin (2002), the war represented possibly the “fiercest and most intractable intellectual disputes in the humanities and social sciences” (p.15). The criticism and debates center on defining the concepts and framework for understanding organizational culture in addition to various components of the methodology utilized in the research.
The variety and ambiguity in conceptual definitions concerning organizational culture has limited consistent research concerning performance and applicability of the results, while frustrating practitioners (Fisher & Alford, 2000; Tierney, 1988; Schein, 2004; Garmendia, 2004; Smart & St. John, 1996). Fisher and Alford (2000) argue that the numerous definitions of culture from such experts on the subject like Edgar Schein were confusing and too academic for the business world to understand and take seriously. Definitional confusion is one possible reason why many would consider organizational culture a passing fad (Smart & St. John, 1996).

Concepts and frameworks related to the idea of organizational culture are debated as well, and the debate is made all the harder if the concepts being debated are not clearly defined or understood.

Researchers and theorists determined to make the link between performance and culture are generally viewed to be taking a functionalist perspective (Siehl & Martin, 1990; Alvesson, 1993; Martin, 2002). This criticism has set up the next debate. Should organizational culture be explored and viewed from a functionalist or interpretivist perspective? Again the debate became more complicated because the terms are not consistently or clearly defined by those engaged in the debate. Agreement on the definition of functionalism seemed to be consistent in that culture and parts of culture were seen as tools or instruments in achieving organizational goals. However Schultz (1995) and Martin (2002) have provided different terms that reflected characteristics of the same perspective labeled rational and integrative. Despite the terminology, it was clear that the approach has strong opposition.

Opponents find that functionalism limits a very complex construct while only taking the managerial perspective that has often consisted of white males only (Martin, 2002; Siehl & Martin, 1990; Alvesson, 1993). The opposite approach is labeled as “symbolism” by Martin
(2002) and Schultz (1995) and as interpretative research by Alvesson (1993) and no label at all from Siehl and Martin (1990). However the consensus is that this approach is holistic, creates more depth to understanding of culture, and focuses on how all organizational members experience and create meaning in the culture. Research approaches are qualitative and anthropological in nature. Although this approach has not been as attractive to the business community seeking practical answers to improve company’s profits, it has provided greater understanding, and depth to the concept and theory related to organizational culture (Siehl & Martin, 1990).

Methodology on both the qualitative and quantitative research in this area has received a litany of criticism, starting with the work of Peters and Waterman (1982). Aupperle, Acar, and Booth (1986) discovered that the excellent companies described in the best-selling book actually did not perform that well financially, and the research was marred by ambiguous and undefined variables and relationships between variables. Siehl and Martin (1990) provided the most comprehensive critique of the 1980s work in the area of culture and performance. They demonstratively stated the research is on the “wrong track” and it is basically “impossible” to provide empirical evidence for the link between the two (p. 241). Methodological problems included the use of convenience and small-sized samples, a lack of comparison to unsuccessful organizations, measurement of espoused values versus enacted behaviors, a lack of congruence between the specific language of the organization and the language used in the research, as well as a quasi-Hawthorne effect taking place -- participants desire to answer in socially desirable ways. In addition, Siehl and Martin criticized that subculture impacts were not measured, and that the researchers only assessed superficial content themes and not manifestations of culture. Further, they charged that the quantitative measures lacked breadth, depth and richness and a
proper study of organizational culture needed longitudinal studies to evaluate fully the impact of culture on performance. Martin (2002) added that it is impossible to control for other variables, such as the economic and competitive environment, to truly isolate culture as an independent variable.

Schein (2004) continued the criticism of quantitative studies by intimating that the typology used in quantitative framework like Cameron and Quinn (1999) limited perspectives and could not provide an in-depth view of organizational culture. He criticized Cameron and Quinn (1999) for a lack of depth and validity in their framework and organizational culture assessment instrument. Critics agreed that the idea of the relationship makes sense, but also agree that the methodology has been extremely flawed or the link is impossible to prove scientifically and empirically.

The "culture wars" show no sign of resolution and research from both sides of the debate continue to appear. Are there consequences from this debate however? Has the controversy and methodological difficulty decreased interest in the concept from both a researcher and organizational leader perspective?

Directions

As this review of the literature is not exhaustive, it cannot be shown expressly that the research in the area has declined. It appears that way. The majority of the work cited here was published in the 1980s and first half of the 1990s. As Smart and St. John (1996) posited, did it become a "fad" that has disappeared? Obstacles cited in this review appear to have slowed research, but possibly for the positive. Because of the debate and criticism, potential authors and researchers might find it necessary to engage a more critical lens to their approaches to ensure validity in their work. Again no one is saying a relationship does not exist; the question is how
one demonstrates it. Recent quantitative and qualitative work in business, sports, and higher education demonstrate that interest in the topic is not dead (Bailey, 2007; Schroeder & Scribner, 2006; Lee & Yu, 2004). Perhaps the most hopeful sign of the continued life of these ideas is the arrival of the revisions of some of the most popular books on the subject. Both Deal and Kennedy (2000) as well as Peters and Waterman (2004) have released updated editions of their books that inspired the popularity of the concept originally. Although they acknowledge in their newer work that some of their model companies did not succeed financially, they stand firmly behind their framework and confidently claim culture is more important than ever in the performance of an organization.

Socialization

Research and theory in socialization suffers similar limiting characteristics as organizational culture interests. A myriad of definitions reflect numerable directions in theory and study, leading to potential confusion in understanding the construct (Chao et al., 1994, Tierney, 1997; Shannon, 2007). The construct has been described as simply as “what do we need to know to survive/excel in the organization” (Tierney, 1988, p. 8). Socialization is also recognized for its complexity as a construct, as is reflected in this often used definition from Dunn, Rouse & Seff (1994) “process by which individuals acquire the attitudes, beliefs, values and skills needed to participate effectively in organized social life” (p. 375). Agreement centers on socialization as a process that encapsulates the transmission of culture to organizational members with the outcome being adjustment into the organizational setting (Louis, 1990). Research has delved into two different areas of the construct: process and content (Chao et al., 1994).
Largely socialization literature has examined various aspects of the process opposed to content. Effort has geared toward understanding the stages of socialization that a newcomer faces and engages (Buono & Kamm, 1983; Chao, 1988). Van Maanen (1976) described a three-stage process in which individuals proceed through anticipating the organizational experience to encountering the organization where information about how to operate within the organization is gained to finally adjusting to new roles within the organization. An additional focus of socialization research includes understanding the impact of organizational strategies and tactics in socialization.

The most accepted model on socialization tactics producing varying outcomes derives from Van Maanen & Schein (1979) (Groman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006). Six binary tactics were proposed that ranged from whether socialization was structured for collective versus individual experience to tactics representing informal versus formal structures to being socialized by mentors versus relying on an individual’s own self-reflection. Findings in this line of research suggest that socialization tactics do impact the process with a focus on the newcomer’s experience. A structured and formal socialization process increases the proactive behavior for newcomers versus an individualized process where newcomers are less likely to seek feedback and information and to build relationships (Groman, et al., 2006). Receiving social support and having experienced mentors have also been proven as a positive socialization tactic (Jones, 1986). Influential socializing groups, such as peers and supervisors, have also been recognized for significant impact on the socialization process (Louis, 1990; Trowler & Knight, 1999).

Content of socialization has been the focus of research to a much lesser degree (Chao et al., 1994). Comprehending and analyzing what is truly learned during socialization represents this area of study. This content is largely seen as aspects of the organizational culture. Given the
difficulty in identifying the components of organizational culture in general, the lack of definitive research in this area is predictable. Review of the literature does identify significant models leading to a significant framework by Chao et al. (1994) (Taormina, 2004). Major dimensions learned in the context of organizational socialization are: job performance, values and goals, history, politics, language and relationships. Development of a scale measuring these socialization content domains intended to demonstrate the relationship between learning specific content and socialization outcomes (Chao et al., 1994).

Undergraduates and Socialization

Socialization has provided the framework for research in development of individuals in many different settings including education (Wilcoxson, 2007). Chickering and Reisser (1993) cited models from Pascarella (1985) and Weidman (1989) as beginning points for understanding the socialization of the undergraduate student and variables that impact their cognitive and affective development. Pascarella emphasized that a group of five influences acts to determine socialization outcomes for students. Student background traits such as personality and ethnicity combined with the structure of the institution (e.g., size and selectivity) result in the institutional environment. The institutional environment directly impacts relationships with socializing agents such as faculty and peers. Together with the quality of student effort, the set of influencing variables leads to individual cognitive outcomes. Wiedman’s model presents additional complexity. Highlighted are additional external influences from parents and noncollege reference groups like employers. Both academic and social influences were recognized as well with important outcomes reflecting important affective life development and cultural issues such as values and attitudes. The comprehensiveness of the Wiedman model
represents the variety of impacts that a student-athlete faces in encountering the organizational culture at an institution and will serve as a base of the conceptual framework for this study.

Significant research related to socialization and the undergraduate experience explores the influence of the socializing agents described by both Pascarella (1985) and Wiedman (1989), namely peers, faculty and administrators (Roop, 2007). Relationships with peers can considerably impact both cognitive and cultural outcomes for the college student (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora & Terenzini, 1999). Cognitive outcomes such as problem-solving skills, knowledge acquisition, and intellectual orientation have all been demonstrated as being enhanced by peer social interaction in college (Roop, 2007). Whitt et al. provide an example as non-course related discussions with students on such topics as religion and politics led to augmented writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. Peer interaction appears to be a particularly strong academic influence, when they “extend or reinforce what happens in the classroom” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p.121). Academic persistence and degree completion are also powerfully influenced by peers as socializing agents (Astin, 1993). Dominant peer groups can drive students’ attitudes, values and beliefs toward academic success (Astin, 1993). Expectedly the far majority of research concerning peer influence on student sociopolitical attitudes and values indicates a positive relationship between peer interactions and development of orientations toward social issues such as race (Pascarella & Terenzini).

Socializing effects on academics and cultural outcomes from faculty are also readily apparent. A comprehensive examination of results from the College Students Experience Questionnaire by Kuh and Hu (1999) indicated focused academic interactions outside of the classroom with faculty (e.g., assisting with a research project) led to enhanced student learning.
Additionally, the frequency of the interaction with faculty is not as important as the academic focal point (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Other faculty interaction characteristics such as concern for student development and teaching have been connected to cognitive outcomes like enhanced critical thinking skills (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella & Nora, 1994). Pascarella and Terenzini theorize that the positive socialization process occurs as a result of transmitting academic values and attitudes from faculty to students and creating a general commitment to the institution through the positive relationship. Infrequency of interaction limits the amount of research investigating college administrators as socializing agents. However, evidence supports that administrators can impact positive academic outcomes such as persistence through factors such as encouragement and support, efficient communication of policy and expectations, engaging students in decision making (Baird, 1990; Berger & Braxton, 1998; Brown & Wright, 1998).

*Socialization and Intercollegiate Athletics*

Models for undergraduate socialization have proven their relevance through a significant body of research indicating the power of socializing agents. These socializing agents are critical for ensuring that institutional culture is carried on through new members in the form of students. Student-athletes face an even more intensified interaction with socializing agents as their extracurricular commitment to athletics means much more time spent with peers, coaches and administrators. However research exploring direct socializing influences for student-athletes is very limited (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Importantly though, there has been much exploration into identifying that being a student-athlete creates a different college experience for individuals especially as it relates to academic success. What remains unclear, and provided
more impetus for this study, are the specific causal considerations for the student-athletes in their socialization and academic outcomes.

Academics and Intercollegiate Athletics

The NCAA president, Myles Brand asserts that the experience of the student-athlete can be very positive and can lead to academic and career success. Brand has used student-athlete graduation rates to demonstrate that student-athletes are succeeding academically as they graduate at a higher rate than the regular student body. Further, he argues that the dumb jock stereotype is a myth (Wharton, 2006). The NCAA maintains detailed statistics on the graduation rates of its student-athletes and has also developed a tool, called the Academic Progress Rate (APR), to measure how each individual team is achieving academic success. Recent NCAA statistics indicate validity to Dr. Brand’s assertions. Student-athletes entering in 1999 graduated at a rate of 63% versus 61% for the regular student body (“Division I Student—Athletes Excel,” 2006). These data are based on federal data collection. The NCAA, which collects its own Graduation Success Rate (GSR), claims its data is more accurate because it takes into account transfer students who leave the school on good terms (“Division I Student—Athletes Excel,” 2006). The NCAA’s GSR is 77% for the same 1999 class versus the 63% reported by the federal government (“Division I Student-Athletes Excel,” 2006). Other key recent findings regarding student-athletes focus on outcomes depending on gender, race, and sport. Male athletes graduated at a slightly lower rate than the regular student body. However, African-American male student-athletes graduated at a rate of 48% versus 37% for African-American male students. Female student-athletes graduate at a much higher rate than the regular student body and at a much higher rate than the males. African-American female student-athletes graduate at a much higher rate than their student body counterparts and African-American male student-
athletes. Men’s basketball has the lowest graduation rate among the various sports (46%), although it is an increase over the previous year. African-Americans graduate at a rate 20 percentage points lower than whites in this sport, although the rate increased four percentage points over the previous class for African-Americans. (“Division I Student-Athletes Excel”, 2006).

These data for NCAA student-athletes provide a solid, quantifiable base from which to explore the academic/cognitive experience of the student-athlete. The NCAA's position is that academic outcomes for student-athletes are positive and continue to demonstrate positive growth. However, past research has explored a more negative view of the student-athlete experience regarding academics.

Some of the most comprehensive research related to student-athletes and academic performance in recent years has been initiated by William Bowen, former President of Princeton University. Bowen, with the help of two different authors, has published two books (2001 and 2003) that have examined the perceived conflict between the educational mission of higher education institutions and the pursuit of winning athletic competition. The research utilized an extensive quantitative database and was unique in the sample utilized. *The game of life: college sports and educational values* (Shulman & Bowen, 2001) reviewed data from 30 academically selective institutions. The authors included a mix of Division I and Division III academically elite institutions ranging from Northwestern to Columbia to Bryn Mawr. Shulman and Bowen examined whether the approach and impact of athletics is different at different levels and how institutions with very strong academic missions deal with the potentially conflicting values of athletic programs.
Shulman and Bowen (2001) analyzed a cohort that entered college ten years earlier than the most recent NCAA statistics and found a number of academic concerns for student-athletes in their elite institution sample. “High profile” (basketball, football, ice hockey) student-athletes consistently finished in the bottom 25% of their class whereas “lower profile” student-athletes completed their degree in the bottom 40% (p. 62). These GPA data were consistent among students in both Division I and Division III institutions. Shulman and Bowen also found that student-athletes consistently underperformed academically related to their predicted academic outcomes, based on predictions from combined SAT and high school grades. Their findings reveal significant differences in academic achievement between student-athletes and non-athletes at the elite academic level. Student-athletes appear to achieve academically at a lower level.

Bowen and Levin (2003) expanded this line of research in Reclaiming the Game. Their sample was narrowed to span the entire Ivy League and 26 other academically elite Division III institutions and data that includes 1995 cohort. Bowen and Levin (2003) argue that “the traditional values of college sports are threatened by the emergence of a growing ‘divide’ between intercollegiate athletics and the academic institutions that are free of the special problems of ‘big-time’ sports” (p. 2). In other words, the educational success of student-athletes at even the small, elite academic schools is being compromised by their role in athletics.

Once again, they found that student-athletes underperformed academically, especially in two athletic conferences: the Ivy League and the New England Small College Athletic Conference (Colby, Bowdoin, Williams, Wesleyan, etc.). Male student-athletes underperformed at a higher rate than female and “higher profile” student-athletes underperformed at a higher rate than “lower profile.” However positive results did emerge. They discovered that the institutions of the University Athletic Association (UAA- Carnegie Mellon, Emory, Chicago, and
Washington University) showed no underperformance. Similar results were found for class rank. The Ivy League and NESCAC school student-athletes consistently end up in the bottom third of the class, with the high profile student-athletes finishing significantly lower than low profile. The UAA again do not reflect these statistics. Bowen and Levin (2003) also found that recruited student-athletes fare much worse than walk-ons in these areas.

Another area of academic/cognitive development examined in each study was choice of field of study. Student-athletes are much more likely to choose to major in a social science or business field rather than humanities or science. The implication was that student-athletes limit themselves to fields of studies that they believe is easier. Shulman and Bowen (2001) and Bowen and Levin (2003) demonstrated that the schools that are perceived to have no concern with “big-time” athletics were still susceptible to the societal pressures to compete and win. The result was limited academic and cognitive development for the student-athlete.

Other measures of academic success versus athletic participation appear to reinforce the negative relationship. Upthegrove, Roscigno, and Zubrinsky (1999) discovered relationships between student-athletes having to repeat a class, being placed on academic probation, and several athletic variables. Academic difficulties are all correlated nationally with the presence of athletics as a revenue sport student-athlete, a student-athlete being African-American and playing at more athletically-focused institution. The lengthy history of similar negative results for all quantitative measures of academic success continues through the present (Adler & Adler, 1985).

Another line of research regarding student-athletes and educational outcomes suggests that academic measures are not a complete indication of cognitive growth. Studies have explored whether athletic participation had an impact on cognitive development by measuring reading comprehension, mathematics, critical thinking, and science reasoning (Pascarella, Bohr,
Nora, & Terenzini, 1995; Pascarella et al., 1999). Controlling for such factors as ethnicity, socio-economic status, and academic ability, Pascarella et al. (1995) found significantly less development for male freshman football and basketball players in math skills, reading comprehension and critical thinking compared to non-athletes and other sport student-athletes. Pascarella et al. (1999) concluded similar findings for second- and third-year students. These cognitive studies combined with the academic outcome research clearly indicate developmental obstacles for student-athletes. However, women and non-revenue sport male student-athletes are more likely to have a better cognitive development experience in college.

In addition to the work on academic/cognitive outcomes for student-athletes, some researchers focus on the factors that might influence those outcomes. One theory is that student-athletes are influenced to focus on their sport participation and to develop a negative attitude toward academics, with the result being poor academic success. Lucas and Lovaglia (2002) surveyed four large Division I institutions in the Midwest and found that student-athletes “perceived greater costs and fewer benefits to accompany a university education” compared to non-athletes and were “less motivated to perform academically” (para. 25). Snyder (1996) examined the idea of academic motivation from both a racial and level of competition perspective. At the Division I level, African-Americans had a much higher expectation of competing at the professional level and were less focused on academics or career preparation. Adler and Adler (1985) approached the area of attitudes and academics by examining how attitudes toward academics change during the course of a college experience. They found that the student-athletes (male basketball players from a NCAA Division I institution) progressed “from an early phase of idealism about their impending academic experiences to an eventual state of pragmatic detachment” (p. 248). Hope for academic success was replaced by
"diminished interest and effort" (p.248). They attribute this change in expectations and attitude to a variety of reasons: emotional and time demands on athletics, "celebrity" attention, and social isolation. Their findings demonstrate the existence of a phenomenon of some student-athletes developing a negative attitude toward and less motivation for academics. Certainly this would impact the negative academic outcome research explored earlier.

Shulman and Bowen (2001) also examined the variable of social isolation. At one of the Division III institutions, an initial attempt to have student-athletes integrated with the student body assigned them to room with non-athletes. However, in the sophomore year for the 1989 cohort, the number of student-athletes rooming together in dorms doubled. Male student-athletes spent almost twenty hours per week with their primary athletic peer group and only two hours per week with other groups (Shulman & Bowen, 2001). Further isolating themselves, student-athletes appear to "circle the wagons" because of prejudice and negative perceptions from faculty and the student body (Bowen & Levin, 2003, p.112). Finally, student-athletes are more likely to under-perform academically if a high percentage of their teammates were under-performing.

A second influence for under-performance is negative stereotypes. Some faculty hold "prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes" toward male student-athletes (Baucom & Lantz, 2001, para. 13). Prejudicial views expressed by faculty from a variety of disciplines arise from various beliefs: preferential treatment of student-athletes in admissions, unfair financial support, privileged academic services, and undue celebrity status. Bowen and Levin (2003) report that at Amherst, "at least a few members of the faculty are widely known for their hostility to athletic participation or for their belief that certain student-athletes are academically inferior or unmotivated" (p. 164). And the tie between student-athletes and faculty seems to be lessening;
Shulman and Bowen (2001) found that student-athletes from the 1989 cohort were half as likely to have a faculty mentor as the 1951 cohort. The close faculty relationships that enable students to perform successfully in their academics is non-existent for many student-athletes.

The recent graduation rates from the NCAA do disprove some myths. Overall student-athletes graduate at a higher rate than the student body. However, a closer examination of those statistics reveals extensive academic gaps for African-Americans, especially males as well as male students in basketball and football. Extensive quantitative, cognitive and socio-cultural research also reveals a clear connection between negative academic outcomes and intercollegiate athletic participation. The obstacles for college student-athletes and academic success continue to be present and require continued research and intervention.

The social and academic experience of the African-American college student-athlete has drawn some research attention, but similar research on the HBCU athletic experience has been neglected. Only one dissertation examines the value HBCU athletic directors, football coaches and student-athletes place on education (Taylor, 2005). Taylor (2005) found that HBCU athletic departments suffer from a lack of academic support infrastructure in staff and facilities, and students do perceive that some coaches and faculty do not care about their academic success. The complete lack of research in this area is surprising given the obvious negative results for HBCUs in the NCAA academic statistics. The disproportionate representation of HBCUs in the bottom of those statistics is increasingly visible in the media, and the NCAA recognizes the problem and is addressing it.

Summary

This literature review demonstrates the complex beginnings and development of research and theory regarding organizational culture. The complexity of the construct has presented
obstacles to organizational culture research. In addition, exploration of the large body of research connecting organizational culture to effective performance confirmed the relationship in a variety of contexts. The process of transmitting organizational culture through socialization was also described, importantly as it impacts the experience of the undergraduate student. Finally, negative and positive connections between participation in intercollegiate athletics and cognitive/academic outcomes were firmly established.

Resulting is firm support for the use of organizational culture and socialization as a base to understand the performance of an organization. In this study, the intent was to understand the exceptional performance of an HBCU athletic department in graduating its student-athletes. Organizational culture and understanding how the culture is communicated and transmitted presented an opportunity to understand in a specific context what has been recognized by the NCAA and national media as a pressing concern. Complete lack of research on the problems contributed to the necessity for this research. Chapter III addresses the conceptual framework for this research based in the organizational culture and socialization literature that provided the appropriate methods to examine the stated research problem.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

HBCU NCAA Division I athletic departments with a few exceptions struggle at graduating their student-athletes. Research clearly establishes the connection between content of organizational culture and organizational performance. Fortunately there are exceptional HBCUs that graduate student-athletes, which provide the opportunity to understand how culture is utilized and transmitted to student-athletes resulting in positive graduation rates. My challenge was to develop a lens to determine the nature of the culture within one of these exceptional HBCU programs and within that culture the socialization processes and their positive relationships to academics. Complicating the challenge was the difficulty arising from the literature and research in defining and isolating the construct of organizational culture and the complete lack of research regarding the presented problem and setting. Necessity led me to develop a framework based on a comprehensive undergraduate socialization model combined with identified culture domains in the socialization process. The result was a conceptual framework best suited to this exemplary setting in which there appears to be an athletic culture focused on academics and which ensures their student-athletes adopt values, attitudes, and beliefs geared toward academic success.

Conceptual Framework

Organizational scholars clearly accept that organizational culture impacts organizational performance. In this study, I sought to understand how one exemplary HBCU in graduating student-athletes ensured that their student-athletes were socialized into an organizational culture that supports academic achievement. A key function of socialization involves the transmission of organizational culture or components of culture for the purpose of integrating organizational
members successfully into the environment and setting of the organization (Carroll & Tosi, 1977; Weidman, 1989; Louis, 1990; Tierney, 1997). The question then became how did South Atlantic University socialize its student-athletes to internalize values, attitudes, and beliefs geared toward academic success in the form of degree completion? This conceptual framework of organizational culture and socialization directed me to ask and seek the answer to these questions: Who are the primary influential individuals and groups in the socialization process? What are the components of organizational culture that are utilized to socialize the student-athletes to a culture of academics? How do relationships between and among individuals and groups influence socialization? Is there congruence between the values, attitudes and beliefs of the student-athletes and the other primary groups within the department, that is, both administrators and coaches? In other words, how does the socialization of student-athletes at South Atlantic University work?

**Weidman's Model of Undergraduate Socialization**

Weidman (1989) applied the concept of socialization to the experience of the undergraduate student in developing a model to explain effectively the impact of the college environment on affective dimensions for students, that is, their values and personal goals. Three key components in the undergraduate socialization process were recognized by Weidman as especially relevant. First, what are the sources of socializing influence? Within the institution, faculty and peer groups are identified as the primary sources of influence that exert normative pressure. Secondly critical are the social processes that occur between the socializing influences (i.e., faculty and peer groups) and the student. Weidman theorized that a key social process for the undergraduate included interpersonal relationships with the primary socializing influences of faculty and peers. A number of variables within these relationships impact the degree of
socializing influence. Closeness of the relationship, the organization of opportunities for relationships, and frequency of interactions can each impact the degree of socializing influence through interpersonal interactions. The third significant component is the results and outcomes of the socialization process. Career choice, lifestyle preferences, aspirations, and values are listed specifically as affective outcomes in the undergraduate socialization process. However, Weidman (1989) does not limit outcomes to these four; he labels them as "a few of the more important ones" (p. 312). Weidman designed his model to serve as a framework for future research in undergraduate socialization and is recognized by higher education scholars for its significance, breadth and depth in explanation (Roop, 2007).

Because of the merits of the Weidman model and its connection to both organizational culture and its transmission, it serves as an appropriate starting point for this study's exploration of the intercollegiate student-athlete organizational culture and socialization experience. Weidman (1989) recognizes the diversity of the college students, and that their experiences are unique, but dependent on many individual factors. In particular for this study, the student-athlete has a unique experience largely in part due to the intense time as well as the cognitive and affective commitment to engaging in competitive sport while in college. The concentrated involvement in athletics and subsequent relationships that develop as a result can only intensify the socialization process.

Weidman's first key component applies to student-athletes in that socializing agents are ever present. Administrators, coaches, and peers all exert socialization influence on the student-athlete. Administrators include athletic directors and other professional staff, such as compliance coordinators, as well as academic support personnel. Organizational leaders have definitively been connected to the management and transmission of organizational culture (Schein, 2004) and
this application includes athletic administrators as well (Scott, 1997; Schroeder & Scribner, 2006). Athletic administrators have the capability of managing and transmitting organizational culture to all involved stakeholders (Scott, 1997). Coaches have direct relationships with student-athletes as well as leadership positions within the subcultures that exist within an athletic department and have resulting normative and socializing influences on student-athletes (Adler & Adler, 1985; Harvey, 1996, Scott, 1997). Peers are especially recognized for their significant socializing influence, particularly in regards to attitudes and values regarding academics (Adler & Adler, 1985; Pascarella et al., 1995; Riemer et al., 2000). Inherent in the presence of socializing agents within athletics are the existence of interpersonal relationships between the student-athlete and the three groups of influential socializing agents. As Weidman proposed in his general model, these relationships will differ in structure and communication, for example in intensity, frequency in interaction, affective involvement, and organization. Finally the student-athlete can experience various affective outcomes. For this study the outcomes in which I was interested include values, attitudes and beliefs as it regards academics in this athletic department setting.

My interest in those particular outcomes is the representation of agreement concerning the concept of organizational culture in the face of very broad definitions and disagreement. Sharing values and beliefs seem to be the central aspect for most of the base definitions of organizational culture (Rousseau, 1990). Schein’s (2004) model of organizational culture formation involves three levels that start with underlying assumptions about values and beliefs, which lead to espoused values and beliefs from the organization, and then are reflected in cultural artifacts, such as rituals and language. Attitudes, while not mentioned as consistently as values and beliefs in the organizational culture literature, remain intertwined with values and
beliefs as a significant outcome of socialization (Carroll & Tosi, 1977). Attitudes inherently reflect the beliefs and values of individuals within the organization (Carroll & Tosi, 1977). Understanding the organizational culture and socialization of student-athletes at South Atlantic will require exploring the agreed upon core of the construct of culture, comprised of both the espoused and actuated values, beliefs, and attitudes. The values, beliefs, and attitudes must be viewed from both the perspective of the socializing agents as well as the resulting outcomes for the student-athlete. The result is searching for the level and type of congruence between the two and understanding which socializing agents truly have power and influence in the transmission of culture within the organization.

A limitation of Weidman’s model is the lack of clarification concerning the organizational culture content learned in the socialization process in the form of artifacts that reflect the underlying values, beliefs and attitudes of the department. I sought to understand the communication tools administrators, coaches, and peers utilized to transmit the academic culture of the athletic department. One simple tool highlighted by Weidman in his discussion is the power of reward for academic performance. Reward in the form of grades is an obvious normative influence between faculty and students, but what are the reinforcing behaviors among socializing agents in the context of athletic departments? Intercollegiate athletics are often criticized for their focus on athletic competition at the expense of academic success. Were South Atlantic student-athletes positively or negatively reinforced for their academic behavior and attitudes? If so, by whom, and how? Were rewards for academic success and consequences for failure present within the organization? The socialization process at South Atlantic needed to be comprehended from a perspective of how relationships, communication, and reinforcements were structured and then impacted the eventual cultural outcomes.
Directly related to socialization process are content areas of socialization that reflect organizational culture learned and serve to transmit the culture. Chao et al. (1994) advised that identifying content or dimensions of socialization is critical to the examination of relationships to outcomes. These culture dimensions include language and history. Socialization in the language dimension means learning the jargon, the language unique to the organization. For this study, I explored what language the socializing agents used to communicate and transmit messages concerning academic values, beliefs, and attitudes. This communication can occur in a variety of forms including verbal, non-verbal and written. Chao et al. define the history dimension as encompassing the traditions and rituals that transmit cultural knowledge. Schein (2004) extended Chao et al.'s content dimensions of language and history to also include all observable products of the organization as the artifacts that embody the organizational culture. Thus, in addition to language and history, policies and programs, which are cultural artifacts, are essential key tools in the process of socialization. An example of a program would be the academic support division. What is its role of the academic support division? What services do they provide to the student-athletes at SAU? With regard to policy, how are these services supported by the administrators and coaches in terms of scheduling and influence over the student-athletes?

An important context for socialization strategies for organizations concerns whether cultural transmission is informal or formal (Jones, 1986). Weidman (1989) agreed that the normative pressures that undergraduates faced in both the social and academic environments can be overtly formal or can be hidden and informal. Written academic standards represent an example of formal socialization content while “unwritten rules defining faculty expectations for students’ academic performance” demonstrate an informal tactic (Weidman, 1989, p.307). Thus, part of the challenge in this study was to observe and uncover the student-athletes’ socialization...
experience for both informal and formal content as it applied to language, ritual and tradition and policy.

Represented in Figure 3 is my conceptual framework model that provided the structural components through which I studied SAU’s exceptional performance in graduating student-athletes. Combining key components of Weidman’s model for undergraduate socialization with aspects of organizational culture theory and content offered a framework to gather data and to analyze how the prevailing values, beliefs, and attitudes within that department were transmitted and operate during socialization. This model allowed me to ask the following specific questions: Who were the dominant socializing agents? What were the prevailing values, beliefs and attitudes as they pertain to the role of academics in the department? What was the nature of socialization content in the process and what was the impact? How did the organizational culture content interact with relationships, communication, and reinforcement? Ultimately what values, beliefs, and attitudes did the student-athletes receive and accept as a result of the socialization and organizational culture experience?
Methods

Given the complex nature of organizational culture, socialization, and the necessity of understanding the perspectives of the various stakeholders within the athletic department in that setting, qualitative research in general and the case study method in particular was the most appropriate research strategy. Case studies are geared toward studying a phenomenon in its
natural context, utilizing numerous sources of data, and developing increased understanding of a specific issue (Schwandt, 2001; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Quantitative study of organizational culture limits the emic or insider perspective as well as analysis and definitions of core issues regarding the concept (Ott, 1989; Schein, 2004). Qualitative research is most appropriately utilized where the case is best understood in its natural environment (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). Researchers most importantly must focus holistically on the study of organizational culture, as well as socialization, which includes understanding participants experiencing the culture in its natural setting (Hamada & Sibley, 1994; Tierney, 1997). This section will describe the rationale supporting the choice of a qualitative strategy and case study method. In addition, I explain the choice of South Atlantic University athletics for an exemplar case in regards to the study’s conceptual framework & methods.

Choice of Qualitative Research and Case Study Method

Noted earlier, organizational culture and performance research has created a myriad of opinions regarding appropriate research strategies. Substantial research utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods has delved into exploring relationships regarding higher education, athletics and organizational culture (e.g. Clark, 1970; Smart, 2003; Schroeder, 2003). Examination of the common characteristics in qualitative research demonstrates that this study was best aligned with that method.

Guiding qualitative research is a number of common attributes. Qualitative researchers focus on understanding individual lived experiences in their own natural settings (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In addition, qualitative methods are suited to reveal the diverse variables and factors that impact the lives and relationships among individuals as well as observing how the intricacies of the natural operate as a whole (Earls, 1986; Schroeder, 2003).
Finally the nature of methods utilized as well as a reflective approach to these methods is unique and characteristic of qualitative research. Methods engaged are necessarily “interactive and humanistic” and include interviews, observation, document and material culture analysis (Rossman & Rallis, p. 9). Ultimately multi-methods in naturalistic inquiry that employ researcher reflexivity on the research provide more depth and holistic views of the context and environment. The listed qualities and characteristics of qualitative research demonstrate the appropriateness of utilizing the strategy for an inquiry regarding organizational culture and socialization.

The case study method was best-suited for the purposes of this research. A case study examines a specific instance to comprehend a larger phenomenon (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The examples explored might include “event, process, organization, group or individual” (Rossman & Rallis, p. 104). The case in this study was South Atlantic University Athletics. This organization was chosen in order to understand the phenomenon of their excellent graduation rate for student-athletes and relationships to organizational culture and its transmission. Case studies are denoted and strengthened by the depth and complexity of the research and the presentation of multiple perspectives (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Given the multi-faceted nature of organizational culture, socialization and the probability of multiple subcultures within an athletic department, a case study presents a format appropriate for multi-layered perspectives and concepts.
Exemplar Case

The case of interest for this study was the South Atlantic University (SAU) athletic department. In stark contrast to many Division I HBCUs, SAU’s athletic department has excelled in the area of graduating their student-athletes. SAU maintained a Graduation Success Rate (GSR) well above the NCAA average from 2005 – 2007. The average HBCU GSR over the three-year span was just under 60%, while the NCAA average went from 76% to 77% (2007 NCAA Report, n.d.). Ms. Bennett, the SAU director of athletics, expressed her complete support for the research and was instrumental in its implementation.

Like all other NCAA Division I HBCUs, SAU is a member of the Division I Football Championship Subdivision. In 2007, SAU’s intercollegiate teams consisted of 230 student-athletes competing on 15 varsity teams (Equity in Athletics Data, n.d.). Recent graduation statistics reveal that 91% of student-athletes graduating from SAU are African-American (2007 NCAA Report).

Data Collection

The study employed triangulation to ensure the credibility of the results. Rossman and Rallis (2003) refer to triangulation as using a “variety of methods... to build the picture that [one is] investigating” (p.69). I utilized interviews, observation, and artifacts from multiple individuals, settings, and sources to bring depth and breadth to the phenomena being explored.

Interviews

Interview participants effectively represented the three socializing groups signified in the model. Administrators were invited to participate based on their leadership position inside the athletic department as well as in the university as a whole. Leadership is significantly intertwined with both the formation and transmitting of organizational culture (Schein, 2004).
Key administrators interviewed included: University President, Athletic Director, Associate and Assistant Athletic Directors, and the Academic Support Director. Ms. Bennett, Athletic Director, expressed that the University President is an integral part of athletics at SAU and assured access for an interview. Coaches represented potential leadership within subcultures of individual sports at SAU in addition to being in the position of a socializing influence for student-athletes. The nine head coaches at SAU were asked to participate and subsequently consented to interviews.

Student-athletes represented both the peer group as socializing agent and the individuals experiencing the socialization process and organizational culture of the department. They also are characterized by a number of differing variables that have been shown to have unique relationships with academics in an intercollegiate athletic department. Studies and NCAA statistics show that age, gender, and sport specifically can correlate diversely with graduation rates and academic data (Pascarella et al., 1995; Riemer et al., 2000; Lucas & Lovaglia, 2002). Purposeful sampling was utilized to ensure that perspectives by gender, sport and year in school are represented (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). Eighteen student-athlete interview participants were selected to represent two from each sport program. I hoped to understand the culture and socialization experience for the overall student-athlete at SAU, but also how it might compare and contrast to other subcultures represented by participation in specific sport. Two students from each of the nine head coaches’ programs gave both breadth across the teams as well as dyadic responses from within the teams. The student interviewees were selected with the assistance of the head coaches, as they were best able to make contact and interview arrangements with the athletes. Student-athletes were purposefully selected to ensure freshman, sophomores, juniors and seniors were represented by multiple interviews.
Prior to initiating interviews, Ms. Bennett was contacted to ensure she was fully aware of the purpose and methods of study as well as discuss any concerns. An introductory letter was mailed to potential interviewees again with full disclosure concerning the study’s structure and purpose (Appendix C). A follow-up e-mail requested the interview and potential scheduling opportunities. Participants again were informed about the study’s purpose at the actual interview and informed consent forms (Appendix A) were reviewed and completed.

A semi-structured interview approach was utilized to ensure that standard data was obtained across the interviews, while permitting other themes to emerge from individuals (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). An interview protocol (see Appendix B) was based on the organizational culture and socialization framework presented in this chapter. Student-athletes were presented with slightly different forms of some questions, due to the differentiated nature of their position within the department. The interview questions were structured to be open-ended, so that participants could elaborate and develop their perceptions that were relevant to the research focus (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Permission was obtained from each interviewee to tape the interviews. I transcribed all interview data, and ensured confidentiality for the participants by assigning pseudonyms and limiting access and use to myself.

Observations

Additional data gathering occurred through observations of staff and team meetings, Academic Support Center activities and programs, team practices, and Student Advisory Athletic Committee meetings (SAAC). Observations are a common qualitative research method utilized in organizational culture studies (Frost et al., 1991; Martin, 2002). Observation provided access to interactions within socializing agent groups and between them as well. Specifically, observations were geared primarily to gathering data related to the content and process
components of my conceptual framework. Language and ritual/traditions are visible artifacts of organizational culture (Schein, 2004) as well as core components in socialization (Chao et al., 1994). Observation of these components of socialization at SAU provided insight into how, when and where socializing agents visibly transmitted values, beliefs and attitudes regarding academics and graduation. Observation of these interactions also provided insight into components of the socialization process. I directly noted the nature and structure of relationships between administrators, coaches, and student-athletes during interactions as well as the nature and content of communication and the use of reinforcement of values, beliefs, and attitudes about academics and graduation. Observing significant participant interactions also added depth to the interviews, as new themes emerged and presented additional questions to explore (Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis). An observation protocol (Appendix D) guided field notes of observations and served a similar function as the interview transcript (Merriam). Written descriptions of the setting, interactions, and people as well as conversation were documented for relevant analysis concerning the study’s purpose and as part of the triangulation of data (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Artifact Collection

Artifact collection was conducted as an additional method to triangulate the data and provided emerging directions to explore in observation and interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Artifacts produced by the SAU athletic department provided critical relevance as they represented “material manifestations of cultural beliefs and behaviors” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.216). Criteria for selection of athletic department materials for analysis included relevance to and evidence of attitudes, beliefs and values of the organizational culture and

Key to employing all three data collection methods (interviews, observations, and artifacts) was the utilization of emergent research design necessary to adapt methodology and data sources as developing knowledge led to significant directions in regards to understanding the organizational culture and socialization within the department (Schwandt, 2001).

**Data Analysis**

Utilizing inductive analysis for this study allowed the discovery of emerging “patterns, themes, and categories” through “interactions with the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). The analysis of the data used a categorical strategy (Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). After each interview, audiotapes were transcribed and then data coded into categories, that is, words, ideas, and phrases from within the interviews that appeared to be significant evidence of the organizational culture, and to socialization and its potential relationship to academic success. Field notes from observations and artifacts underwent the same inductive and categorical analysis. Specific attention in data analysis focused on the behaviors within the socializing groups and their cultural manifestations of specific values, attitudes and beliefs toward academics as well as the content and processes of socialization described in my framework. Themes that describe more “subtle and tacit processes,” were developed following the categorical analysis (Rossman and Rallis, p. 282). Since the interviewees represented the variety of demographics, functions, and interests within the department, the interviews provided the opportunity to identify and then compare and contrast possible subcultures that impacted the overall organizational culture, socialization and academic success for the student-athlete. Ongoing analysis occurred throughout the study (Merriam, 1998).

**Maximization and Demonstration of Trustworthiness**
Trustworthiness addresses the goodness or quality of a qualitative study (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). For a naturalistic study, four criteria are utilized to evaluate the research’s trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Schwandt, 2001).

Hoepfl (1997) refers to credibility as the “test” for how well the researcher describes the “multiple realities” that are assumed present within the study (p.58). To ensure that the results were credible, I relied on member checking to solicit the participants’ review of data and triangulation through the utilization of multiple sources and methods (Merriam, 1998). This allowed participants to verify the plausibility of the data (Merriam).

Two types of triangulation were utilized: data and methodological. Data source triangulation uses multiple sources of data (multiple participants) for a study. By obtaining data through interviews, observations and material culture, methodological triangulation was employed (Patton, 2002). To have credible results, the results must truly reflect participant perspective and not the researcher’s. Using these two types of triangulation allowed convergence on the analysis from differing participant and researcher perspectives, adding depth and additional dimensions to ensure credible data.

Transferability refers to the premise that results can be applied to other situations depending “on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the situation to which it is transferred” (Hoepfl, 1997, p. 59). The researcher must provide complete information, so that the reader can decide if the findings are transferable to other situations (Hoepfl, 1997). I provide detailed information concerning the setting for the study, characteristics and background of participants. Results of the study are reported utilizing thick descriptions that provide
sufficient detail for the reader to evaluate whether findings can be generalized to other settings (Merriam, 1998).

Patton (2002) refers to dependability as involving a “systematic process with systematic results” (p.546). Dependability is necessary to establish credibility as well (Hoepfl, 1997) and relates to the consistency of the study’s design and execution. This step was accomplished by clearly documenting the emerging design process, data collection procedures, procedures for analysis and researcher perspectives, values, and beliefs that might have influenced the study’s procedures and/or results.

Confirmability is the fourth criterion by which the results of the study are ensured to be trustworthy. According to Morrow (2005) confirmability “…addresses the core issue that findings should represent, as far as is (humanly) possible, the situation being researched rather than the beliefs, pet theories, or biases of the researcher” (para. 15). Reliance on member checking ensured the study results reflected participants’ experiences, beliefs, and values, and not mine.

**Ethical Considerations**

As I am the primary research instrument in qualitative inquiry, chief ethical considerations revolve around the researcher-participant relationship (Merriam, 1998; Schwandt, 2001). Ethical responsibilities regarding the relationship were initiated from a contractual perspective (Schwandt). Inherent in this contract was approval from the Human Subjects Committee and agreement to participate through written informed consent (Appendix A). The informed consent form clearly identified the study’s purpose, participant involvement, procedures for confidentiality, potential risks and benefits, as well as clearly stating that withdrawal can occur at any time. Specific actions were undertaken to reduce the likelihood that
participants’ confidentiality would not be compromised. I used pseudonyms in the dissertation or subsequent publications to protect the identities of participants. And although all interviews and other meetings were tape recorded, all tapes will be erased at the conclusion of the research project.

Regard for the best interest of the participant further guided ethic responsibilities in both data collection and data analysis. A semi-structured interview guided participants, but I instructed them to elaborate on relevant themes and responses. I withheld personal input and perspectives. I used active listening by focusing intently on the participant and being aware of verbal and non-verbal cues. This combination of techniques provided a comfortable, supportive atmosphere and encouraged open, honest reflection upon the research topic. Reflection in field notes provided the opportunity for me “to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one’s own perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports” (Patton, 2002, p.65). I intended to maintain the highest levels of ethical standards in all facets of this research.
Clearly the academic statistics at SAU indicate that the student-athletes have adopted values, attitudes and beliefs that propel them toward academic success, reflecting an overall academically-oriented organizational culture. My intention in this study was to explore the nature of this culture and specifically to identify the various influences and processes that have socialized the student-athletes into it. What will become quite apparent is that the members of this organization see themselves as family and enacting familial roles. The culture’s success in many ways is predicated on this common belief and value emphasis. Presented in the conceptual framework, three main socializing agent groups—the administrators, faculty, and peer athlete groups—impact the organizational culture and socialization experience for student-athletes.

Understanding how these groups fit within the organizational structure and the backgrounds of the constituent members provides necessary context to comprehend how the SAU family works. I begin exploring the socializing agents of SAU by explaining their backgrounds and their initial perceptions of the metaphor of family within their conception of their organizational culture and by considering on a preliminary basis their values, beliefs, and attitudes regarding academics and athletics through their conceptions of their duties and the department’s mission. Consideration of the socializing agents’ backgrounds and perceptions of the mission as well as their role in the culture provide the backdrop to discerning the cultural content and socialization processes. Full comprehension of an organizational culture begins on the surface and advances inward (Deal & Kennedy, 2000).
The Administrators

Four SAU athletic administrators have direct influence with coaches, student-athletes and policy regarding academics. Ms. Bennett leads as the athletic director; she has been in that role on an interim and then a permanent basis for approximately eight years. Her academic and coaching experiential background have given her extensive credibility among the staff, reinforced by almost a unanimous opinion among the department staff that she is an exceptionally strong and positive leader for the organization. Serving in the capacity of compliance coordinator and senior woman administrator are two of Ms. Bennett’s former assistant coaches, Ms. Morris and Ms. Gannon respectively. Expectedly, they are very supportive of the athletic director and her views on academics. Academic services direction is provided by Dr. Rollins. Relatively new to the institution compared to her athletic administrator peers, she is recognized as charismatic, powerful and passionate about the role of academics and the student-athlete. Most participants agree that her influence on the staff and student-athletes is powerful; no one in the department communicates more with them concerning academics.

Although these athletic administrators are important and influential, a review of the administrators as socializing agents must begin with the institution’s President. Ultimate responsibility for the operation and success of the organization rests with him and it became clear that he is quite engaged in the achievements of the teams and athletes—both on and off the field. Outspoken and holding a firm belief in the value of academics as well as expecting academic success within the department are the central characteristics of the five administrators who clearly command the respect and admiration of the coaches and athletes.

The President
The NCAA recognizes the authority and control of the college and university president regarding institutional athletics. It reorganized in 1997 to situate college presidents as the chief governing officers with the NCAA (Copeland, 2009). Given this responsibility, SAU’s President Samuels possesses the lead role in setting and directing the implementation of the culture of the athletics department. SAU is Samuels’ first presidency in an academic career spent at both HBCUs and majority institutions. Notable is President Samuels’ military background, which athletic staff indicated impacts his leadership style. The athletic director conveyed Samuels’ attention to detail:

There is a lot of pressure on me from above. The President is from a military background, so he will read every word on our website and he will e-mail me every detail of where there’s a problem.... So I think sometimes I micromanage too much on things that I don’t have to.

Yet the head basketball coach described the President’s emphasis on need for structure and discipline for staff and athletes:

And [the President] also wants you to be very disciplined. He is a military guy. So he is very structured in how he does things. He wants your programs to be very disciplined and we all want that. But it definitely comes from the top, how it needs to be.

The President is obviously engaged with administrators and coaches, as one would expect. However, to what extent does a President become involved beyond the staff? Wiedman (1989) noted that administrators have a limited impact on students because of their role and limited opportunities for interaction. However, engaging students appears to be President Samuels’ primary strategy to promote academic success. In describing his role with and attitude about athletics:

I am very much a participant. I don't know how much you have found out, but I am in the locker room...and they need to see me because I am the visible leader on campus. And so I make it a point of being with them through wins and losses, but also to do what I can to encourage the young men and women.
Speaking to the football team after every game symbolizes an important expression of institutional support and motivation provided by President Samuels. Teammates Tyler and James expressed gratitude for these speeches as they “feel great support” from him. It is not just the major sports that benefit from President Samuels’ presence. He expresses a dedication to supporting – in his words, “both sides of that gender equation.”

Both women’s softball and basketball players related the backing of their President with sincere enthusiasm and awe. “The President is out here a lot.” Impressive to them was the fact that he “spoke” to them and “knew them.” At a women’s volleyball game, I observed as the President sat on the front row in the stands for over an hour and cheered the team on. He greeted and spoke to the student body as they walked by. Approached at the game by a graduating woman basketball player, he eagerly agreed to provide a reference for her.

College administrators can influence the student experience as well as perceptions of the institutional climate through relationship aspects such as friendliness, support, and effective communication (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). President Samuels believes in personal support and involvement in the entire athletic program. As the institutional leader, President Samuels has made a significant impression on all the constituent groups with his intimate and continuous involvement in athletics. His value and beliefs are not merely statements, but are manifested in his very visible support of all programs and especially the student-athletes.

And when it comes to student-athletes, they give so much to the University. It becomes the University's responsibility to provide them as much support to ensure their success as much as possible.

Succeeding in life “off the field” is a consistent and continuous message that several student-athletes reported hearing from both coaches and administrators. For President Samuels, this message serves as the overall mission for intercollegiate athletics.
I think it is a great mission, in fact it instills in the participants the whole drive and
determination that you need to succeed and the tools that you develop in intercollegiate
sport are the same tools that you need to be successful in life.... They tend to be
successful in whatever career field they enter later on in life. You learn to compete in a
very hard fashioned, very fair fashioned and you learn to take...you have to have a short
memory. You get defeated one week, you can't let that carry-on to the next week.... So
you have to learn to overcome difficult circumstances. And so I think all of those
combine to really prepare one for life's journey.

President Samuels asserted that his post-game football speeches consist of messages of win or
lose, “understanding the whole rules of life” and “succeeding off the field” by excelling in the
classroom, “staying out of trouble,” and being academic role models for the student body. Off
the field messages received by James in Presidential locker room speeches have emphasized
“Think, Work, Serve.” These three words serve as the President’s overall theme and motto for
the institution and emphasize a comprehensive direction for in-and out-of-classroom activities.

An organization’s mission reflects beliefs regarding its role in society (Schein, 2004). President
Samuels’ belief for intercollegiate athletics at his institution is that it should develop good and
successful citizens. He believes on the field and off the field effort from the student-athletes will
produce this outcome.

The family as a metaphor for SAU athletics pervades all three constituent groups
(administrators, coaches, and student-athletes), but begins with the President. He ensures that he
and his wife are significantly engaged in the “athletics family.” Mrs. Samuels attends the athletic
events with her husband and spends the time at games, such as the women’s volleyball game,
sitting several rows above her husband, nestled within a group of students and rooting
enthusiastically for the team. Bolstering the concept of family for President Samuels is what he
calls his “caring mode.” This caring mode is manifested through his genuine support, his
visibility at events, and his accessibility. He even noted that over-accessibility may be a problem
as sometimes athletes will approach him about a problem with their team or coach before
actually speaking to the coach. Although athletes observed that they generally have more depth in their relationships with coaches and athletic administrators, they do genuinely feel the compassion and support of the President.

Scholars of organizational culture agree about the significant impact that the values, beliefs and role modeling of the organization leader can have on the culture and its members (Schein, 2004). President Samuels is expected by the institution and the NCAA to maintain control of the athletic program and the evidence from the staff and students as well as observations demonstrates that he takes this role seriously and exudes a passion for student-athlete success. His beliefs, values and attitudes about athletics and student-athletes are manifest in his thoughts and actions. His expectations for the athletic staff also reflect his beliefs. As more than one coach observed, the coaches who do not care about their athletes did not last very long here.

The Athletic Director

Predating the President by several years at the institution is the director of athletics, Ms. Bennett. Ms. Bennett sculpted an educational and athletic background that has enabled her to shape her leadership style as well as her attitudes toward academics. Private secondary school education instilled deep seeds regarding the importance of academics and degree attainment especially for athletes. Positive role models during that time made significant impressions. She explained: “I had coaches and teachers who believed in doing things right and all the athletes in that structure were great students.” Continuing her academic and athletic career at an elite university reinforced her values. Today, as a result, she garners respect from the staff and coaches at SAU for her intellect and ability. A major sport coach stated that her leadership was respected in part because of her credentials resulting from both her college educational and
athletic background. Those credentials assisted in persuading the other major sport coach to accept the position at SAU. Two additional coaches and an administrator correlated strong academic values from the athletic director to her undergraduate institution.

Extensive coaching experience and success on the court has also helped Ms. Bennett with gaining the respect of the SAU coaches. Coaching women’s basketball at two institutions and for several years at SAU before becoming athletic director comforts the coaching staff as she “knows the deal.” Conference championships as a coach have garnered her deference and admiration. One of the major sports coaches expressed his respect: “She knows what it takes to win as a coach and that makes all the difference in the world.” Respected experiential and educational background certainly contribute to her standing within the organization, however she is genuinely perceived as a strong and effective leader by administrators, coaches and notably the student-athletes. Student-athletes normally would be expected to be removed from direct interaction with or impact from the top administrator. Individuals from both men’s and women’s non-revenue sports are surprised that the athletic director knows their names; thus they feel an atmosphere of caring and support. Sanaa, a player on the women’s basketball team believes that the athletic director is directly engaged in academic leadership with the coaches. “I am sure that she is giving the coaches ideas about how to get their athletes to make better grades, how to get us focused in the classroom.”

NCAA institutions are engaged in an “arms race” currently, spending on facilities and coaching salaries at an “unsustainable rate” according to President Myles Brand to stay ahead of the competition in recruiting student-athletes (Kelderman, 2008, para. 3). Ms. Bennett sees this resource competition in the NCAA as directing her primary role in the department. “Holding (the department) above water,” she joked, is her main duty as she deals with the “resource
struggle” and the “arms race.” Resources provide the people, programs, and facilities that enable success and “every conversation, every strategy, every meeting and the result of which direction we go in is going to be skewed by resources,” according to the athletic director. Being at a HBCU also puts her at a disadvantage in her role as resource provider because they lack the “fundraising pork” from an alumni base and corporate entities that majority schools have. Her focus on providing resources ultimately impacts both the academic and athletic experience for the student-athlete.

Ms. Bennett was one of a handful of organizational members to emphasize that winning is the primary mission of the organization. Correlated to this mission of winning is the expectation of job security. She recognizes that academic success and not winning on the field will not keep her employed at the institution. But she quickly stressed her belief in academics, “graduating student-athletes is winning too.” Winning the “right way” is her vision that is in part executed through “graduating the highest percentage of our student-athletes as we can and giving them a good college experience, while they’re here.” Despite understanding that winning on the field is the primary mission, her initial direction upon the accepting the position was to firmly establish an infrastructure within the department that emphasized NCAA compliance and academic success. Winning on the field places second behind establishing “that you are going to run the athletics department the way it was meant to by the NCAA. Ms. Bennett accepts the reality of the pressure to win in NCAA Division I athletics, but verified by her as well as the coaches and peers of SAU are her self-proclaimed “traditionalist” attitude, beliefs and values concerning the positive role of education for the student-athlete.

The athletic director joined a small number of organizational affiliates in not referring to the organization from a familial perspective. Family implies a caring and supportive role, and
she does not perceive her leadership style or relationship to the members of the organization in that way. Being “rough” on administrators and “pushing” the coaches to “do what they really need to be doing” are in large part how she describes her relationships. “Pretty strong” is how she observes the relationship to athletes, but recognizes that they need a leader who is an advocate for them and provides a success-enhancing atmosphere rather than merely “someone they see.” Ms. Bennett perceives her leadership style as assertive and authoritative, which is confirmed by several coaches and administrators.

However she is also recognized as a member of the organizational family. Coach Mabel acknowledged the familial role of Ms. Bennett pulling the coaching staff together and encouraging them to support each other and work together in times of crisis such as the current fiscal challenges. Bonding and unification of the staff are the result of Ms. Bennett’s efforts, according to Coach Mabel. Coach Ross sees the maternal side of Ms. Bennett as he sends athletes with whom he is “frustrated” to her for “nourishing.” Other administrators noted this maternal role, citing one example in which a prominent football player spent so much time in the athletic director’s office that they jokingly called him her son. Envisioning herself and performing as a strong, confident leader appears not to preclude Ms. Bennett from enacting familial roles within the organization.

Organizational culture scholars have often concluded that leaders can substantially create and maintain a desirable culture for an institution (Martin, 1992). At SAU, the athletic director in large part has created and implemented a vision based on a firm background and belief in the transforming power of intercollegiate athletics and education. A powerful leadership style combined with these values and beliefs guide much of the organization to recognize her role in
developing a congruent positive culture on academics. Best stated by one of the coaches, “Coach Bennett makes sure that we know it is our job to make sure our kids graduate.”

The Associate Athletic Director

Ms. Gannon serves immediately below Ms. Bennett in the organizational structure. She directly reflects Ms. Bennett’s leadership style and belief in academics. Having coached together several years, Ms. Gannon earned the promotion as a result of the athletic director’s belief that “if you got good people, transition them over to something else…” Specifically, Ms. Gannon’s comprehension of the expected “work level and work ethic” and her identical “belief that athletes are students” prompted her promotion to an administrative position by Ms. Bennett. More “purposeful” is how Ms. Gannon describes her current job compared to previous coaching roles.

New purpose arrived in the form of being able to “influence all 300 some student-athletes” instead of being restricted to working with one team. Ms. Gannon truly sees her primary role as being of service to all student-athletes, in addition to the duties of mentoring coaches and acting as a liaison to “upper-level administration and the conference level.” Serving students takes the form of leading student-run NCAA athlete groups, such as the Student-athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) or the CHAMPS Life Skills Program. Priding herself on knowing the athlete’s names and being able to “say hi” off the field, she feels she connects directly with the athletes as students, which she notes separates her from some of the other administrators. A ministerial background off campus for Ms. Gannon seems to support her perception of her on-campus role as a both a counselor and leader for student-athletes and coaches. Consequently her view of the organizational mission reflects a counseling philosophy.

“We want for our student-athletes to be successful in the classroom, to be successful in their sports, to be successful as an individual. And to know that as a result of this
experience when they leave here they are a better person. They are more mature. They are smarter. That we have had a hand in their character development.

Ms. Gannon distinctly recognizes that she performs a familial role for student-athletes at times. She is a “mom away from mom.” Tough athletes are able to open up to her in that role. Football players tell her things that they cannot reveal to their coaches and find it “okay to cry in front of me.” Being recognized as available and there for troubled athletes is also a way of fulfilling that “mom” role. On one occasion an athlete who was considering suicide came to her because of the maternal relationship. On another, she helped a distraught athlete who lost his home in hurricane Katrina by helping him talk through the tragedy. Caring for the student-athlete as a person is the key for Ms. Gannon in executing her “mom away from mom role.”

Ms. Gannon was promoted by Ms. Bennett to an administrator status because of her proven commitment to the value and belief in education as a priority for student-athletes. Revealing in an athletic job in which she plays primarily a positive role with student-athletes is counter to her old coaching duties that sometimes required “doing something that makes them mad.” She executes her role as a counselor/administrator, clearly engaged in ensuring the well-being of the student-athlete.

The Compliance Director

Hired for the same reasons as Ms. Gannon, Ms. Morris has served as the assistant athletic director for compliance for six years. She both previously played for as well as coached under Ms. Bennett’s direction. Having worked for Ms. Bennett for over ten years as an assistant coach, the athletic director was confident of Ms. Morris’s ethics and commitment to the academic side of college athletics. Referring to the three former coaches (Ms. Gannon, Ms. Morris, and Ms. Bennett) working together in coaching, Ms Bennett reflected on the academic success. “We basically graduated almost 100% of our student-athletes.” Ms. Morris says that the
“mindset” that academics are primary for student-athletes was instilled in her by Ms. Bennett when she played for her as a college athlete.

Ensuring NCAA compliance for all of the student-athletes serves as the job focus for Ms. Morris. Her days are full with certifying NCAA eligibility, ensuring NCAA compliance with academic matriculation, requesting waivers for special cases, as well as educating coaches, administrators and boosters to ensure they comply. Wearing “a whole lot of hats” is what it takes to handle the compliance job according to Ms. Morris. When asked about the mission, she simply refers back to the President’s motto: “Think, Work, Serve.” That theme is pervasive on campus and serves as a reminder for her and SAU staff that customer service is a priority and students are that priority. “That’s why we are here.” Best reflective of that sentiment is Ms. Morris’s “open door policy” for student-athletes. A dozen or so athletes typically stop in each day with four or five who find comfort in just sitting in her office between classes. Considering the job of the department compliance officer has become increasingly difficult with evolving academic standards that require more complicated analysis, monitoring and evaluation, one would believe that finding time to commit to meaningful relationships with student-athletes seems extraordinary and potentially stressful given the demands of the work.

Like Ms. Gannon, Ms. Morris perceives herself as a home away from home “mama” for many of the athletes. Closest to her are football players, a relationship that she largely attributes to her office’s proximity to the football office. She has “a couple of them that call me their mama.” Personal conversations concerning “girlfriends… or things going on in their home” reflect the in-depth nature of the familial relationship, similar to Ms. Gannon’s experience. However, Ms. Morris describes another level of connectedness in the lives of the athletes:
[The athletes say] "can you call my mom and tell her this?" I have phone numbers in my phone from their mothers. (The mothers say) "Call me and let me know how my son or daughter is doing"; "call me anytime."

Athletes who identify Ms. Morris as their on-campus “mama” have linked her in communication to their real mothers so that issues can be addressed by both their at-home and on-campus families. Proximity to football encourages the maternal relationship, but all of the administrators are identified by both male and female athletes from a variety of teams as fulfilling familial roles including those of “mom.”

Three of the four administrators who directly touch and impact the academic experience of student-athletes at SAU have spent over a decade together coaching at the Division I level and developing a successful academic system built on the strong beliefs and values emanating from the current athletic director. Fulfilling a motherly role to the student-athletes is common among all three as well and seemingly a critical part of their belief that the student-athlete must be nurtured as part of overall “off the field” character development.

*Assistant Athletic Director of Academic Services*

Sensibly, it could be expected that the first week of classes would be busy for an athletic academic advisor as student-athletes confirmed and adjusted class schedules. Clearly, that was the case as an extensive line of student-athletes snaked out of Dr. Rollins’ (Assistant Athletic Director- Academic Services) office door on the day prior to classes beginning. She sat at her desk engaged with student after student calling them by name or “Sweetie” seeking to know what happened to them the previous summer and ensuring they were enrolled in the appropriate courses for the fall. Passion and commitment to her students and this role, left little time to participate in this study and she initially declined an interview for those reasons. Describing Dr.
Rollins’ ardor for the work, the athletic director knows that Dr. Rollins “wants a 100% graduation rate. She can see it, smell it, taste it.”

This “head coach for academics”, as one coach called her, has been at SAU for the relatively short time of four years compared to the other administrators discussed. Unique to Dr. Rollins compared with the other two associate/assistant athletic administrators is her lack of coaching or athletic background and previous working relationship with the athletic director. Holding a similar role at another conference institution and achieving “a lot of success there”, Dr. Rollins was directly approached by Ms. Bennett to come to SAU in that same position with the added incentive of initiating a new academic center. Having received her doctoral degree from SAU, Dr. Rollins was “honored” by the interest. Her desire to accept the position was enhanced by the promise “to give back.”

Developing and implementing a comprehensive program “that would allow students to be successful” is Dr. Rollins’ view of her main responsibility as academic services director. She proudly mentions a number of initiatives that she believes are critical to achieving the outcome of student success, including freshman and transfer student advisement sessions, study hall and tutoring programs. Hiring and working with a “good support staff” in the academic center is also central component of her job and one that makes the “whole area so wonderful.” Academic policies and programs that Dr. Rollins has employed are viewed by consensus as a significant factor in the academic success of SAU athletes and will be discussed in detail later. Ms. Morris “can tell a big difference” between before and after Dr. Rollins’ arrival and her initiating her academic center and plan.

Student success off the field and in life is also the central theme for what Dr. Rollins views as the department’s mission:
... [it] would be to educate student-athletes to be able to reach their potential. Not only in their field of sport, but to graduate from this university. I further believe that we are responsible for developing, mentoring student-athletes so that they can be not only a graduate statistic from here, but to be a wonderful productive citizen in our country. I want them to be students who we can look back at 10 years from now and be proud to say that this kid came our way and he or she graduated from this university and they are doing really well and excel in their field and now they are able to give back to their institution and help other students who are growing up trying to be like them. I think we have a personal responsibility to teach our students here, especially student-athletes, to be responsible and to be able to look beyond themselves, be on their game and to find a way to give back to others.

More thoroughly stated, Dr. Rollins’ concept of mission directly corresponds with both the President’s and Ms. Gannon’s emphasis that the department’s obligation was to produce students of overall good character who would go onto be “productive citizens.”

Confirming Dr. Rollins’ views of her job and mission as well as her perception, which is similar to the other female administrators, that she acts like a mom to many of the athletes was made easier through extended observation. Dr. Rollins’ office is directly connected to the academic center, through which a constant stream of student-athletes move throughout the day. Dr. Rollins’ open door policy means that she invites interaction with students on a continual basis. Her role as “mom” stems from her personal caring for the student-athletes. Students will remember two things about her after they graduate according to the academic director – she is “very serious about academics and she cares a lot about student-athletes.” Dr. Rollins’ caring for students can take the form of motherly “fussing” and “yelling” at them as well as a “business meaning look” that she used to receive from her own mother. Her mien reminds the athletes’ of their own mothers’ discipline arising “from a loving place.” Talking to them as if “they were my own son or daughter” demonstrates the compassion she feels is necessary to succeed at assisting student-athletes. Her experience is that her methods do make a difference and “they appreciate
it.” Allison, an athlete from one of the minor sport teams, confirms this conclusion. “I can go whine to her like she is my mom on campus. ...I keep her in the loop about everything.”

Naturally, it would be anticipated that Dr. Rollins would have a central role in the academic success of the organization as that is the sole responsibility of her work. Credit for the high graduation rate and numbers of honor students is given to her by administrators, coaches, and students. The credit given to her is not related solely to her professional role however. Her energy and passion for the work as well as her caring attitude for all student-athletes are the reasons she not only knows and call every athlete by name, but is familiar with both their personal and academic lives. Coaches and athletes remain amazed by these traits, but the athletes are moved especially. Sanaa, an athlete on a major sport team explained that:

... she knows everybody and by name. Football, track—she knows everybody. She knows if I am struggling in a psychology class. Out of every body, how does she know that? It surprised me when I got here.

“Passionate,” “outstanding,” and “serious about academics” are all terms used more than once by other members of the organization to portray Dr. Rollins and her orientation to her work. Mentioned much more frequently by organizational members as making a difference in student success than other administrators, the nature of her work lends itself to more student interaction and direct impact on academics than the other administrators. However, clearly she creates significant opportunity for interaction and seems to make the most of these opportunities. Ultimately she sees her work as “ministry, where I do my work to help other people meet and reach their goal or potential.” Not a coach or having a coaching background, she still recognizes that it is important to make a connection between academics and athletics to engage the student-athlete in her educational mission. As she was observed telling one student-athlete who was proudly exhibiting his improved grades, “this is my championship.”
Summary

Criteria for the selection of the administrators to participate in this case study were solely based on the potential for direct influence on the academics of student-athletes. The nature of their positions provides them with that potential, but decidedly they choose the level of intensity with which they approach their work. As a socializing influence for the SAU student-athletes, this group of administrators exhibit strong values regarding the educational responsibility of the department and as well as belief in the power of education and the overall priority of success off the field as opposed to merely on it. Although the reality of the importance of on-the-field success is admitted by Ms. Bennett, the administrative attitude is congruent in that their organization must be operated the “right way”, which means caring for academic success and personal well-being of the student-athlete as they develop into “productive citizens.”

The caring attitude is reflected in the belief, as the President described, in the “SAU athletics family.” Parental roles for the student-athletes are most apparent for these administrators as the four female athletic administrators serve as the compassionate but sometimes admonishing on campus mothers, while President Samuels represents an authoritative, supportive and teaching paternal presence. The caring and family atmosphere for student-athletes obviously begins at the top of the organization and is identified by the athletes as influential. Jimmy, a minor sport athlete, explained:

I like it because a lot of – like the athletic director and a lot of the people that have high names – they know you personally and they take the time to talk to you. Like Coach Gannon, I often see her and we always just speak and she asks me “how it’s going?” And it means a lot to me because it makes me think that people care about you. And when people care about you, you really want to impress them.

A congruence of the values, beliefs and attitudes toward caring and successful academics among the administrators is explicit and deliberate, evidenced by the selection and hiring of three
of those administrators by Ms. Bennett. As mentioned, two of them worked for years in coaching with Ms. Bennett prior to becoming administrators so the athletic director was completely confident in their views and actions toward academics and athletes. She knew that their values and beliefs matched hers. Dr. Rollins’ success at another institution in academic support was known by Ms. Bennett, who recruited the academic director for those reasons. Clearly, Ms. Bennett’s hiring strategies have significantly impacted and ensured the positive nature of the socializing influence of this group on student-athletes. And perhaps in this way has impacted the students and the program the most.

The Coaches

Fifteen varsity sports, seven men and eight women, comprise the athletic departments’ competitive teams. However, only nine head coaches lead the fifteen teams. Many NCAA track programs utilize the same coach for cross country, indoor track and outdoor track, and that is the scenario for both the men’s and women’s programs at SAU. Completing the explanation for the lower number of coaches versus teams is the fact that both men’s and women’s golf and tennis programs are led by one coach each.

SAU head coaches present a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds and range in time at their positions from almost thirty years to one. Only three of the nine predate Ms. Bennett’s tenure as athletic director, meaning that six had to navigate Ms. Bennett’s hiring process. Reflected in her view of the mission, she looks first for “the ability to win” when hiring a coach. But previous graduation rates from earlier coaching stints are reviewed as well and have to be explained by potential coaches when the numbers create questions about academic success. Coach Overby, one of the newer head coaches, recalls academics and graduation rates “being thrown out there first thing” during his initial interview with Ms. Bennett.
SAU’s basketball arena has an entry way filled with pictures of legendary teams and athletes from the past, especially in basketball, football and track. Recent athletic successes have been collected by women’s sports, who boast championships, coach of the year awards and major improvements for multiple teams. Administrators and coaches brag about those accomplishments, but the teams they know that must win are the major sports. Significant differences are palpable regarding the pressures on the “major sport” coaches versus the “Olympic” sport coaches.

NCAA Division I sports are typically divided into two categories. Football and men’s basketball are referred to as major or revenue sports. All others are referred to as Olympic, minor, or non-revenue sports. Ms. Bennett uses the same classifications when discussing the significant expectation differential for the major sports versus the Olympic sports:

If you are a coach of one of the major sports and you graduate everyone and don’t win some games, you are not going to have a job. And that’s the truth, I tell them that. And that’s probably going to remain the truth in major sports. In our minor sports, you graduate everybody and keep your kids clean – get them all doing all sorts of public works stuff. Cause if you do that, we’re probably not going to pay that much attention that you don’t win a tennis match ever.

Coach Ward, a major sport coach, confirmed that Ms. Bennett had in fact addressed him concerning the added performance pressures:

…Miss Bennett has made it clear the engine that has to run this train is football and men's basketball. So there is definitely a different pressure before the football coach and the men's basketball coach versus the rest of the department. It's nothing against them. It is what it is.

Pressure to win comes from unexpected sources and impacts campus comprehensively according to another major sport coach:
Football is the bell tower here. If football is successful, then everyone will be successful because then there will be more money. And that is a lot of pressure on me. I even had the chief of police tell me-"coach, when you win in football-we don't have any problems on campus." When we lose, we have all kinds of problems on campus with our students. If we win in football, enrollment goes up for the University.

Olympic sport coaches recognize the added expectations for those sports and understand that additional resources are directed to them for those reasons. Coach Overby commented that "football and basketball are king here and as well they should be." Given the obvious differences in the missions of major versus Olympic sports at SAU, it is necessary to explore any similarities or contrasts in coaching values, beliefs or attitudes regarding academics based on that grouping.

Major Sports

Coach Ross. Holding a variety of assistant coaching positions for over thirty years in major Division I programs, SAU is Coach Ross’s first head coaching job and first job at the football championship division level. Attracting him to SAU was the “great opportunity to restore a program” that had a “history of winning.” Asking what he sees are his job duties elicited strong opinions regarding the “hypocrisy” of the NCAA. The problem for Coach Ross lies in the “system’s” extreme emphasis on winning but lack of reward for academic success of his players. Citing Duke as an example, he highlights their excellent graduation rate for his major sport but high turnover in head coaches because of the failure to win on the field. Tenure for head coaches is the answer as far as he is concerned. Tenure would protect him from getting fired and he can recruit players who are “academically sound.” He surmises his role to be either focused on the athlete or the student and the pressure to win accounts for making some very difficult decisions regarding his players’ campus life and direction. “A very delicate balance” arises, but “bottom line, end of the day – you really have to realize that they are students.”
The mission for the department, according to Coach Ross, involves hiring “good people,” who will keep the “student-athlete’s interests at heart.” Hiring “good people” means coaches, assistant coaches and administrators who will focus on the student opposed to winning and just the athlete. Mission for the program goes back to navigating the balance between “on the field” and “off the field” prioritizing. Coach Ross speculates that most major sport programs have a “90% concern for on-the-field success,” while his is “opposite.” “We are 51% concern for off-the-field first and that is what my whole doctrine is.” Off-the-field success does not just include academics, but involves:

Discipline, the way you dress, the way you look, the way you talk to people, the way you speak, the way you communicate with people, work ethics. All those things will help you be successful on the field.

James from his team confirmed that Coach Ross “talks about success off-the-field a lot” and “pounds education in our face.” Possibly the ultimate compliment comes from Dr. Rollins, who praises Coach Ross as probably the most supportive coach when it comes to her work in the academic center:

... in particular—he is the only guy—I love him, he does it right. He knows and appreciates everything that my staff, you know what ever we do. He is very, very supportive of anything that I send to him. Any action that he needs to take, he is on it. He appreciates every single detail about academics. And any chance he gets... an opportunity to speak about the academic success of our student-athletes in football, he does it.

“Ain’t no difference between a parent and a coach...difference is I got 90 kids.” Coach Ross voiced the strongest opinions of any coach or administrator regarding his role as a parent to his players. Providing parental guidance, support and love to his athletes is not just a responsibility thrust upon him because of his position, but a necessary choice made by individual coaches to respond to the social and emotional needs of “young people.” “If a head coach
doesn't have that mentality, then he isn't a good head coach.” Coach Ross indicated that the role of parent/coach has impacted his personal life:

Right now, I got ninety children in camp. Some of them are 22, some are 18. They are all my sons. That is the way I look at it. Their parents brought them here and dropped them off, then they become my responsibility. So we only had one child, because my wife made me realize I don't have time to raise a lot of kids. I am raising these guys. Strongly denoting that choosing to be a parent to his players is elective, he still acknowledges that the nature of head coaching today pressures coaches in to being responsible for their athletes 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

I am responsible. I am accountable. In college ... today, all of us live in a glass house—you better understand that. When all those kids go out drinking..., it comes back on the head coach. If my name is written across your forehead and everything you do reflects on me—then you better think of me as your father. We are parents.

Both administrators and coaches at SAU concede the additional pressures on Coach Ross to win because of the high profile sport he coaches. Coach Ross accepts the possible reality of being fired for not winning. Facing those external pressures, off-the-field success is his clear mantra with academics being a key component. For Coach Ross, parenting his athletes provides the care and support needed to make it in the classroom and in life.

Coach Ward. Similar to Coach Ross, Coach Ward came to SAU to rebuild a program that “had a lot of tradition” but had “hit rock bottom.” Contrary to Coach Ross, he had been a head coach at the Division I level for several years and had achieved much success. Coach Ward’s move to SAU was further explained as an opportunity to coach in a higher level conference that received more attention than his previous one.
He knows that he has to win and sees his “primary responsibility is to build a program” and “to take it to a championship level type program.” Part of building the program includes graduating “our players to the best of my ability.” Ultimately the goal is for the championship program to be viewed as one with “integrity” and as a “positive entity.” Changing the “culture of the program” has been a related job priority for Coach Ward in accomplishing his championship vision. A “loser’s mentality” was present upon his arrival and he has “struggled” to change the “mindset” to a “winner’s mentality” but feels as if he is making progress with fans, coaches, and players. Recruiting and what type of person to recruit has become a principal component of the culture change that Coach Ward seeks:

I am stuck on kids with character, who want to get an education. That's the big step in being successful because if you want an education, then half my battle is won. I don't have to sell you something that you don't really want. Some guys come to college and not really wanting in education. They want an opportunity to play basketball.

Thomas, a freshman, serves as a shining example of this approach, according to Coach Ward. Thomas had a 4.0 grade point average in high school and was recruited by Ivy League institutions and is an excellent player. Players like him will be the key to accomplishing the mission for the program, which Coach Ward sums up for all Division I major sport coaches as – “Graduate your players. Run a clean program. Win some games and try to do it with integrity.”

Family is not an organizational theme inherent in conversation with Coach Ward. Coach Ward’s two players interviewed for this study were definitive about the organization as family, but did not refer specifically to their head coach. The coach describes his interactions among the staff to be “very professional” and having “great working relationships”. Professionalism seems to be his approach toward his players also. Strong commitment to developing his athletes as professionals outside athletics characterize his coaching philosophy – “I am not trying to be your buddy. I am not trying to be your best friend. I am trying to be your coach. Somebody who is
going to help you develop into whomever you are trying to be.” Coach Ward describes himself as very “image-conscious” and wants his “young people to be looked upon in the right way and as student leaders.” Reflecting his focus on professionalism is the team policy prohibiting braids:

Nothing against braids or anything like that. I'm trying to have an image that is viewed so that our kids are viewed in a light that a Fortune 500 company likes a guy – he won't initially be turned off by his appearance. If he is academically sound then I want him to be able to get in that door and not have something as trivial as how he appears holding him back. And I tell my guys all the time, "you know, I am not letting you not wear braids because I have something against braids, I am just trying to help you understand that sometimes where you want to go, you have to do certain things to get there."

Development of his players does not just rely on policy. Understanding individuals and “what makes them tick” is “incumbent upon” Coach Ward in the teaching and motivational role he has as a coach:

Some guys, if I raise my voice I scare the crap out of them. I can't get nothing out of them. Some guys, if I don't raise my voice I can’t get nothing out of them. So it's incumbent upon me to find out which method I need to utilize

Pressure to win is something that Coach Ward recognizes as a major sport coach and has dealt with throughout his career. His job depends on it. However, he has not abandoned an emphasis on academics and in fact sees having academically-oriented players as a potential key to on-the-court success. An array of internal team policies (to be examined in following chapters) regarding academic monitoring and adherence also corroborate his stated recruiting philosophy and program mission. Coach Ward does not adhere to the same family metaphor or relates
caring values held and displayed by the majority of participants concerning SAU athletics. But, he admires and respects wholeheartedly his administrators and fellow coaches from a professional standpoint and certainly demonstrates his concern for the success of his athletes off the court and in their future post-SAU lives.

Olympic Sports

Coach Davis’s Olympic Sport team won their conference championship last year after rebuilding a dismal program that “did not win a conference game for twenty years.” Noting the differences between the need to win for major and Olympic Sports, Coach Bennett jokingly highlighted this achievement. “In the end, no one gives a damn other than me and (Coach Davis) that (her team) won a championship.” Coach Bennett reported that “to be fair,” Coach Ross was “proud of her” and Coach Ward bragged on Coach Davis’s championship as well. Differences in mission for the Olympic teams are clearly apparent in the organization.

Also notable are differences in academic success for women versus men athletes. The latest NCAA national statistics reveal the well-documented differences. Women athletes graduate at a 16% higher rate than men (2008 NCAA Division I Federal Graduation Data, n.d.). At SAU, the difference is 13%. Noted by several SAU coaches, a competition for the highest team GPA on campus is always vied for by women’s teams. The achievement differences signify a need to group the coaches by gender of team as the Olympic Sport coaches’ values, beliefs and attitudes regarding academics are explored. Coaches Davis, Sumter, Haskins and Mabel lead women’s teams. Coaches Elam and Overby coach both the men and women in smaller programs. Coach Holt is the only coach to head just a men’s team in SAU Olympic sports.

Coach Davis. The job at SAU was “taking a couple of steps forward.” She spent 10 years as a head coach at a previous institution, but was looking for an opportunity to progress at
another level and SAU provided that. Like Coaches Ross and Ward, she faced a rebuilding situation after a dismal competitive history and has had success with transforming the program.

Coach Davis describes her personality within the organization as both “dominant” and “very competitive.” Competitively she wants to win athletically and academically. She pushes her players to strive for a team GPA over a 3.0 and to earn the highest overall GPA for the department. Confirming this self-description is Ms. Gannon, who commented that Coach Davis’s program is “tight knit” perhaps as a result of having a “little military type something in her.” Reflecting how she sees her role as coach is the coaching “philosophy” outlined in the team manual distributed at the beginning of each season:

...our job is to provide you with an environment that yields opportunity for success, providing the tools for success places the end responsibility on each individual athlete to maximize their ability. To participate in intercollegiate athletics is a privilege, we hope you will respect and enjoy.

High expectations are placed upon the students and the program by Coach Davis.

“Graduating athletes” is the mission she believes has evolved for the organization over the last five years. Upon first arriving, winning seemed to take more of a priority. Coach Davis believes that it should be “academics first and then athletics,” but also laments a lack of organizational concern about winning on the field. “We’ve gotten away from sports being..., winning being a top priority.” Athletics could provide additional benefits to SAU, but are not realized because of the prioritizing of academics and not on-the-field success according to Coach Davis:

This is an academic university. But we’re kind of trying to change our mindset, athletics can actually help you gain more enrollment if you allow, but the University is like we’re going to stick to the academic way and they really haven’t bought in to the fact that athletics can do more. We’re behind as far as athletics as marketing-it’s always academics first never athletics first. Anything that you can think of that would enhance the University, it’s always academics first. It’s never athletics first.
Coach Davis, uniquely from the other administrators and coaches, explores environmental factors as shaping the organizational mission. Her experience with SAU's athletic conference is different than at her previous institution regarding strict monitoring and evaluation of academic standards:

I just think it's a lot harder to be relaxed. We can't be relaxed because of the conference we're in. So it makes a difference, and makes us stay sharper and graduate our kids on time. We cannot get away with... graduation rate is something they would put on a website or something. We have to stay on top of our game.

Because of budgetary issues, she observes that a focus on winning is starting to emerge. Especially for the major sport programs, as their success is tied to additional revenues for the institution. Mission for her own team is detailed in the player’s manual, received by each athlete and reviewed at the beginning of each season:

Mission of the ... program is consistent with the purpose of South Atlantic University, which is to provide an intellectual setting, in which student-athletes may find a sense of identification, belonging, responsibility and achievement. The setting will prove beneficial to the student-athlete, and will prepare the individual for lifetime experiences.

The stated team mission centers on the theme of off-the-field success and developing productive citizens, but stated team goals reflect Coach Davis’s competitive desires to win on the field. The primary goals are athletic. The sole academic goal seeks the team GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Family arose as a discussion point when comparing SAU to her previous institution, another HBCU. Both organizations are seen by participants as families, but with different structures and intensities. Family at the preceding institution was characterized by affectionate terms like: loving, caring, camaraderie, close knit. Relationships at SAU however are professional. "Here you've got work to do. It's about business. You have responsibilities. You do
your job and you go home.” SAU is still family however, but the level of “camaraderie” and depth of relationship has changed.

Here it's more like a family, but the long-lost brother. You know it's your brother you love them, but I might not see you for a couple of years. But you know, if you need me, you know I'm here. That's how it is here.

Coach Davis’s team academic policies definitively indicate her serious attitude concerning her players and their academic success, as will be discussed later. The belief in graduating athletes is there and congruent with others in the organization, but her priority and intense belief in athletics and views on the mission of winning differentiates her from many of her peers. She is unique in noting that the mission is shaped extrinsically and not intrinsically. Driving her program towards academic success is her own intrinsic value and her athletic-based need to compete and win.

*Coach Haskins.* A long tenured coach at SAU, Coach Haskins had excellent ties to the institution, which is what helped her gain the position. Former coaches and alumni influenced her to apply and accept the position. “Everything” is how she jokingly describes her duties and responsibilities as a coach here. Coach Haskins has been “doing a whole lot to rebuild the program” over the years and has been challenged by a lack of personnel resources and resulting “paperwork” obligations. Her time would be better spent recruiting, “making home visits” and “really putting myself out there.”

Student-athletes are the focus of the organizational mission from Coach Haskins’s perspective. SAU athletics is “headed in that direction to make sure our student-athletes get the most out of their college experience academically and athletically.” The previous coach for her program emphasized that “all of his athletes graduate” and continuing to graduate all of her
athletes is continuing the "legacy" of the program. "If you stay in this program, you are going to graduate out of our program."

Like Coach Ward, family was not an organizational concept mentioned by Coach Haskins. Peer relationships are "friendly," however she is "private" and a "serious" person. Seriousness applies to her coaching athletes as well as she describes herself as "really hard, but she builds "long lasting relationships" through "having fun" and "fellowship" off the field. "Fellowship" denotes the influence of Coach Haskins's religious beliefs, which she pronounces as assisting in her in getting her through the "challenges" of the work. "...I love the Lord and they know that. I am not ashamed of that."

Characterized by seriousness and professionalism on the field and about their roles and relationships, Coaches Davis and Haskins are similar in philosophy and style. Family is not a strong metaphor for them, but deep concern for academic success of their athletes is still present. Critical for Coach Haskins is the feeling of obligation and responsibility to the "legacy" of a former coach.

**Coach Sumter.** The head coach position at SAU is the first for Coach Sumter, after stints at two other Division I programs as an assistant. Grateful for the opportunity, she has strong ties to the administrators here. Coach Sumter played for Ms. Bennett, Ms. Morris, and Ms. Gannon and later coached briefly with Ms. Gannon. Rebuilding a program has also been the task for Coach Sumter and her team has made significant athletic accomplishment in a relatively short time period. Ms. Gannon observes that Coach Sumter's players are close to her in part because of her youth and energy.

The major sport pressure to win is not present for Coach Sumter and that shapes her role and responsibilities. "I don't necessarily have something over my head as far as the number of
games I am supposed to win every year.” Recruiting and graduating her athletes top her list along with community relations and developing game and daily schedules for her program. She is a “big detail and organization person” as she implies a controlling nature. Being responsible for the daily plan “is something that I won’t let go of.”

The feeling and idea of family comes up almost immediately with Coach Sumter; her program seems to have the strongest connection to the organization as family concept among the nine athletic programs. Conversation becomes emotional and passionate for Sumter as the organizational mission revolves around the family environment:

Everybody talks about a family atmosphere. That is something that every school wants to sell and tries to sell, but that has been the truest thing about this department. For me, it has been a unique situation. I came here excited about what I saw, what looked like a family environment. I came here and lived it as a student-athlete, and now I have come back professionally and see that it is still fostered here. So now the coaches that I played for, they are my mentors. The athletic director, who is my boss, was my head coach. The SWA was my assistant coach. The compliance director was my assistant coach when I played. We are talking—a true family. On the women's basketball side, it is hands down a family environment for me.

The family mission becomes visible in the presence and compassionate support of her mentor/administrators. Kind words are expressed to coaches and athletes after wins and losses next to the locker room and hugs are doled out to players “in the cafeteria or going to class.” Her team’s mission “takes on the characteristics of the coach.” She expects organization, initiative and motivation from her assistants. Even at a 6:30 am practice, Coach Sumter is “excited and motivated” and expects “everyone else to be that way.” “I just kind of create the environment that I want.”

Coach Sumter links the idea of family to her peer coaches, in addition to the administrators and overall organization. Family environment and peer coaches are swayed by physical location of offices according to Coach Sumter. Five of the nine programs, including
Coach Sumter’s are housed in the same corridor, while the other four are individually placed in other locations on campus. “Pretty much family” and “a more casual environment” describes this set of coaching offices compared to the administrative offices because of the “hustle and bustle” in that area according to Coach Sumter. In-depth and personal conversations are commonplace as she is “not just going to sit at my desk and then leave.” But there are events that bring the entire organization as a family together:

This past year, it has been labeled as the triple play weekend. We have a softball game going on, a track meet, and then the football spring game. We had a lot of people here. Everybody tries to get recruits to campus that weekend. It is just a good day to come out and see all of the sports. A lot of the fans come. The band is playing. It is that family atmosphere. It is just our day to really thank the student-athletes.

A significant part of the family atmosphere for Coach Sumter is familial roles played by the four athletic administrators. Student-athletes are viewed “as their own children” and “they are not afraid to tell them the same thing that they tell to their children.” Administrators are “viewed as moms to probably all of the student-athletes” and as a result if student-athletes “walk into one of the administrators’ office, they are going to make time for them.”

In comparison to Coach Davis and Haskins, Coach Sumter firmly believes in a mission of graduating athletes and exploration of her policies and conversations with her players confirm her commitment to academics. The feeling of family is where she differs to some degree from all four previously discussed coaches. Coach Sumter’s team is part of the family along with her peers and the organization. This program revealed the strongest evidence and declarations of a family type group within SAU athletics. An assistant coach for Coach Sumter observed it to be a “true sisterhood.”

*Coach Mabel.* “I have always been a coach.” Coach Mabel has coached at every NCAA level and in a variety of sports. Prior to taking the SAU job, she had “stepped out of coaching
for a little bit and was in administration.” She still had the coaching “bug,” and chose to accept the “challenge” of rebuilding the program. Coach Mabel faced an “uphill climb” in the beginning, but sees organizational support as a key to the progress she has seen. The program is “moving in the right direction.”

Like Coach Haskins, Coach Mabel is frustrated by the amount of administration and paperwork required. Components of administration include “equipment, travel, budget – all those little things that happen behind the scenes and very little of it has to do with coaching. Her time spent with athletes amounts to only 20 hours per week. Recruiting is also a significant time consumer.

Concerning the organizational mission, Coach Mabel believes it “mirrors” President Samuels’ “Think, Work, Serve” mission. For athletics, the mission means focusing on academics and graduating athletes. Academics have been “stressed to us since I’ve been here and is probably why I’m staying here.” Grateful for the academic message emphasized at SAU, Coach Mabel understands that “academics has to be the biggest priority” and brought that philosophy with her to the institution. In some part, she attributes that to her experience as a teacher:

Because being a teacher, I always liked people being in the seats and helping people understand something and helping them learn and reaching them. As a result, I want my athletes to have that same experience.

The mission impacts recruiting in regards to bringing in students “who are here to get an education” and will succeed off the field as “contributors to society.” While focused on academics, Coach Mabel observes a significant correlation between good athletes and good students. First, she is “invested” in them as students because the outcome is a stable, consistent
program with four year athletes. Second, good students possess character traits that transfer to the field.

The other thing that I've learned after years of coaching is that the better they are in the classroom, the better they are on the field. They actually carry that work ethic, that pride-they carry that with them onto the field. And it is very interesting, because they have an "I care" attitude when they are being successful in one area, they want to be successful in the other. Very rarely have I found an athlete who does well in the classroom and doesn't care when they are on the field.

Other coaches highlighted the importance of academics to keep their athletes on the field, but Coach Mabel exclusively made the rational argument concerning the connection between good students and good players.

"Family oriented" is how Coach Mabel describes the atmosphere of the organization. This conclusion is based on widespread support of each other's academic and "on the field" goals. Department staff members are considered "friends" and facing challenges such as the current "budget crisis" helps create a "very unified group." Coach Mabel considers herself very "team oriented" and highlights that she uses the term "we" to refer to her program because they are a "collective group." The connectedness of the entire organization through mutual support and congruent academic message also leads her to use the term "we" when discussing the department. "When I say "we," it is the mission of our athletic department.

Her programs' GPA is "hovering around the 3.2 mark" and "to be honest with you, that is really not good enough for me." Nationally, the team's GPA ranks in the top 15% for its sport. As classes were getting ready to start, Coach Mabel's administrative work clearly revealed a commitment, enthusiasm and expectation for academic success. Her excel spreadsheet details the class schedule for each player and timing for conditioning; practices and meetings for the semester are planned out to accommodate the student-athlete, sometimes even resulting in teammates not working out or practicing together.
Coach Overby. “I always knew I wanted to Coach.” Coach Overby found himself looking for a college coaching career after working in his sport as a teaching professional for several years. Having a great collegiate athletic experience and loving the “college atmosphere” drew him to the position at SAU. He was well aware of the SAU athletic legacy from being a native of the area and playing against SAU as a collegian. His sport had seen some success at SAU, but on his arrival he found it lacking especially in the area of recruiting. Immediate goals are to bring in solid students who are also good players.

Because his program is not a major one and is not a “money making sport,” Coach Overby sees his primary responsibility as bringing in “quality students that stay here and represent the University in a certain way and make the grades and stay eligible and graduate.” That “realistic” conclusion does not preclude a competitive desire to win. “Winning is important and you want to win.” However, he understands the level of pressure to win for him is substantially less than the major programs and his job “is not dictated or predicated by us winning the conference championship.”

The mission for the department is graduating students according to Coach Overby, but it is partnered with the goal of “winning.” The major programs at SAU have a history of winning and Coach Overby recognized that emphasis before his arrival. The academic focus of the department did “surprise” him. He “found it opposite of what he thought it might have been.” Cited as evidence is the large difference in graduation rates between athletes and non-athletes at SAU, “skewed greatly in athletics favor.” “Student-athletes stay here and graduate.” Across the board, Coach Overby observes all SAU coaches stressing academics, partially motivating him to “make sure that we have the highest GPA.”
Familial terms are not used by Coach Overby to describe the organization, but the working atmosphere is “extremely comfortable.” “I felt like from day one, like I had been here three or four years.” His relationship with his student-athletes is “almost too good, sometimes.” The level of friendship creates a level of trust that crosses boundaries for Coach Overby sometimes as far as athletes confiding in him. “I am your friend, but also your coach and I don’t want to hear everything y’all say or think.”

Relatively new to collegiate coaching and “not caring about his grades” in college, nevertheless Coach Overby appears well adjusted in his role and the organization including what he sees as the central mission of graduating athletes. While not described in family terminology, in-depth and supportive relationships are clearly present for Coach Overby.

Coach Elam. Coach Elam is proud to have been involved in coaching “six or seven sports” over his lengthy collegiate career. He followed family members to SAU and is one of the longest tenured coaches here. Vociferously and enthusiastically, he declares his job is about education and developing good citizens rather than athletic accomplishments. Descriptive language about his role reflects his enthusiasm:

My job, the way I see it, is to take and mold young men and women not just in athletics—mold them to be better young men and women then what they were when they came to me....So my pet peeve is to graduate every single athlete that passes through my program. ...Stay with me for four years, and we will graduate you.... My kids are pretty fearful of me about education, because you can break a leg or arm or what have you but you cannot break an education. I preach that. Everybody knows that. When you come here, Coach Elam is going to be serious and he is going to love you and he is going to respect you. But he is going to be hard on you about education...it would be a disservice to the University, to the students, to the parents and to myself if I didn't give them my all academically.

The fear he creates concerning education is based on a number of strict punishments for educational missteps such as missing class. Not just words apparently, Ms. Gannon confirms
Coach Elam’s self-assessment by saying that he is “one of the toughest coaches that we have,” but further asserts that the students emerge from the program as future leaders.

Like several others in the department, Coach Elam identifies the organizational mission as “two fold.” Being “the best we can be athletically and academically,” while recognizing that the major sports are “dependent on winning and losing.” “Preparation and training” are the keys to accomplishing both. Education is emphasized within the organization. “That is what everybody is about…. We take pride in what we do academically here.” Seeing players graduate is “when I can stick my chest out.”

“This is family… everything we do is family.” Coach Elam clearly views his program as reflecting family structure and behaviors. While other staff members have utilized the concept of family to describe the caring and supportive relationships of their program or the organization, family in this instance refers to the ability to accept and learn from the tough love of the Coach. “Embarrassment is motivation. …I am the best at good embarrassment.” “[The student-athletes] will say that coach will give you a Mike Tyson punch and hug you in the same breath.”

The tough love of Coach Elam within this team family delineates him as an authoritative parental figure and coaches as parents are perceived as something special. “As coaches, we have an honor… the student-athlete really has an extra parent with them for those four years in school.” More than faculty or administrators, coaches are placed in the role because of the time involved and depth of the coach-student-athlete relationship. The relationship is recognized as well by some of the student-athletes’ parents, who according to Coach Elam have said: “I am wondering whether I am the parent or you are the parent.”

Strict policies and rhetoric regarding academics characterize this program and Coach Elam’s leadership of the team. A “two fold” mission is proclaimed, but on the field success has
been very limited. Ms. Bennett used this program as an example of the difference between minor sports and major ones, where not winning a game will not garner her attention as long as “you graduate everybody and keep your kids clean.”

Coach Holt. Extensive background as an athlete, official and youth coach combined with familial relationships at SAU led Coach Holt here for his first collegiate head coaching job several years ago. He feels very fortunate to be in this position and observes that it was “strictly by the grace of God that I received the job.” “I love what I do. ...I love coming to work each day.” His role as a coach is “developmental” in regards to guiding and teaching his athletes to be “better people.” His sport “just happens to be the vehicle to be able to do that.” His coaching abilities lead to developing “good” athletes, but he is more interested in developing “great” men.

Developing athletes in terms of helping to “build lives” is discerned as the mission for the organization as well. The prominence of athletics and visibility at the institution give the organization the power and resources to achieve the mission. “It (athletics) is the front porch of the University.... It is what people see.... It is curb appeal.” Coaches and administrators support this mission as “we have a lot of coaches who care” and he is “happy with the administration” overall in regard to pursuing the mission. Academics are a critical component of the development mission and he emphasizes to his athletes that they are “student hyphen athletes and not student comma athletes first.” Meaning that unlike other coaches (e.g., Coach Elam) who emphasize that the “student” is first in the term “student-athlete” and is therefore the priority, Coach Holt believes the two terms are connected. Student-athletes have a personal responsibility to make the grades in order to compete athletically. “Juggling life skills” is how Coach Holt encapsulates it, leading back to his goal of developing men overall.
Coach Holt does not specifically define his role as parental, but certainly his outlook on developing his athletes can be seen as a parental view. "Truly a family atmosphere" is how he describes the relationship amongst his peers and administrators. He largely attributes the creation of this atmosphere to Ms. Bennett. Ms. Bennett role models the characteristics of this family type atmosphere including: "rooting" for each other, "genuine" communication that sometimes involves disagreements, and ultimately sacrificing personal interests for "what is best for this university."

Developing "productive citizens" is the primary goal and value for Coach Holt's program. Academics are a component, but "image" is the principal concern he has for his athletes. Image is about character and behavior. "When you carry yourself in a positive way with integrity and character, people notice." Ms. Bennett highlighted Coach Holt for the way his program distinguishes itself with a community service perspective.

Summary

SAU coaches are overseeing programs that are experiencing truly exceptional graduation statistics. All but one sport have above average graduation rates and six programs graduated all of the athletes who entered the school from 1998 – 2001. Graduation is an outcome for the coaches, but not the principal sum of their view of their role and the organizational mission. Six of the nine were attracted to SAU because of the challenge of "rebuilding" a program. Rebuilding referred strictly to wins and losses. Potential for athletic accomplishment brought them here. Envisioning their role as guiding winning programs, the mission was most often recognized as enhancing student well-being either through academics and or developing character. Graduating athletes is accepted and embraced by most as the critical product of the
academic mission. Major or minor sport, the competitive drive for on and off the field success is clearly evident.

Organization as family is not a consensus among the coaches although most consider some part of the organization to operate or feel like family. Coaches Ross and Elam definitively consider themselves father figures to their student-athletes. In loco parentis for them means monitoring behavior and doling out punishment when required, compassionate advice giving, and ultimately feeling responsibility for their non-athletic development accomplishments. Coaches Sumter, Davis, Mabel, and Holt observed themselves to be part of a larger organizational family that engages in impassioned support for each other with a common goal of success for the entire organization and well-being of students. The remaining coaches did not specifically mention family, but bragged about the professional support of the organization and acknowledged their significant commitment to their athletes as people, rather than just competitors.

Are the SAU coaches congruent in their values, beliefs and attitudes concerning the importance of academics and graduation? Positively. Discussions revealed a deep concern for the lives of students and a belief that life success will be greatly enhanced through the decisive academic achievement of graduation. Compelling as well is the notion that the motivation to win on the field is not a value or attitude that necessarily has to be sacrificed for academics. Many of the programs are succeeding in both and the value of winning applies to both athletics and academics for most of the coaches.

The Students

Student participants represented a variety of backgrounds and status within the institution. A mix of freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors combined with transfer students
and recent graduates provided insight into the level of socialization and commitment to the organization at all points of matriculation. SAU student-athletes defied the “dumb jock” stereotype by all accounts and revealed an amazingly congruent message about their commitment to academics as well as the organization. Like the coaches and administrators, their views concerning the organizational culture are discerned through perceptions of the mission and potential family atmosphere. Starting with the major sports is necessary again as the potential for different experiences is ever present, given the acknowledged pressure to win games.

**Major Sports**

*James and Tyler.* James and Tyler compete for Coach Ross: James as a sophomore, while Tyler about to finish his last season and graduate in the spring. SAU was selected as their school for both academic and athletic reasons. James recognized it as a top HBCU academically and the athletic program had a history of sending its participants to the professional ranks. Academics prevented him from receiving offers from higher-level athletic institutions. James retains a GPA of 3.0, reflecting a successful academic first year. Tyler cites the potential to win and interest in one of the reputable academic disciplines at SAU for his selection. The attraction of a full scholarship was “a big plus.” Administrators and coaches brag about the academic success of Tyler during his time at SAU.

Being a student-athlete at SAU is “like being a student-athlete anywhere,” according to Tyler. “Everybody kind of knows who you are and you are a role model on campus.” James echoed Tyler’s sentiments and finds the responsibility of being a role model inspirational. “I want to keep playing a positive role, cause once you do something negative then a person will take your name and just run it through the mud and make you look as bad as you can.” Being a positive role model “makes you feel good as a person.”
Organizational mission centers on academics for both. James submits President Samuels’ theme of “think, work and serve” initially and then largely focuses on his Coach’s role and message on education:

...our coach, he protects us on and off the field. He is always pounding education in our face. It’s education, education, education then [the sport]. ... He says that we are student-athletes, not athlete-students. You know what I’m saying, because education will always be number one here at this school.

Tyler reiterates the depth of reinforcement concerning academic mission from Coach Ross:

Coach Web does a great job of making sure we take care of everything having to do with academics. The highest punishment we can get comes from not taking care of stuff academically- extra hours of study hall... He reminds us all of the time of taking care of business in the classroom. Go to class. So he has helped us a lot. Pushing the team, all the athletes. Go to class and take care of business.

Coach Ross’s stated commitment to “success off the field” is an inculcated message that Tyler and James have received.

“Brothers” and “brotherhood” are family concepts applied to both teammates and the larger organization. The intensity of the sport creates a bond between teammates according to James leading to a familial outcome- “you become like brothers... it’s a brotherhood.” Tyler offers a behavioral example of the team as brothers: “For instance today, you beat each other up and then we went to the big swimming pool. Gave us a little time to relax and have fun and throw each other around the pool. Just like brothers would.” James observes family relationships at the department staff level as well. Administrators and coaches behave as “brothers and sisters around here.” In this context, brothers and sisters meant “showing a lot of love, hugging everyone.” Family means caring relationships for Tyler and James at the team and staff levels.

Diverse in matriculation and academic status, Tyler and James expressed completely similar views on the mission and family culture of their organization. Coach Ross has played a critical role in instilling the value of education to his two athletes, while they feel surrounded by
concerned and compassionate individuals from each of the influential groups explored in this study.

*Thomas and Keith.* Thomas and Keith are freshmen, new to Coach Ward’s program and new to the institution. Critical differences for their experiences and subsequent perspectives are Thomas’s standing as a full scholarship athlete and Keith’s position as a walk-on player. Both athletes have the same academic and athletic requirements made of them, but only Thomas is eligible for the department’s academic support services.

Scholarship status created obvious divergence in why the two students chose SAU. Thomas came here with belief in being immediately able to play as a freshman and a connection to Coach Ward and his assistant coaches. “I just wanted to play for a school where the coaches liked me and believed in me.” Keith came here “for the school” and not basketball. Making and staying on the team is not a guarantee, so the promise of a strong business program landed him at SAU.

“Life is good” so far at SAU for Thomas. The combination of playing his sport daily with going to class and all “for free” does “not get much better....” Keith is enjoying the “fun,” “freedom... and getting to do what you love to do at a high level.” He also recognizes the positives from having the “notoriety” of playing a major sport at SAU.

“Point blank, it is to win” is how Keith explains the department mission, but he quickly and strongly inserts the academic part of the mission. “They do encourage great academics,” because “there is also a life after sport.” A “winning mentality” is learned from the commitment and participation in the sport and that approach is applied to academics and then one’s career. Keith’s views appeared to be reflective of his learned experiences from sport in general rather than his recent and limited time at SAU. “See athletics really teaches you life lessons along with
the sport.” As a walk-on athlete, Keith has limited access to the academic services provided by Dr. Rollins and her staff. His perspective serves as a reminder that SAU’s athletes enter the organization having developed values and beliefs regarding sport and academics and in this case, a positive one.

“Academics come first,” according to Thomas. His view of the mission links field to classroom much like Coach Holt. Athletes have the responsibility to “do well in the classroom” so they can compete for the institution. A more intense involvement with the coaches from recruiting to his first months on campus provide more of a local socialized perspective. “…The coaches really stress about the classroom, all of the coaches.”

As freshmen, both players have adopted a family outlook within and outside of the immediate organization. Having initially felt “welcomed” at the school, Keith perceives the open and friendly atmosphere of the institution to be family-oriented. Thomas added that the appearance of tight knit relationships among all groups at the institution – students, faculty and staff – and likened it to “one big family.” “Everybody knows everybody. … They treat you like family.” This theme applies to Thomas’s view about his “athletic family” as well. Because there are connections amongst all staff, not just within teams, he talks to a variety of individuals including football and volleyball coaches and finds “everybody treats each other nicely and [with] respect.” Keith adds there is a “fun” aspect as well, where “everybody jokes around like brothers and sisters.”

On campus for only a short time, Thomas and Keith reflect organizational beliefs in the intercollegiate athletic mission of academics. Scholarship status differences expose the socialization impact of the coaches on Thomas as well as a more comprehensive view of mission and family from Keith whose connection to the culture remains on the edge.
Mary and Lara. Transfer students comprise the majority of athletes on Coach Davis’s team, so Mary and Lara are able to provide that perspective. Transferring as a junior, Mary is now a senior and in her second year at SAU. Like Keith, she felt “welcomed” here on her initial recruiting trip. Specifically, the administration and athletic academic support services staff gave her a sense of comfort. Academics had been a “big struggle” for Mary. She knew she had the athletic ability to compete “anywhere, … but to know that I had a really good support team academically is the main reason why I chose this school.” Lara is a transfer junior who has only been on campus and competing a short time. Her recruiting trip sold her on the institution as well. A combination of coaches emphasizing academics initially and meeting the academic services staff, who immediately provided her with an individualized academic plan, linked to her chief goal of academic success. Lara’s first two years of college had been very successful academically, differing from Mary, but they both arrived at SAU with the feeling for academic potential as the result of positive interactions with coaches and administrators.

Coach Davis’s emphasis on winning is reflected in the mission outlook for her two players. Mary reiterates two of Coach Davis’s top two goals – win the conference and compete well in the NCAA. As a number of coaches mentioned, part of the mission focuses on being a positive role model and projecting an appropriate image. “Carrying yourself right” is critical as “everybody is watching us.” Lara repeats the win the conference goal, but adds that “they always want us to graduate … and do good outside our sport.” Her coaches were responsible for emphasizing both – win and graduate.

A year’s additional experience gives Mary more obvious depth to her relationships in the organization and subsequently deeper feelings of family. “Ms. Gannon – that is like my mom
right there.” While other administrators, Ms. Morris and Ms. Bennett, “just feel like family to me, because I do not have my family out here.” These administrators play familial roles in that they are very accessible, open to discussing personal issues, and take care of her when she is having academic or individual challenges. Mary observes the family culture at SAU to be genuine and differentiated from other institutions she visited:

Sometimes people can sell you it on a recruiting trip, but since I have been here- it has been like that (family oriented). Everything that they said on my recruiting trip, it's official. They don't play games. They keep it real and that is how I wanted it.

Team coaches serve in parental roles as well. Coach Davis is a father figure to her, while the assistant coach is her mother. Those roles are based on the level of strictness and dominance provided by Coach Davis, matching depictions discussed earlier, and the assistant coach’s level of “cool” and approachability. Peers on other teams represent “one big family” as they support each others’ athletic efforts by attending their games and cheering. Finally her roommate and teammate “acts as a sister in a sense” as they “motivate” each other academically and compete for the highest GPA. Constrained by her short time period on the team, the idea of the athletic department as family has not developed for Lara. However, she is “relaxed” around her teammates and observes friendships quickly emerging.

Coach Davis’s goals for her program are to win first. Her players reflect that notion, but also recognize an academic mission and appear to be drawn to the institution by the academic values conveyed by staff. A year’s time for Mary has given her a strong sense of family throughout the organization. As junior transfers, it appears both student-athletes are experiencing the same influences that engage positive academic values and feelings of family that matriculating freshmen experience.
Leigh and Sandra. Leigh and Sandra are recent graduates and provide a perspective of two athletes who competed and matriculated under the tutelage of Coach Haskins. Leigh arrived at SAU having wanted to attend an HBCU, but “not wanting to be too close to home.” She spent three years on the track team after initially participating full time in another sport. Sandra also wanted an HBCU experience and was influenced to come to SAU by the offer of an athletic scholarship. Both athletes were successful academically, graduating with cumulative GPAs over 3.0.

Both Leigh and Sandra enjoyed the “perks” of being a student-athlete. Athletes had an advantage over regular students socially with their campus lives structured to be “around different people all of the time.” It was “easier to make friends.” Difficulty emerged in the student-athlete life as well, with juggling practice, competition and academics. Sandra was forced to develop time management skills on her own that allowed her to engage in other campus organizations in addition to athletics.

Academics were clearly the mission during their experiences. Leigh emphasized that “they put that before the sport for us.” Strongly reinforcing the academic message to them were Coach Haskins and Dr. Rollins. Coach Haskins was “really strict on academics” as she wanted to see them “succeed.” Dr Rollins played a supportive role, “always being there for you” when it came to academics.

Leigh and Sandra referred to close relationships on campus and in athletics, but did not use a family metaphor to describe the organization. Close bonds were specifically developed with individual coaches and an administrator. Sandra compared her success to “it takes a village to raise a child.” Many individuals “had a hand in her finishing – “including coaches, parents and her spouse. Leigh recognizes that Coach Haskins did “care” about her and describes her Coach’s
personal style as “tough love.” Both athletes recognize Dr. Rollins for her encouragement and they acknowledge her as the only administrator with whom they developed a “bond.”

Distinctive to them was the “life coach” relationship that emerged with a coach outside of their team. Leigh and Sandra concede the importance of their association with Coach Holt. Ultimately he became a “friend and counselor” for both. “He has one of those personalities where you know that you are always welcome.”

Leigh graduated in five years “after changing my major several times.” Sandra graduated in four and one half years. The culminating academic outcome having been accomplished, they look back and can plainly recognize the academic message and support of the message provided by individuals within the organization. Those individuals represent the coaches and administrators with whom they had the closest relationships.

*Sanaa and Monica.* Monica and Sanaa identify their connection to Coach Sumter, other coaches, and teammates on their recruiting trips as reasons why they ended up at SAU. “A family oriented atmosphere” is what Monica observed prior to enrollment and “that was really important to her.” Sanaa transferred to SAU from a major Division I institution and attributes Coach Sumter and the elevated academic success of the team as the influential reasons. Positive traits for Coach Sumter assigned by Sanaa include being a “nice lady” and a “big disciplinarian.” Discipline and structure were program characteristics that Sanaa sought and believed would be instrumental in her athletic and academic efforts.

“Wins and A’s.” This is how Sanaa concisely summarizes her view of the dual mission of athletic and academic success. Expectations are high from coaches and administrators throughout the department for athletic competition and grades. “If you are getting [a scholarship] on the court, they are expecting you to win.” Monica concurs with the concept of
this dual mission and connects it to the “family” orientation that she observed prior to arriving on campus. “If you are family, then you have one common goal. That goal is getting wins and A’s.”

Like their Coach, these two student-athletes reiterate the theme of family within the organization more than any other set of student-athletes participating in the study. Monica having linked family orientation to her choosing to attend and the overall mission, Sanaa confirms this view after only a semester on campus. Both athletes assign specific familial roles for everyone in the department. Coach Sumter serves as their “mother.” Providing evidence for this depiction, Sanaa explains:

If she hasn't heard from you, she will check up on you like a mom. If I am leaving to go somewhere, like a mom she will tell me to call her when I get there, call her when I'm leaving again, call her when I get back on campus. It is just different... they check up on you like family. It keeps you on your toes. I wouldn't say that she talks to every single player every day, but she talks to a player every day.

Administrators serve as “aunts.” Football coaches who come over in the cafeteria and check on them are “uncles.” Sanaa refers to teammates as “sisters” and “everybody else on the other teams are my cousins.” For Sanaa, the family atmosphere makes it “just fun being here” and reduces any pressure placed on them to win games. “It feels like we have been doing this for so long that it is really nothing.”

On their first day back on campus after a summer off, the players hugged each other and “acted like they had not seen each other in years” as described by Monica. More than any other team, Coach Sumter’s and her players model and press the idea of family. Clearly an important concept to Coach Sumter and her players, the value is driven home by the three administrators who are closely tied to the team as former coaches: Ms. Bennett, Ms. Gannon, and Ms. Morris. Obviously significant to this family as well and so impeccably characterized by Sanaa, athletics and academics in the form of her quip: “wins and A’s.”
Brooke, Phyllis and Allison. Upperclassmen playing for Coach Mabel, these three student-athletes cited similar reasons for choosing to attend SAU. Opportunity to play at the Division I level was a draw as well as the academic reputation of programs in which they were interested. Allison and Phyllis are entering their final year as seniors, with Allison spending all four years at SAU and Phyllis having transferred here from a junior college. Brooke is beginning her junior year. The team GPA was the highest in the organization the previous year and all three athletes have contributed to that exceptional academic record.

Similar to several other athletes, Brooke perceives the organizational mission to be a combination of “succeeding on the field” and trying to “bring everybody up as far as [possible in their] academic standing.” She agrees with Thomas, connecting winning on the field to “getting it done in the classroom.” Allison and Brooke uniquely see the organizational mission being driven by the misconceptions that outsiders and majority institutions have of HBCUs. “Preconceived notions” about HBCUs and “battling constantly the reputation [that] there is crime and there is low graduation rates” push the administration to “provide student-athletes a nurturing environment” with the expectation that the athletes will “prepare for the real world and be responsible adults.” Phyllis explained the mission of the organization by contrasting it with her prior institution. Contrasted with being “on her own” at her first college, SAU provides the resources to “prepare us for the real world and at the same time helping us get things done that we need to get done.” In summary according to Phyllis, “the mission is to make us better people and get ready for the real world, bring our GPAs up and help us in any way they can.”

The supportive atmosphere provided by the department is the most significant perk to being an athlete at SAU according to all three athletes. “A big family” is how Phyllis explains the compassionate environment. Organizational family includes Ms. Bennett and President
Samuels who “know you when they see you.” Teammates are “sisters” for Brooke and Allison. These “sister” relationships take the form of “fighting like sisters,” but “defending each other” to persons outside the team. Feeling of family being present within the athletic organization, Allison is frustrated that it is opposite with non-student-athletes. The strong bonds of the athletic family however, do create a “negative side” where there is a detachment from the non-student-athletes.

Currently, Coach Mabel’s program is the most academically successful on campus in terms of GPA. Allison, Phyllis, and Brooke feel supported by the overall department in terms of relationships and resources in what they believe is a mission to achieve academically, graduate and have successful lives. Athletic family for them begins with their teammate “sisters” and rises to the level of the institution’s President.

*Michael and Angela.* Coach Overby primarily influenced Michael and Angela to make SAU their choice to participate in intercollegiate athletics. Michael transferred from another Division I program after his freshman year because Coach Overby “was nice” and did not want to alter his competitive style. Angela is a freshman and is at SAU because of her appreciation for Coach Overby and his “offer of the most money.” Their GPAs exceed 3.0 after relatively short tenures at the institution. Appreciating the life of an athlete here, Michael enjoys the travel, fun of playing his sport and being on scholarship. Angela enjoys the sport as well and states that so far classes are “a piece of cake.”

Mission for the department is simply “to graduate us” according to Michael. A run-in with Dr. Rollins demonstrates the mission according to Michael. When Michael dropped one of his classes for the semester, “She yelled at me, ‘Do you want to graduate?’” Angela echoed Michael, agreeing that “their biggest thing is to graduate us.” As a freshman, she is required to
attend study hall four hours per week. Her experience with that mandatory policy and her interactions with the academic staff in the study hall provide substantiation that graduation is the mission. “They push us hard on that.”

Like their coach, neither Michael nor Angela described the organization in a family oriented manner. Relationships and atmosphere are supportive and “friendly” however. “As one” is how Michael portrays how coaches and administrators treat each other and the student-athletes. Coaches know all the athletes and ask “how are you doing?” Among administrators, the best rapport is with Dr. Rollins who is considered a “friend.” Michael clarifies, “I can pretty much go to her with anything.” “Friend” is the term used for Coach Overby and various teammates as well. Both athletes feel comfortable in going to their coach “with any problem,” but boundaries do exist as “he will get on you if you are doing something wrong.”

Michael and Angela are at SAU to play their sport, but the pressure to win is not a value they feel from the organization. Pressure to graduate is very apparent to them. Graduation messages are delivered consistently and forcefully from their coach and Dr. Rollins, the “friends” they have in the organization.

Chad and Kelly. Attending an HBCU was of primary importance to Kelly in selecting SAU. A likable campus and “friendly” atmosphere on a recruiting visit sold her on the institution. Playing a sport was not in her initial plans, but now she is in her second season for Coach Elam and appreciates the feeling “of being a part of something … with everyone supporting you.” Chad has extensive family connections to SAU, and had been attending summer academic programs here for years prior to college. His science and technology related major constitutes his chief focus forcing him to really “manage his time well” and “plan things out.”
President Samuels’ “Think, Work & Serve” immediately registers with both of Coach Elam’s athletes as the organizational mission. Reflecting the mission is the service provided by the department and specifically academic services: “they are really helpful.” Kelly exhorted the efforts of Dr. Rollins and her staff related to the mission: “they always make sure that we are the first to get our schedules right or to tutor us if we need anything. …They are always looking out for us.”

“Everyone is like family” according to Kelly who resumed the theme of support she feels in the organization. “Every time we see each other, we say hi [and] ask them how their day is.” Chad pointed to organizational activities such as community service and recently going to a sport related movie as a group as proof of being a family. “We do stuff like that all of the time. …We see each other besides sports.”

Coach Elam’s program is smaller and less competitive than many of the other intercollegiate teams on campus. Yet Chad and Kelly echo the same feelings of support and family that athletes throughout the organization maintain. Academic values and academic resources are received by athletes similarly whether participating in major or minor sports.

*Jimmy and Reggie.* Coach Holt’s two athletes state they are at SAU because of the location. Reggie, who graduated last May, wanted to stay close to home to assist with his family. Jimmy is originally from this part of the country, but has been living in the Midwest. He wanted to return closer to his original home. Being a SAU athlete led him to establish academic priorities and develop time management skills. As an athlete, traveling to different places and meeting new people were also opportunities afforded Reggie that he truly prized. Jimmy loves the relationships he has established at SAU, especially with the athletic administrators. Their compassion has influenced his academic effort. He does not “want to let them down.” Both
athletes provide unique perspectives, having played a major sport initially before switching to Coach Holt's program.

"...You are a student first in the classroom" encapsulates their view of the departmental mission. "Athletics are important" but the goal that Reggie observes as the department's main concern "is that degree." "They put a focus on you actually getting your studies in and getting your work done.... We definitely take pride in academics here." Like Angela, Jimmy sees the study hall policy as a reflection of the mission and one that was critical in his early academic success. "It really helped me adjust to the college style of work and workload."

Each practice for this team begins with teammates in a tight circle, arms around each other and swaying back and forth. Jimmy describes it as "a little bonding time" that involves "a nice little conversation, then we pray and it's time to get to business." Family is a strong theme for both athletes and the pre-practice gathering is a symbol of family at the peer level. And for Reggie and Jimmy, it extends through the entire organization. Jimmy reflected how the circle evolved into family for him:

I didn't know what to expect. I remember coming into the circle and they asked me my name and I kind of put my head down and they said look up. And I looked up and I was like "what have I got myself into." But then everybody started talking to me. They made sure I was doing what I was supposed to be doing. They didn't mess around but at the same time they wasn't rude about it. If I messed up, they pulled me aside and told me what to do. They just kind of took me under their wing and made me feel real good. I was really nervous. I didn't know what to expect and then I was all alone and had no friends. Now they are like my family.

Supporting each of the different teams at their competitions is evidence of being "one big family" for Reggie. Administrators as well as students are part of this collective effort. For Jimmy, Coach Holt comprises a major part of his athletic family:

Other than my father, he is definitely the most influential man that I have been around... We talk about life. I had a couple of family problems and you can't always call home. I
know I can always call Coach Holt. He makes me feel right at home. He is not my father or relative but sometimes he feels like one. I am real close to him.

Despite graduating, Reggie attends practice sometimes to “see how the guys are doing” and sees it as confirmation that competing for Coach Holt “has actually done something for me as far as instituting values and certain morals as far as working hard and appreciating the level of work which coach has given us.” Observing this graduate at practice and family circle ritual at the beginning of practice provides physical evidence of a culture where the athletes feel a sense of belonging and connection.

The Student-Athletes Summary

Student-athletes interviewed for this study represented a wide range of matriculation and athletic statuses necessary to provide perspective on values, beliefs and attitudes about academics and athletics from every level. Freshman through seniors, recent graduates, transfer students, as well as scholarship and non-scholarship athletes from the nine different programs diversely comprise this peer group. Despite the varied backgrounds of the athletes, the core values, beliefs and attitudes are remarkably congruent and match that of the other two socializing groups: administrators and coaches. Significant value is placed on academics and graduation at all organizational levels. The student-athlete participants believe that success after intercollegiate athletics hinges on graduating from SAU.

The participants arrived at SAU for varied institutional and athletic reasons including: the HBCU experience, academic reputation, family legacy, opportunity to play Division I, and the promise of a scholarship, often better compared to other institutions. Emerging is the understanding that coaches and administrators begin the influential socialization process during recruiting, well before the students officially begin their SAU lives. Positive initial associations to Coaches Overby, Sumter, and Ward were cited by athletes as their reason for choosing SAU.
Academic values begin to get reinforced as coaches ensure that academic services and Dr. Rollins are a part of the student-athlete recruiting effort. Both of Coach Overby’s athletes describe meeting Dr. Rollins with their parents, the outcome being the creation of “a homey feeling.” Angela’s parents strongly approved of department academic policies and practices like study hall. Lara and Mary received the academic pitch as well from their coaches and Dr. Rollins during recruiting visits, with Lara being impressed by academic services initial review of her transcripts and “being ahead of the plan” for her. As this study begins to explore the content of the academic culture and the nature of relationships in the socialization process, the critical role of Dr. Rollins and the academic services center will be realized. Undoubtedly, coaches recognize organizational academic resources as personal and professional assets and a weapon in the athletic recruiting wars.

Which socializing group has the most influence on the values, attitudes and beliefs of the student-athletes? As student-athletes describe their belief that the department’s mission is related to graduating and academic success, coach and administrator influences materialize. James noted the “pounding” of the education message they receive from Coach Ross and the message of “off-the-field success.” Thomas’s coaches relay the academic message in team “meetings” and “huddles.” The impact of Dr. Rollins and academic services surface as the students specifically highlighted policies that drove home the message that academics are taken seriously and expectations are high. “Are you going to graduate?” is an oft posed question by academic services according to Kelly. Winning is perceived by some of the coaches as part of the mission and some of the student-athletes as well. However all of the student-athletes perceive academics as at least half of the mission, if not all. Whether coaches or administrators create the most significant impact on those views cannot be determined without full review of the cultural
content utilized to transmit academic beliefs and values as well as the processes used to transmit the academic culture.

Socializing influence can also be measured in how the students identify family with the organization and the familial roles they assign to peers, coaches and administrators. Athletes from every program but two observed some component of the organization as family. The four athletes who did not share this frame of reference, reflected the non-family perspective of their coaches. Seemingly natural identifications with teammates as brothers and sisters were common, but authoritative parental roles were assigned to both coaches and administrators. Coaches who have a strong sense of family like Coach Holt and Coach Sumter were strongly identified in a familial role by their athletes. Further examination of the nature of the interpersonal relationships within the department will reveal the extent that this family identification influences the academic culture.

Congruence of a positive academic culture in SAU athletics is definitive. Determining influence among the groups and individuals begins to emerge with this initial examination of values, beliefs and attitudes among participants. Full investigation of content utilized to transmit culture as well as the nature of socialization processes is necessary to identify fully groups and individuals who truly are impacting the entire organization and ultimately the excellent graduation outcomes.
CHAPTER V
SOCIALIZATION CONTENT

A congruent set of values, attitudes, beliefs regarding the significance of academics firmly established, this study sought to understand the tools and cultural artifacts in the form of policy, language and ritual that served to transmit the culture and socialize the student-athletes. Academic policy at SAU emanates from two areas. Official department academic policy is largely initiated and implemented from the academic services center. Mostly formal in nature, the policies are written, reinforced throughout the department and effective in reaching freshman and transfer students as they begin their membership in the culture. Second, coaches maintain their own set of academic policies, a mixture of formal and informal rules geared toward their own assurance of their athlete's academic success. Commitment to implementing the policies from coaches and academic center staff results in transmitting the academic culture through numerous socialization opportunities.

Participants did not unilaterally recognize or admit the existence of a common academic language throughout the organization aside from two Presidential formal themes aimed at the institution as a whole. Further exploration of discussions about academic missions, relationships, and roles and responsibilities reveal that student-athletes have indeed adopted the informal language of their coaches and the administrators, which mirrors the ultimate academic values of the organization. Informal language during everyday interactions also drives the feeling for student-athletes that the athletic department is a caring and familial organization.

The organization directs resources to reward academic success through two formal rituals. Purposefully designed by the administrators, the ceremonies engage the entire organization and serve to inspire those not receiving the tangible awards and verbal praise to
work for those awards in the future. Informal rituals occur at the team level, typically aspiring to provide a friendly competition and reward structure for academic success for both coaches and athletes. The administrators know that the rituals are a prime method of concretely recognizing the importance of academics. And the student-athletes have taken notice.

Reviewing these three areas of cultural content demonstrate how organizational values are reflected in the academic operation. Effectiveness stems not from merely well-designed policy, language and ritual, but from people who care about the outcomes of the cultural instruments. By its very nature, informal content provides even more definitive evidence of an academic culture and raises the level of effectiveness of the socialization of the student-athletes.

Policies

*Academic Services Center*

Asked to choose the most effective academic policy at SAU athletics usually evokes one of two responses from administrators, coaches and students: study hall or weekly freshman meetings. Both are implemented in the physical location of academic services and are designed and coordinated by Dr. Rollins. The success of the policies emanates from the commitment of the academic services staff to develop personal relationships with the student-athletes. In addition, thoughtful enforcement of rules and guidelines by academic services staff and then supported by coaches and administrators communicates to the athletes that academics and these policies are taken very seriously.

*Study Hall*

Study hall appears to be successful for essentially three reasons; it enforces study time, provides access to academic resources including staff, and motivates athletes to study so as to be
exempted from the study hall requirement. Understanding these outcomes as viewed by the participants compels a closer look at the elements that make SAU study hall work.

The program operates as a combination of efficient physical design, rules-enforcement, and staff support. All are essentially a creation of Dr. Rollins, who brought the format from her previous institution. "Really neat" is how she describes the initiative. She credits a “friendly” yet “structured” environment as keys to engaging the student-athletes. The physical setting of the center is designed to provide a “friendly” yet structured atmosphere and ultimately aids in study hall achieving a goal of student-athletes focusing on their studies.

The Academic Services Center consists of two rooms. Furthest from the entrance is the office of Dr. Rollins, whose open door policy encourages student-athletes to frequent for advisement and conversation, but also allows her to supervise study hall activities and to visit with students for the purpose of monitoring ongoing individual academic efforts and doling out support and praise. “In it to win it” is how she describes her philosophy toward academics and loudly praises a football player for “making all A’s.” Study hall operates in the second space, a large cinderblock room geared toward promoting staff interaction in conjunction with the ability to monitor student-athlete activity. Covering two walls, 13 computer stations face outward. Several open tables sit in the middle of the room for general study and tutoring. Large permanent lettering on the wall in school colors reinforces President Samuels’ mission of “Think, Work, Serve” as well as Dr. Rollins’ chief concern – “South Atlantic University Student- Athletes Graduate.”

Perhaps most important is the placement of two staff persons within the room. Every student must enter by the graduate assistant’s (GA) desk, and sign in and out, indicating the time spent in study hall. The assistant director for academic services is positioned across the room
from the GA. From both vantage points they can observe each computer screen, ensuring students are absorbed in academic activities as opposed to the temptation of entertainment. For example, the GA catches a student playing a video game and quickly reprimands him. Jokingly referring to him as “lazy,” he is forced to sit by her side and return his attention to academics: the GA tests his knowledge for an upcoming quiz.

The design is purposeful according to Dr. Rollins. The physical layout combined with the rules and their enforcement by the staff clearly indicates that academics are taken very seriously. Angela, having only been at SAU for a month, has received the study hall message loud and clear- “… we have a requirement of four hours of study hall per week and they really push us hard on that, because they are wanting to graduate us.”

The rules for study hall are critical in creating an atmosphere of seriousness regarding academics as well as providing multiple opportunities to socialize new students to their academic vision. Entering freshmen and transfer students must attend four hours per week for at least one hour a session. Students carrying below a 2.4 GPA or enrolled in a “developmental” course are labeled as “at-risk” and are required to attend the four hours per week as well. These regulations are spelled out in the official student-athlete handbook.

Not in the handbook, but cited in the academic services manual are the rules governing behavior, attendance, and the ultimate consequences for failure to abide by the them. Only academic efforts are expected on the computers; to prevent temptation, social networking websites (e.g., facebook and myspace) are blocked. No cell phones, IPODs or mp3 players are permitted and no loud or social conversing may take place. Behavioral infractions receive reprimands from staff, but more importantly not making the required four hours is taken very seriously by Dr. Rollins:
And if it's someone who is a no-show the first time, it's in the report. Second time, it's in the report. Third time, it's a no show – I kick them out. They are no longer welcome to my center. They are ineligible to come here. They can not even come down here. And if they come in here, my staff knows that they are not welcome to utilize any services. Not even my computers.

The “report” is a weekly Friday memo e-mailed to administrators and coaches detailing academic service activities and study hall attendance infractions. Thomas ended up in the Friday memo when he failed to attend his four hours one week. Coach Ward required him to run arena stairs the following week at 6:30 am as punishment. Never missing another study hall session will be the outcome of the punishment according to Thomas. James expresses appreciation for the study hall rules, saying they are not “babying” but “guidelines” ultimately assisting him to focus on academics. Not all student-athletes appreciate the strict guidelines. After being reprimanded by the assistant director of academic services for having a cell phone out, a student quickly shuts down the phone with the words “too harsh” audible but ignored by the assistant director. Perhaps Sanaa sums up the student-athlete experience with the study hall rules best:

I don’t want to say it’s punishment to go down there, because it is not. You can converse a little bit. It is not a prison, but it is not just free time. It is not a social lounge. It is kind of in the middle.

Coach Holt did not directly state what he believed to be the most effective academic policy for SAU student-athletes. He feels that the “rules and structure” are a necessity, but “caring” people must be present for policy to impact the individual students; Coach Holt emphatically holds that “caring” is firmly entrenched throughout the organization.

The academic support staff conveys gravitas blended with compassion while working with study hall participants. Students are greeted as they enter and sign in. For James, it meant being asked “how my classes are going?” upon signing in. The greeting signified to him a level of interest in his personal success and a connection to the academic staff. Hugs are doled out
liberally by all three staff members to students in study hall, accompanied by praise for any academic accomplishment. Many students labeled as “sweetie” by Dr. Rollins. The assistant director moves from student to student in the room checking on assignments being worked on and taking time to test a student-athlete with flash cards for an upcoming exam. Two students visit the GA at her desk for assistance on assignments, but largely her role appears to be one of enforcing the rules and study atmosphere. Dr. Rollins lightheartedly confirms the GA role as the “chief of police” for study hall.

The combination of study hall elements leads to an observed effectiveness for three reasons. First, “you have no choice to study,” that according to Allison. A 14 week semester means that required students will spend 52 hours in study hall. Attentive staff, encouraging academic focus and implementing rules that limit “goofing off” as Michael brands it, provide the impetus for mandatory studying. Reinforced by Angela, study hall “makes it real easy” with required attendance of an hour a day and the only thing to do is homework. Second, students view study hall as a provider of academic support and resources. The best evidence is the customary attendance of student-athletes who are not required to be there. Exempted from study hall since their first semester at SAU, Allison, Tyler, and Kelly come to utilize the computers and meet with staff regarding assignments. Tyler cites the main reasons now for appearing in study hall are to “check in with Dr. Rollins” and assist other student-athletes because “we have a great support system down there.” Allison is a regular and largely because of the “nurturing environment” as provided by the academic staff. Finally, as Sanaa alluded, study hall can be seen as a form of punishment and something to evade. Jimmy explains, “it really keeps you on your toes to have a 2.4 (GPA) to not have to attend study hall.” For Monica, the standard is higher (3.0 GPA) as assigned by her coach, but the reward for meeting the standard and avoiding
study hall is four precious hours of time—“and that is extra motivation to go to class.... You want to have those four hours to sleep, relax, whatever. We value out time.”

Although many coaches expressed appreciation and support for the program, surprisingly the only significant negative perspective came from the athletic director. Ms. Bennett “really hates study halls... but knows they are a necessary evil.” Her chief concern is for the “true student” who is forced into a situation with “poor students” who do not study and “irritate” others around them. Like Monica, Ms. Bennett realizes the pressures placed on a student-athlete’s time and feels that the four hours could be better spent by a “mature” student:

...studying in their residence hall or going over to the library to study or going to their study partners to study. Versus coming down to the dungeon with these other people, and they almost see it as a waste of their four hours. They might say, “I could have taken a nap during this hour, and felt good for practice and I am mature enough to do that.”

As a “necessary evil,” the only way study halls will work are with resources such as qualified staff and computers. “If there’s no one to monitor that they are actually working and actually focusing on their school work... then it is actually an hour sentence for that student.” Ms. Bennett is committed to providing the resources to academic services so that study hall can work.

Michael provides an example of a study hall from his previous institution that was not effective. Essentially a computer lab, it was monitored by another undergraduate student. Athletes attended for thirty minutes while signing in for three hours and spent the majority of their study hall time playing video games. At SAU, “they just don’t put up with that.” Dr. Rollins’ study hall reflects the academic values of the organization on a number of levels and socializes the student-athletes to the academic culture. The value of academics is visible on the walls and in the way staff approaches their work. Constant interaction, maintaining a serious tenor, and providing persistent encouragement serve notice that expectations are high for the program, academics and the outcome of graduation. Requirements force extensive interaction...
time for the newest members of the organization and those at risk of not accepting and succeeding in an academic culture. Coaches are engaged with the Friday memo for their additional support and to provide consequences for non-compliance. Mary admits her struggles with academics and proclaims the usefulness of the mandatory study hall. “That is something that we have above regular students here, because that is how we get our academics straight.”

**Weekly Freshman Meetings**

Targeting freshmen and new transfer students is the official academic services policy and practice of “weekly freshman meetings.” Athletes required to follow this policy must meet with the assistant director in academic services or the GA on Monday or Tuesday. Students bring their academic folders to the 10 to 15 minute meeting. Folders contain their master planning sheet that lists each course and its upcoming assignments, and current grades. Graded work is included in the folder as well. Allison described her typical experiences with the meetings as a freshman:

> You have a set time, like every Monday at 11. So I would come in and bring my folder. When they ask me if I have any grades, I would write it down for each class. They would write down if I had a test coming up. The following week, they would look at that and ask how I did on that test. They would ask if I needed any help.

The SAU student-athlete handbook indicates that the purpose of the “required” semester long meetings is to assist with “transition to college, time management skills, majors, and explain the University system and NCAA rules.” For similar reasons, Ms. Bennett and Dr. Rollins believe this policy to be the most effective program within the department.

The anti-study hall frames how Ms. Bennett appreciates the freshman meetings. “Good starts are critical.” A component of the “good start” is receiving individual attention where important personal relationships develop versus the less personal study hall group monitoring from academic services staff. Resulting opportunities from the meetings include academic and
athletic intervention ultimately involving coaches:

You have someone in academic services talk to them and getting to know them personally. They might tell them something that's going on that they might not tell anyone else. They might be talking about bad grades or something that is going on personally. Academic services will inform coaches about what's going on, and the athletes might not be punished because they might be going through something, and might be going to practice and not giving 100%.

Getting to know individual learning styles through the personal interaction is the significant reason for the success of the policy and practice. The personal interaction leads to specialized academic interventions according to Dr. Rollins:

The weekly meeting is so valuable because we have an opportunity to sit down and talk to the student-athlete, learn about them as an individual, as a student first. Learn about their background. Learn about their learning styles. Learn about the personalities and sometimes personal things that relates to family. A lot of conversations, a lot of things come out of those meetings and it only empowers my staff and I know more because we know why "Johnny" behaved this way. We'd learn how we should approach "Devin." We know that this is not the right presentation to work for "Steve." And so it just helps us to know the student-athletes better. It also allows us to review graded papers that they have received back from their professors. We can catch those problem classes or problem grades early and do something before it's too late and I love that because we do get a lot of turnaround from that. We get an opportunity to really jump on a class that is going bad and turn it around into a very very good class by the end of the semester.

The student-athletes cite two reasons for the meeting successfully impacting their academic efforts as a freshman: the meeting keeps them on track, helps with time management and provides interventions if needed. James mirrors the policy objectives regarding “transition” as stated in the student-athlete handbook from his perspective:

I mean, you come out of high school with a high school mindset. You are coming to college to party and have fun. At these meetings, you are introduced to a new scenario. Academics is the number one scenario in college. 'Cause you're really getting into the real world in college. The meetings are really introducing you to academics, being on the right track so you can have a great future.
Keeping James and other student-athletes on the “right track” comes from the academic support staff monitoring grades, teaching time management and intervening when necessary. Allison also reinforces the “right track” view:

They make an effort to make sure you keep track of stuff in case you are not used to doing that. The biggest problem that student-athletes have, especially going from high school to college is time management and organization...They make an effort to get you into a habit of managing your time.

Ms. Bennett also believes in time management is a critical issue for freshmen athletes and the positive impact on the issue from freshmen meetings:

The kid who really doesn't want to tell you they don't know how to study, they have never seen a syllabus before. You help them learn how to put their assignments on a calendar. You work with them on when to start their assignments. "How did you do on your chemistry test?" They might say “this happened...” or “I made this [grade]....” So they get that personal interchange and somewhere out of some of those meetings is going to be the perception from Dr. Rollins or whoever is working with that student that Man, they are clueless as to how to navigate... just going to class three hours a day and the rest of all this extra time you thought you had – you are really supposed to be studying.

As the student-athletes are kept on track and taught time management, effective interventions are prescribed when necessary as issues arise. Mary is grateful for the academic staff to be aware of her academic, athletic and personal situation. She is confident in their support and knows they will “have our back if something goes wrong.” Assigning a tutor is a common intervention and Dr. Rollins and her staff maintain a “hit list” for the tutors in academic services. Student-athletes who are discovered to be having academic issues within the freshmen meetings are placed on this posted list that tutors review. When tutors arrive for their scheduled time period, they make sure they see student-athletes placed on the “hit-list.”

This policy is again Dr. Rollins’ initiative. Employing it at her previous institution, she notes that it increases student-athlete participation and accountability by setting “the rules upfront and letting them know what it is going to be like and this is what we are expecting.”
Like study hall, consequences hold students responsible: “the minute they break those rules, we will deal with them accordingly.” The Friday memo awaits those who do not show for the freshman meeting.

Culturally, freshman meetings work in many of the same ways as study hall. It brings new members of the organization into the central physical location for academic culture in the organization where they can continue to receive that positive academic and graduation message. Thomas meets with the GA each week, where she “reinforces the idea that you need to go to class.” The GA focuses on good grades during a freshman meeting, exclaiming that she wishes she could post up good assignments. The messages come from caring staff, who interact individually with the student-athlete each week during the entire semester. The message is reinforced on the meeting form itself, which states the central goal “to become a student-athlete graduate of SAU.” The follow through on academic issues discovered in the meetings as well as consequences for not attending illustrate the depth of the value of academics in the organization.

**Attendance Policy**

An extensive vetting process resulted in the newest edition to formal academic policy in the organization. The organization claims “zero tolerance” for unexcused classroom absences according to the student-athlete handbook. “Official contests” are the only valid reasons for absence. This policy includes consequences for one, two and then three missed classes for the same course. The severity of the penalties appears to be the link to its effectiveness. According to Ms. Bennett, the policy was shaped by the University-wide athletic committee in addition to feedback from the coaches. Consensus in development was key in the development and success of this policy; its ultimate cost is the loss of scholarship funding.

Just implemented the last year, penalties are progressive over three unexcused absences.
The first absence penalty constitutes a meeting with Dr. Rollins and their Head Coach to "address the importance of attending class and potential punishment." Suspension of athletic participation from practice and a game occurs upon the next offense and the athletic director is now brought into the loop. A third occasion will combine the second penalty with a 10% loss of scholarship. In addition, "an academic success plan" will be created by the student-athlete, coach, and "faculty mentor."

Because athletic competition might be impacted, Ms. Morris explains that the policy's effectiveness can arise from a peer and coach pressure perspective. "Coaches are on them and their peers are on them" as "that can affect a win or a loss." "We take away money" is what most impresses Coach Davis. A large Atlantic Coast Conference institution is the only other school that she knows will enact that severe a punishment. Class attendance was not a priority at her previous school. Here, this policy serves as symbol that "we don't really play with academics."

Coach Mabel's athletes observe the policy to reflect the organization's mission of academics. They are impressed as well by the seriousness of the consequences. Brooke essentially remembered the penalties after learning of them eight months previous. Allison states that football players have been punished according to policy guidelines. She believes that coaches throughout the organization check physically to ensure the athletes are in class, or they will communicate directly with the instructor on absenteeism. Knowing that peers have been punished gives the policy credibility for Allison. It motivates her to get to class:

Some mornings I don't feel like getting up. But once that policy was implemented, I thought twice about it. Is it really worth an extra 45 minutes to get in trouble and have my name all over the athletic department and have them tell me that they are disappointed in me and that I am a leader and should be setting an example?
Coach Ross states that he did take away a scholarship for a starting athlete who missed several classes among other infractions. Coach Ross believes that athletes will be "accountable," because now they understand the punishment could happen to them. He is "slow to kick them off...but they need to know that you will do it."

The attendance policy continues to communicate the message that academics is taken very seriously by the organization. The news of one loss of a scholarship spread by peer network throughout the entire organization, according to Allison. Student-athletes have learned that the attendance policy does not contain empty threats and believe they will be caught if they miss class. The policy itself carries weight as formal cultural content. However enforcement seems informal and coach dependent. Coach Ross and Coach Ward indicate that they have inflicted punishments of suspension and scholarship loss according to their own judgment and valuation of the offense versus departmental policy guidelines. In this instance, enacted team policy has combined with stated organizational policy to influence student-athletes that the entire organization is watching. The athletes understand that being in every class is a habit viewed critical by the organization and is ultimately related to academic success and graduation.

*Academic advising.* The three above policies are generally seen as most effective in the organization and they also represent the most formally presented. Dr. Rollins has also designed an academic advising system retaining both formal and informal qualities that significantly enhance the academic culture in which the SAU athletes are engaged. Academic advising runs completely through Dr. Rollins and she incorporates decision making into the advisement regarding: course enrollment, major choice and dropping a course. Dr. Rollins' system provides for continued development of caring relationships with staff, increased quantity of contact with
student-athletes resulting in quality opportunities for socializing students to academics and
graduation, and overall monitoring of each student’s matriculation.

Institutional policy provides for academic disciplines to assign academic advisers to each
student who are expected to counsel students on their major curriculum sequence throughout the
matriculation. Athletic policy dictates that each student must see Dr. Rollins before their major
advisor when pre-registering for courses. Also required is permission from Dr. Rollins to drop a
course, even though this can be done electronically directly by the student. These regulations
explain the long line of students waiting in the hallway, two days before the commencement of
the fall semester. Actually both Dr. Rollins and the assistant director for academic services
advise student-athletes during the process of course enrollment.

Advising provides another point of contact in addition to study hall and freshman
meetings and is a critical method of staying in contact with upperclassmen who no longer have to
participate in study hall and freshman meetings. Despite the long lines of students, advising is
not all business and appears to be another chance to develop the caring relationships that signify
the organization’s culture and atmosphere. Each student is asked initially not about their course
of study, but about summer experiences and their personal lives. Some student-athletes seem
genuinely surprised by the inquiry and take a second to collect their thoughts, having been totally
focused on the business of trying to register for classes. The outcome for students is a feeling of
support and inclusion. Referring to both Dr. Rollins and the assistant director, Brooke and
Phyllis explained – “they really take you in.” This sentiment is connected to the academic staff
“getting your schedule done” (Brooke) and ensuring “all of your classes are in the first day of
school.”
While Dr. Rollins and the assistant director equally advise students, clearly Dr. Rollins' leadership shapes the process and atmosphere. She directs the student traffic inquiring as to their needs and liberally referring to most students as "sweetie." A maternal authority emanates from the compassionate direction. Expressing every faith in the professionalism of her assistant, Dr. Rollins still takes the time to check in with a student who has just spent several minutes with the assistant director to ensure proper course enrollment. Student-athletes like Monica see Rollins as "everyone's advisor until they find a major." She feels Dr. Rollins' "concern" and "worry, making us feel like they really want us to excel." Knowing he could have dropped a class on his own, Michael still went to Dr. Rollins for permission because "they like it and they like to be informed about what we're doing." Consequently, Dr. Rollins was provided an opportunity to admonish Michael for dropping below her suggested course load requirements and to reinforce the personal and organizational value of graduating on time.

Dr. Rollins' advising strategy for matriculation has a relatively new component that has become part of the academic culture and vernacular: three and a half years. Student-athletes are forcefully encouraged to graduate in three and a half years versus four. For her, this is an element of advising that she "is most proud of now." It is highlighted in orientation, where she explains how it can be accomplished. The fruits of this strategy are beginning to ripen, as one athlete finished last year in the time frame and two will finish this semester. By pushing the expectation of graduating a semester early, she hopes they will graduate on time in four years.

Ms. Morris has recognized the power of the initiative:

[Dr. Rollins'] main thing is "I'm here to graduate you." Her thing is 120 hours. You need to be graduating in 3 1/2 years. It shouldn't take you four years. You should be in grad school that final semester. That's the most important thing. I know it's good for them to hear that.

Thomas just received the message a month earlier at his academic orientation meeting with Dr.
Rollins and it has registered. He believes that he will graduate in 3 1/2 years and knows that is the “goal” of the academic department. Instilled in him is the idea that “it is possible and it is good for the student-athlete.”

Dr. Rollins made a conscious decision at her last institution upon being thrust into unfamiliar territory to become an expert at NCAA eligibility guidelines and the university’s rules, guidelines and curriculum sequences. She “mastered that” and brought that expertise to SAU, where one of her first initiatives was to “master” the academic catalog. Her mastery allows her to be an expert on eligibility and matriculation and understand “what programs were most rigorous and most difficult and what programs are more liberal that you can have flexibility to do different things.” It does appear that there is some focus in academic services on eligibility versus individual needs, and Brooke expressed a concern. For her, advising was very valuable as a freshman but recommendations were geared toward general education and eligibility versus a career focus. Brooke felt like limited resources (only three people) in academic services prevented full counseling regarding career development. A minority view from Brooke, most student-athletes reflect Mary’s positive outlook whose advisor “helped her through a lot” and kept her “focused on academics.” Academic advising is Dr. Rollins’ designed domain. She ensures through regulation, monitoring, and personal relationships that student-athletes are compassionately coerced towards graduation.

Summary – Academic Services

All of the academic services’ formal and informal policies denote an organizational culture reflecting values and beliefs in the significance and seriousness of academics. Driven by caring and conscientious staff, student-athletes learn in academic services that the organization cares deeply about their academic success and graduation and that serious consequences follow
non-compliance. The academic services center physically performs as a distribution center for the organizational message and vision regarding academics and graduation. However, Dr. Rollins recognizes that her unit alone cannot succeed at socializing students to academics. From her perspective, coaches are a bigger influence because of the amount of direct contact and influence they employ. The coaches have to “buy in.” SAU coaches reflect the academic values of the organization and utilize a number of their own policies to reinforce their own beliefs and support the academic mission.

Coach Policies

Every coach implements at least one of their own academic policies in addition to those emanating from academic services. They do not supersede Dr. Rollins’ initiatives, but generally serve to reinforce the academic mission of the organization as well as keep their athletes eligible and on the field. Coach policies derive from previous coaching experiences or have been learned from coaching mentors. They are implemented for a variety of reasons. Upholding academic tradition, competing academically, ensuring future careers off the field, and guaranteeing athletic eligibility are the chief motives for adding an additional layer of academic cultural content. Those programs with more resources, mainly in the form of assistant coaches, implement more policies. Those programs are also faced with the most pressure to keep their players on the field. Also programs intent on having the highest GPA in the organization employ a wider range of academic strategies.

Study Hall

Academic services makes certain that freshmen and new transfers and those with a GPA of 2.4 or below get four hours a week in their facility. Coaches utilize their own versions of enforced study to get their entire team engaged both on and off campus. Sunday nights in the
library from 6-8pm is the appointed study hall for Coach Haskins’s team. While she knows “they don’t do a lot of studying,” that is not necessarily the goal. “Transitioning back to Monday” and returning the focus to academics serve as the true purpose. Leigh perceives Coach Haskins’s study hall differently. She and her teammates “did not like it at first,” but found it to be an effective study time because “you are not just going to sit there.” For Leigh, the Sunday night library hours helped her understand the importance Coach Haskins placed on academics. Sunday nights are study hall for Coach Ward as well. He hopes to get his players in the study mind frame for the week, but also wants to make sure they are on campus and not out of town and heading to classes on Monday morning. Sunday night study halls are more about the timing than anything else for these coaches. Their athletes are expected to change the weekend perspective to a weekday focus on classes and studying.

Study hall as punishment and intervention are academic instruments for Coach Ward and Coach Sumter. “Study hall boot camp” was designed by Coach Ward and Dr. Rollins, in response to his athletes “getting behind” academically. For one month during the off-season, individual workouts were ceased and players and coaches reported to academic services every day for two hours a day. The program caused a “rebellion” as the players felt “they were being treated like kids.” Coach Ward’s response was “well, you are acting like kids.” The outcome was better grades, and Coach Ward recognized the effort as a “little method of punishment.”

A grade of D or F at midterm results in mandatory one hour per week study hall in the coaching offices of Coach Sumter’s program. Punishment versus study time is clearly her goal. She observes that teammates will “laugh” at those who end up in the study hall and will work harder to avoid it. Sanaa, a victim of the study hall, bolsters that sentiment:

Because that is the worst. [The coaches] will sit there and literally stop doing what they are doing and watch you for an hour. I might have nothing to do, but I am just going to
act like I am doing something. If they leave the room, I will stop and then when they come back I will start to fake writing again.

Sanaa and Monica relay that this study hall is also a punishment for not going to class, and for them, it “is our motivation to make sure we are in class.” Punishment is an effective academic culture socialization tool in the organization and will be explored in the next chapter.

In the tradition of her mentor, Ms. Bennett, Coach Sumter holds study hall when the team travels. The bus and the hotel are locations for off-campus study halls, up to an hour and a half in duration. Coach Mabel ensures “mandatory study time…on the road as well.” “A quiet hour” is spent on the bus, so they can focus on whatever they need to focus on.” From Brooke’s description, Coach Mabel has understated her study hall efforts on the bus. “An extremist” is how Brooke refers to a policy of taking all cell phones away during most trips. “She literally takes them away.” Coach Mabel’s message to the athletes according to Brooke: “you need to be studying.”

Coach initiated study halls are employed with differing goals and structure. Despite Ms. Bennett misgivings, these study halls have impacted the student-athletes in positive ways concerning academic values and subsequent behavior. Increased studying is not always the outcome, but the athletes recognize that academics are taken seriously on the organizational and team level. Ms. Bennett believes that for study hall to work, someone has to show a genuine interest and truly engage in the activity. This engagement appears to be the case for these coaches.

**Academic Monitoring Systems**

A number of programs employ a variety of methods to track the academic activities and progress of their student-athletes. They range in complexity, mostly depending on the resources available to the head coach. Coach Ross’s efforts represent the most intense system of academic
monitoring, using a combination of student-athlete self-reporting and coach monitoring.

Centering the system are the “truth statements,” which Coach Ross observes to be the most effective academic policy assisting his players. The policy depends on factual self-reporting by players, monitoring by assistant coaches, and intensive scrutiny of both student and coach reporting by Coach Ross. The detailed process is explained by Coach Ross:

Every Friday, every player has to meet with his position coach and fill it out. They date it. And on there is a list of all of their classes. They have to write down whether they were in class and whether they were late to class and then they have to write down a reason if they missed a class or were late. They have to write down if they have any papers due or tests coming up. And then they have to sign it. Their position coach looks at it. Then the position coach keeps a copy of it in his file. If the kid missed class or was late to class, the coach makes a note of it and keeps a record of it. Then that coach makes a copy for my secretary and then the secretary makes a copy for me. And then on Monday or Tuesday, I will look at every last one of them. I am looking to see if they missed class or were late to class and see why they were late or missed. I see the assignments that are coming up or projects. If a see two or three guys got a project coming up, then I'll ask them if they need a tutor. After I look at all of them, I will make notes on different players. In a staff meeting, we will discuss them. If any player misses a class a third time, that coach has to bring it to my attention. Then I get really concerned. The other reason it's a true statement, is because if the kid is flunking a class or doing really poorly, I will go back and look at the reports and we get other academic reports. If those reports say that he was missing class and his truth statements say that he wasn't missing class, now this is a legal document. He signed it and dated it and said he was going to class. He lied, that is why I call it the truth statement. End of the year, he lied and then flunked the class, I am going to reduce his scholarship.

The Friday “truth statements” are backed up by a “daily class absent report.” If the athlete misses a class, “it is their responsibility to fill it out and give it to me by the end of the day” and “that comes straight to me.” Repercussions for missing classes as reported on this form include: running, suspension from playing or practicing, curfew, and loss of scholarship. “Those are actions...you can’t have something in place and not have actions.” A belief in his responsibility to ensure personal success for his athletes is the motivation for the policies. His “hope is that maybe because that kid knows at the end of the day, he has to fill this out and at the end of the
week he has to fill it out and face me- that that will get him out of bed. He knows that there will be consequences.”

President Samuels expressed appreciation for this system that involves not just self-reporting, but class attendance monitoring by coaches. He observed one of Coach Ross’s coaches on-campus, and the coach “looked like he was out there spying on students.” The coach informed President Samuels that he was “watching his athletes to make sure they go to class.” This signified to the President a commitment from the coaches to the academic success of the student-athlete. “If coaches can become that engaged and become that dedicated to watch and ensure that the student-athletes do what they want them to do then I knew we were on the right track.” Tyler and James indicate that Coach Ross’s policies and persistent verbal messages have impacted the entire teams’ views and actions toward academics. James conveyed Coach Ross’s academic reputation, “They (teammates and coaches) said since Coach Web got in the system, the team GPA went up. The team GPA went up a whole lot.”

Coach Ross’s system relies more heavily on self-reporting forms than any other program. Resources in the form of assistant coaches allow Coaches Ross, Ward, and Sumter to employ more thorough and complex academic tracking efforts. Like Coach Ross, Coaches Sumter and Ward assign responsibility to assistant coaches for monitoring the academic efforts of individual athletes, with the coaches completing weekly update forms versus the athletes. Coach Ward assigns four players to each coach and expects them to heavily engage personally with their academic endeavors. Going to classes to ensure they attend, getting feedback directly from professors, and meeting with the player three times a week provide material for a report given to Coach Ward on Fridays. A staff meeting provides opportunity to review the reports. Negative information about a student results in a verbal confrontation ultimately holding the athlete
“accountable.” Motivation for a determined and continual tracking policy in part comes from experiences of losing athletes because of academic eligibility. Coach Wool, Coach Ward’s top assistant, describes two incidents that involved misleading faculty feedback inspiring Coach Ward to “want to know how [the players] are doing all of the time.” The two most pressured to win programs have two of the most complex and involved academic tracking programs. Academic values and beliefs are passed to assistant coaches and players through the persistence, and athletically the players get to remain in the games.

Coach Sumter’s assistants meet weekly with assigned players and complete Coach Sumter’s designed form that monitors grade progress and course attendance. Her hope is to learn not just about academics but also any personal issues impacting their athletic lives. Weekly staff meetings provide the forum for discussing academic situations. Issues lead to the study hall or running punishment for attendance problems. Everybody runs if there is one transgression of missing class. Coach Sumter’s strategy is for teammates to pressure each other to get to class.

Smaller programs have created monitoring systems typically without the benefit of an assistant coach, leading them to rely on self-reporting. Connected with his goal of “developing men,” Coach Holt implemented an individual athlete file method maintained by the athletes themselves. They track their academic progress as well as maintain a list of goals. His athletes “are responsible for their own matriculation.... I make them responsible for talking to their own professors and counselors.” “A one man show” is how Coach Elam describes his monitoring efforts. Class checks, direct faculty contact, and his own progress report completed by faculty constitute his program. As tough love is his style, athletes with increasingly poor grades and attendance receive inverse quantities of “physical training.” Coach Mabel makes certain that each of her athletes maintain a weekly planner with the goal of time management education.
Handed in every Friday, she “glances” at them as “more of an accountability thing.” “They understand that they have to be organized…and they really have embraced that.”

Monitoring and tracking systems serve to buttress the academic culture in a number of ways. They reinforce the seriousness of academics message that the student-athletes receive. Consequences are potentially very serious and include the dreaded early morning running.

Seeing a coach take the time to attend a class to ensure attendance is a substantial symbol of the commitment to student-athlete matriculation. Meetings with coaches provide more opportunity to discuss academics and convey messages geared toward success and graduation. Clearly the motive of keeping the athletes eligible is strong, but the message the student-athletes reflect in their discussions is that academics are valued more than athletics by the coaches.

GPA

SAU's student-athlete handbook outlines in detail the NCAA academic eligibility guidelines through matriculation. NCAA guidelines provide an increasing margin of GPA from 1.8 to 2.0 to maintain eligibility from sophomore to senior years. Dr. Rollins raised that minimum to help ensure eligibility by elevating her no study hall minimum to 2.4. Coach Haskins has retained a 2.5 GPA minimum implemented before Dr. Rollins' tenure. Setting this standard is a reflection of the excellent academic history of the program and her former coach, who “embedded into our spirit” the goal of graduation. A competitive personality is motivation for Coach Davis to “require” a 3.0. She directly competes with Coach Mabel for the highest team GPA and feels the competition makes it “fun” for her players. As mentioned earlier, one of her official goals for the program is to have a GPA of over 3.0. Coach Mabel’s high expectation for GPA was discussed earlier as well. Her players are not faced with a hard rule for a minimum GPA, but the informal and high expectations are unmistakable. Driven by tradition, competition
or Coach Mabel’s belief in “stressing academics”, the GPA is a quantitative policy reflecting the academic culture that these coaches seek.

**Competitive Considerations**

The above policies are described by coaches as formal structures with rules and guidelines. At times, SAU coaches evaluate individual athlete needs and make informal adjustments to accommodate conflicts between academic and athletic requirements. Coach Overby explains that as a smaller sport, his athletes “don’t always get the preferred [class times].” Although conflicts between practice and class time do occur, Coach Overby emphasizes to his athletes that class is the priority and “get out to practice as soon as you can.” This policy applies to individual problems with courses as well:

I had couple of players struggling last semester, and they had term papers due and I told them to take a couple days off and get it taken care of. Make sure that you get your paper done. I said, you should have taken care of this paper earlier, but get it taken care of. Grades are more important than you playing.... I think they trusted and respected me enough to know that he is going to let me do what I need to do academically.

Angela recalls a Coach Overby statement from her first team meeting that indicates that his academic values match his actions, “school comes first...get your school work done so you can play.”

“Walking the walk” is how Coach Mabel refers to adjusting competitive athletic efforts to advance academics. Practice is eliminated around mid-term and final exams to “give them the opportunity to be successful.” “Road” and “overnight” games during the week are avoided to limit missed classes. Games played during the week are scheduled for Wednesdays since “it is more difficult to miss a Tuesday/ Thursday class because they only meet twice a week.” “If they are in class, they will have an opportunity to learn.” Athletes struggling academically will be left
on campus instead of traveling. “It is a privilege to travel with this team...first things first is academics.”

Brooke confirms and appreciates Coach Mabel’s initiatives:

She will work with you. I know my roommate last year and she was an education major and if she would have chosen to play and only do that, she would have had to come back for another semester and come back in the fall to student teach. Coach Mabel and her and her supervising teacher sat down and found a way to make it work. She was missing a lot of practice and even some games, but she was the first African-American female to go through here as a player in four years.

Allison admitted that there were “consequences as far as playing time” for that teammate. As a senior “you have to choose the sport or school.” The no practice policy around exams also taught Allison and her teammates that Coach Mabel’s priorities lie in academics.

We were freaking out. We felt like we needed to practice. She said, "You're not going to forget how to play softball in three days." But you do need to study for midterms, that's like, she knows when midterms and finals are and she knows to lay low on the conditioning and the practice. She gets us to write down our midterm and final schedules and she looks at all of them and figures out when we need to practice. If people have midterms on the same day but at different times, she will make practice optional because she knows that we need to study. She will not be there to supervise practice. Midterms and finals, she is very flexible.

Coach Mabel and Overby do not face the pressure to win like the major programs do. Ms. Bennett does not necessarily expect them to win. Their academic values and beliefs combine with that freedom and produce flexible, informal policies that send a direct and visible signal to the student-athletes. Coach Mabel’s simple plan of not practicing during exams challenged player’s notions of athletics versus academics visibly and demonstrated their coach’s commitment to their academic success. These informal policies send an even stronger message to the athletes than the formal policies. Not based on consequences, the policies are geared to create the trust and respect that Coach Overby highlighted regarding ensuring his players focus on academics.
Policy Summary

The academic policies for the organization are thorough and comprehensive at the organizational level and in varying degrees at the team level. For socialization purposes, they exist as artifacts of the SAU academic culture and serve as the impetus for other cultural content and socialization processes. They require interactions between staff and student-athletes, leading to the development of relationships and opportunity to deliver the academic message. The content of the message through these policies is multi-layered. Student-athletes are exposed to a variety of values surrounding academics: it takes time and commitment, it is to be respected and taken seriously, their athletic life is at risk for lack of academic effort and success, the organization cares about them and their success. The student-athlete sentiments explored previously regarding the organizational mission indicate that academic center and coach policies have played a significant role in socializing the athletes to the culture.

Language

When asked whether common words or phrases are used in the organization regarding academics, many participants responded in the negative or did not provide strong responses. For instance, an inquiry to Coach Mabel concerning whether there is common departmental language regarding academics evoked the response, “I don’t know if there is one common phrase.” However, observations and analysis of overall conversations reveal common language around two central values. Formal and informal language centers on the belief that student-athletes should be good citizens off the field and need to “act accordingly” as Sanaa refers to it. Informal and non-verbal language convey the attitude that SAU athletics is caring and as a result, family type organization. Familial type language and some of the non-verbals have been mentioned
previously in describing the values, beliefs and attitudes of the organization. Tying the phrases
together as a language component demonstrates how it conveys the compassionate part of the
culture to the student-athletes. Academic language is present and emanates from Ms. Bennett,
Dr. Rollins and the coaches, but generally represents a component of the message to be a good
citizen.

*Good Citizens*

President Samuels’ theme of *Think, Work, Serve* is the institution’s motto. It is
pervasively visible across campus according to Coach Ward, “billboards, just little flyers and any
(official SAU) letters” contain the phrase. He made sure his program manual contained the
theme after the President introduced it. Dr. Rollins has it painted on the Academic Services
Center wall in large letters. Verbally, President Samuels does express his theme on a consistent
basis. James states that “every speech” from President Samuels contains *Think, Work, Serve*. As
players in Coach Ross’s program, they are addressed by President Samuels virtually after every
game. The words not having made as big an impression on Monica, she recalls “a motto that the
President says at every assembly” but can’t remember the exact phrase. President Samuels has
been successful in enveloping the campus in his message, but key is its internalization and
interpretation.

Administrators, coaches, and students who cite the motto as the mission of their
department connect it to the idea of students being good citizens. Ms. Morris sees it as direction
for her role and the role of the organization, which is “make sure they (student-athletes) go out
and be productive citizens.” “Serve” is a directive and reminder to “serve the students.” Coach
Mabel cites the phrase as the athletic mission as well. Her interpretation centers on an
“academic focus” and links it to the recruiting of student-athletes who are “going to be
contributors to society." President Samuels is observed by Coach Mabel to embody the motto in his actions of visible support for her program and the academic mission. James and Tyler are exposed to the motto more than any other student-athletes because of the quantity of contact with the President. They were the only student-athletes to refer to *Think, Work, Serve* as the organizational mission. James believes that as athletes, "we really know" that (*Think, Work, Serve*) is the mission. The Dean of Residence Life is the latest to profess the motto to the team according to Tyler. The message as James and Tyler perceive it refers to their responsibility as campus leaders and the need to be positive role models who set an example for the entire student body. *Think, Work, Serve* as conveyed to them exerts a sense of expectation and subsequent pressure to be good citizens. President Samuels’ motto has reached SAU athletics and had intended impacts of creating a sense of academic effort and contribution to society. Its reach however is limited and has been internalized by only a few members of the organization.

Informally, language about student-athletes being good citizens is pervasive and starts at the top of the organization according to Coach Overby. For Ms. Bennett, the theme is the same, but contains an additional intent. Her concern is for the organization as a whole and its image in the larger community. Recognizing that the organization is a commodity and needs a positive brand in the community to acquire precious financial resources, her concern is "perception."

According to Coach Overby:

Perception is the one thing that Coach Bennett uses a lot in our staff meetings. The perception that the community has about us and the University. We have to make sure that the perception is a certain way, because for many years it was pretty poor. Perception for the University. And that is the one thing that they are really striving to change ... She is always very conscious about telling us to be careful about the perception. She doesn't want the coaches going places and doing things where we might be seen as a little odd or weird. Obviously the (Coach Ross's) players, there are a couple of places downtown where they are just not allowed to go. The coaches will not let them go to those establishments.
Coach Overby credits Ms. Bennett as a “huge influence” in developing a positive “perception” in the community for the organization.

A number of coaches have extended the theme of public perception and utilize different terminology to apply the values to their programs and student-athletes. Exemplary physical appearance and behavior are especially prized outside of athletic competition. “Classy” is how Coach Overby has applied the theme to his own program:

The thing that I hope (the student-athletes) will remember is class. I want them to dress classy when we go to tournaments. I want them to dress classy when they are on campus...Act classy in class. Act classy on the road. Act a certain way when they go to practice. Act a certain way when we go to tournaments. That is the one thing that I hope they take away from it, when they get out is class. We are going to do it a certain way. We might not be the best team in the country, but we are at least going to act like we are.

Coach Holt connects part of his success in graduating athletes to “caring” and a component of that is being “big on image.” “Image” for him implies physical appearance, for example “rules about hats in buildings.” It especially suggests appropriate behavior he described as “how you carry yourself.” Coach Holt is proud of a letter sent by a patron of a restaurant they visited on a trip for a competition. The letter, sent to President Samuels, commended “the guys” on “the way they were dressed and how they carried themselves.” Used to praise and motivate his own athletes, the letter represents to Coach Holt the “kind of stuff being done throughout our entire athletic department. It is not always an athletic thing, it is a life thing.”

Coach Holt’s view is very similar to Coach Ward’s, who is “image-conscious.” Wanting his “young people to be looked upon the right way and as student leaders, he is implementing a “professional day.” “Shirt and tie” must be worn by everyone in the program on Wednesdays. The goal is two fold. The athletes will be recognized by others “in a certain light” and the athletes will “understand how you have to be to make it in this world.” The phrase “how we
carry ourselves” is utilized as well by Coach Ward in explaining his image-consciousness and he believes “that translates over to how you do everything else in life.”

Student-athletes utilize similar terms attributed to their coaches in describing an expectation that they physically fulfill roles as good citizens. Mary states that “carrying ourselves right” is her perception of the University mission. She feels pressure to be a role model as a student-athlete. Her coach and administrators assisted her in incorporating that value into her life, as a direct result of personal actions she refers to as “messing up.” Monica has adopted the phrase “carry yourselves accordingly” instead of “carry yourselves right.” This phrase she learned from Coach Sumter and her staff. Counteracting negative perceptions of HBCUs is the context for her use of the phrase:

We want to change the negative thoughts that people might have. This is what we are about and our school is about. Let me make sure I'm acting like I have some sense, basically. It adds a little pressure.

Sanaa reinforces the idea by stating that different situations require different behavior. The court requires one “mode,” while the classroom necessitates another. “Act accordingly” depending on where you are. While the references to “image” and “carrying yourself” typically do not directly cite academic behaviors and goals. Positive academic outcomes are strongly implied in the language that creates expectation of being positive role models and good citizens.

Often more straightforwardly related to the academic success component of being a good citizen are references made to “off the field.” This phrase sprinkled throughout discussions with representatives from each level of the organization centered on life outside athletic competition as a student, citizen and future graduate. President Samuels utilizes the term in his locker room speeches:

I mention academics, every chance I get. That they have to be successful, off the field if they plan to be successful on the field. Because if they don't, they won't be eligible to
play first. Secondly, another game of life is that you have to make sure that you don't get yourself in trouble, not just for you but also for your team. So they have to do things in order that the team will be successful. And that means going to class, maintaining your grades so that you maintain your eligibility. Representing yourself as a student-athlete in the right way in the classroom also says something to the other students about the University and about what they are gaining out of the athletics program.

Expectations of being a good citizen and academic role model are again exacted upon the student-athletes. Ms. Gannon delivers the message as “not just doing it on the field.” Inherent in her conversations with student-athletes are discussions of graduate school, internships, and careers in order that they can “maximize this opportunity.” Success “outside of touchdowns and points” is what is “preached day in and day out” according to Ms. Gannon. She adds that Dr. Rollins, Ms. Morris and many coaches join her in driving home the idea.

Coach Ross utilizes the language more than any other coach or administrator and subsequently his athletes use the term “off the field” more than their peers. His view of the organizational mission was discussed previously and centers on “off the field” success. Teaching them “what it takes to be successful in life off the field” sums up his coaching philosophy. “Life off the field” encompasses skills necessary to succeed personally and professionally. Both James and Tyler stress “taking care of business off the field.” According to James, Coach Ross discusses it a lot. “Off the field” symbolizes an expectation of personal and academic accountability for the student-athletes at SAU. They feel the pressure as the message is transmitted top to bottom in the organization.

“With freedom comes responsibility” is a phrase not mentioned by Coach Mabel during an extensive interview. However, Brooke, Allison, and Phyllis immediately thought of it when asked about common phrases used in the organization and they attribute it to Coach Mabel. It represents a more formal example of utilizing good citizen language at the team level. Allison explained that use of the phrase is a recent trend and truly signified a change in coaching
philosophy and management of the team. Her freshman year, the team operated from a
“handbook of rules [contained in a] big, thick binder.” The handbook was meticulous and
detailed in its description of what could or could not be done as a member of the team and
supplied the consequences as well. “That handbook was ridiculous.” Conflict arose as
“loopholes” were found in the stated rules and athletes attempted to skirt appropriate behavior
based on the fact that it was not specifically outlined in the handbook. The next year, which was
Brooke’s freshman year, the handbook was eliminated and the “with freedom comes
responsibility” system implemented:

She told us all. I am not going to give you any rules. With freedom comes responsibility.
And I think when somebody just puts it on the line like that. This is my life, I control it.
The fact that they are trusting you to make your own decisions and they are supporting
you, just makes you want to prove it to them even more. I know I can make my own
decisions, so I will.

Allison felt empowered and accountable as well:

Now it is on my shoulders. It is about my morals and my values. If I do something, then I
will wonder if coach will question it and my leadership. When she says with freedom
comes responsibility, it puts more responsibility on me to make my own decisions.

Her recruiting trip is when Coach Mabel first presented the phrase to Ro as well as her parents.
The phrase signifies a system implemented to develop maturity and responsibility and ultimately
change the team chemistry to one occupied by good citizens. Inherent is academic
accountability. “With freedom comes responsibility [sets] your standards to really high,”
according to Allison.

The good citizen language is both a representation of the values of the administrators and
coaches as well as a socialization instrument. Opportunity for administrator and especially coach
speeches is one of the natural traits of an intercollegiate athletic organization. Every practice,
game, and team meeting presents itself as a prospect for delivering a recurring theme. The SAU
athletes are constantly exposed to the idea that they are to look and behave in ways that will positively reflect on the organization. That positive behavior clearly includes hard work in academics.

\textit{A Caring Organization}

Coach Ross has a sign outside his office door that reads, “If you are a player, walk right in and if you are not a player then you have to check in with the secretary.” The intended message is that the players “are the priority.” Associated action is that Coach Ross will “stop whatever I’m doing, if a player walks in the door.” While responding to a question for this study, he does indeed stop to converse with a player at his door who is having course enrollment issues. He additionally creates a sense of priority for them by genuinely asking about their family rather than just focusing on athletics. Coach Ross’s sign signifies the common belief that this is indeed a caring organization. Non-verbal language clearly impresses this value upon the student-athletes. The many hugs given Dr. Rollins and her staff were mentioned earlier, but James observes lots of hugs among all staff especially after extended holidays. As a result, he concludes “that there is a lot of love on this campus.” Coach Sumter notes that despite the administrators being very close to her program, “they pretty much hug all of the athletes.” The result according to her is that the athletes get the “family feeling.”

President Samuels also concludes that his actions convey the message of caring to the athletes versus verbal language. His presence at “all of the games, all of the sports” demonstrates his “accessibility” and subsequent caring. It is not just being at the game though that transmits the message. It is sitting in the front row of the volleyball game amongst the students and actively rooting for the team. It is greeting one of Coach Sumter’s athletes with a smile and patiently listening and agreeing to a request for a reference.
Caring language running through the organization ranges from Dr. Rollins’ comprehensive use of the term “sweetie” to the multiple references to themselves or others as family. A caring organization is reflected at the highest levels as observed in the weekly administrators meeting attended by the four administrator study participants as well as the head of each of the additional business and athletic units. The number one meeting agenda item is the deaths of two athletes’ grandmothers. Ms. Gannon, running the meeting during Ms. Bennett’s initial absence, highlighted the need for “support” for the athlete and “reassurance” for the parents from the organization that the athlete’s academic needs will be accommodated. With a major athletic department event on the horizon and NCAA certification process upcoming, ensuring support of athletes in difficult family circumstances took precedent. Caring language verbally and non-verbally signifies a commitment to the well-being of athletes and staff peers. Does it impact academics? Explaining the high graduation rate for his team, Jimmy surmises “knowing people care and you don’t want to let them down.”

Not recognized as a definitive characteristic of the organization, common language surrounding academics is not readily apparent to the participants. However universal language geared toward values that inherently includes academics as a component creates a supportive environment for personal success. SAU athletes display language usage that reflects the expectation that they are to be role models and productive citizens off the field and that they are cared about as individuals. Subsequently their success off the field is a concern for the organization.

Rituals and Traditions

Rituals and traditions are the third area of socialization content identified as a dimension when academic culture can be transmitted at SAU. Two primary formal organization events
serve this function. The end of the year athletic banquet reflects Ms. Bennett’s values and intent to physically show that academics are a priority. The banquet is an explicit academic cultural artifact that meets her goal and serves to motivate the student-athletes as well. Dr. Rollins designs and implements the spring academic recognition ceremony, publicly presenting the academically successful athletes to the campus community. Her unique event is also intended to motivate primarily through reward but also shame. These two administrators wield the largest influence over the overall academic culture. Appropriately, the two most important academic events in the organization are essentially their creations.

On the team level, informal traditions do exist typically with the intent of motivating by creating friendly academic competitions for athletes and coaches. However, these informal traditions appear inconsistent in structure and occurrence, limiting the impact. Informal rituals containing the most socialization cachet emphasize the organizational value of caring.

*The Banquet*

Ms. Bennett energetically describes the end of the year athletic banquet as one of the most influential ways that the department delivers its academic expectations to the student-athletes. Chiefly reflective of the organizational academic priorities at the banquet are the academic awards for the male and female athlete with the highest GPA for the year. Upon implementing athlete of the year awards several years ago, Ms. Bennett “insisted that we do an academic award.” She purposefully set out to design an award and ceremony to demonstrate “how important academics are.” “Let’s make this award look the best, be the most expensive.” Coach Holt verified that the “academic prize is larger than the athlete of the year prize,” while Coach Ward is genuinely impressed that the “academic trophies are the biggest trophies” at the banquet. In addition, presentation of the award is set for last. For Ms. Bennett, ending the
banquet on that note tells the winners that they “are the cream of the crop … I think it is really special.” She is grateful that is often not the athletic stars who receive the awards. “It is not Mr. Suave” although she clarifies that excellent athletes have won the award as well. The resulting recognition by the peers of the academic winners is an indication to Ms. Bennett that the “signal” of the organization’s value on academics is getting across:

I have found that the rest of the student-athletes actually give them a standing ovation. Their teammates are actually fired up, and so excited that they won it. And when people look at it, they are like “wow, you are going to have to give that to your mama.” I wanted it to be that way. So we are telling them that this is the value on you doing that, period.

Dr. Rollins explains that other academic awards are distributed that night for the highest GPA on each team. Academic services present the academic awards, but overall do not coordinate the program. A “super program” and a “beautiful occasion” are how Dr. Rollins lauds the event.

Do the students get the academic message that Ms. Bennett’s seeks to deliver through the banquet and award? Coach Holt and Coach Wool cast some doubt. Not sensing “how important it is to the athletes,” Coach Holt emphasizes that academic socialization primarily occurs through relationships and not awards or banquets. Student-athletes in Coach Wool’s program have not expressed any feedback personally to him regarding the banquet over his tenure, leaving him unable to comment on the effect. Fortunately, Tyler and Brooke have both received the top academic award at the banquet and provide perspective on how it impacted them and how their peers reacted. It had been a year since Tyler won the award, which sits at home on his dresser. Recognition of his hard work from both the students and administration is his lasting impression of the experience. Warm feelings from the event result from simply being acknowledged “in front … it’s good to be up there.” Brooke’s athletic season unfortunately conflicted with the most recent banquet, preventing her attendance. “Really cool” is how she describes the honor. Teammates responded by saying “good job” and “way to represent the program.” Coach Sumter
recalls that one of her athletes won the award and was impacted by the increased peer recognition too. “She got popular then with people who thought she was just cool, popular to be around. Now they respected her in a different way.” These academic award winners were successful athletes, but were certainly buoyed by the academic recognition especially from peers.

Ms. Bennett would be pleased with the motivation that the banquet provided Mary for not being recognized. She feels she “could have been up there…but just did not put forth the effort.” Familiarity with many of the athletes helped her to believe, “if they can do it than I can do it.” Competitively inspired, the idea of receiving an award for academics versus athletics intrigues her and states that “this year, I will take it into consideration and try to do something academically.”

The banquet is spoken of most highly by the top two administrators in the organization. “A huge and awesome event” creating jealousy among non-athletic administrators is how Ms. Gannon captures the affair. It brings a mixed reaction or non-reaction from the remaining participants. Some spring athletes seem disinterested because athletic commitments keep them from participating. The banquet however does serve as a symbol as Ms. Bennett intended and does impress some coaches and athletes. It demonstrates how culture can be physically reflected in artifacts and purposefully designed to signify the values of an organization. Simply making the academic award nicer than the athletic one and making that presentation last provides the context that academics come first.

*Spring Basketball Game*

One home men’s basketball game during the spring semester is chosen each year to recognize academically successful athletes during half-time. Dr. Rollins is responsible for arranging the date and coordinating the event. Qualified athletes must have a 3.0 or higher GPA.
from the previous semester and are “showcased” on the court during halftime. Her goal is to inspire and encourage the athletes through recognition and like Mary at the banquet, motivate those who are not being recognized. The value placed on academics by her and the organization emerges again through deliberate design.

All athletes are required to attend and a dress code is required for those appearing on court. Her purpose is for student-athletes to realize the prestige from receiving this recognition as well as to present them professionally to the general public. For two years, Dr. Rollins included just the athletes but has since decided to engage the coaches to enhance the ceremony. She wanted to “do something new and different and be inclusive of everyone because I believe if you include people you are able to get more out of them next time.” The outcome was a “delight:”

The head coaches felt like they were getting a report card too. And I believe that you have your student-athletes out there receiving their academic honor, and you have coaches on the front line celebrating that...it would make student-athletes realize, "hey-it's more than the game, it's more than the ballgame- you know, my coach really, really cares about my academic success."

Noting increases in participation, she sees it as a “motivation piece.” Coach Sumter highlighted historically how the ceremony has grown. She participated as a student and commented how “it was just five of us standing there.” Indicating the growth of the ceremony as well as academic success of the athletes, “now...the court is packed.” Ms. Gannon estimates that as many as 90 athletes have participated. Presenting certificates to the athletes is President Samuels, again demonstrating to the entire institution the value placed on academics.

Motivation generally occurs in a visual sense and from three perspectives. Student-athletes on the court are inspired by the crowd support. “They love it” is how Coach Sumter sees it. Just being in the limelight and “waving to their peers” is especially self-gratifying.
to her. Showing her peers that they are “regular students” is a key point of the ceremony for Allison. “We came here to play a sport, but we can relate to them on a higher level.” Monica explains how being praised publicly at the game feels to her:

I feel really proud when I go down there and you see all of the alumni and they are so proud of you. It is just a good feeling. Kind of like when you bring home that A on your math test and your mom puts it on the refrigerator.

All athletes are required to attend the game and those not on the court have a different visual perspective. They are motivated by seeing their teammates on the court and receiving the adulation. Coach Davis recalls listening to student-athletes discuss feeling “left out” by not participating and she noted that the feelings are intensified “if there are 10 people on the team and 7 of them are being recognized.” “Just missing it (GPA of 3.0)” has been Jimmy’s scenario. He sees “the smiles on their faces” and appreciates their hard work, but clearly laments not being on the court. Coach Gannon states that she often hears athletes like Jimmy claim, “I was so close.” Taking advantage of the motivational opportunity, she responds “you can do it next semester.” Last, Dr. Rollins said it was a “report card” for the coaches. The number of dean’s list student-athletes standing next to their coach is a visual public accounting for that team’s academic success. “It allowed the community to know who’s doing it and who is not.” She highlighted Coach Sumter’s program as a positive example, having gone from “three or four ladies” to the entire team. In her estimation, seeing the success of others ignites competitive coaching personalities and “just put everyone on blast.”

Similar events have been held during the fall at football games. However, Dr. Rollins explains that getting academic events on the “agenda” for football games is difficult because of the limited number of games and the “packed” schedule for halftimes. Instead, academic successes of student-athletes will be featured in the printed program this year and those athletes
recognized by the conference for their academic prowess will be highlighted. Inconsistency in
the fall ceremony places full attention on the spring event and that is the one recognized by most
coaches and student-athletes as impactful. The football “agenda” is a practical signal that for
most athletic departments, football game halftimes equal important business and entertainment
opportunities and supply is limited.

Total organizational congruency is not quite reality for the positive feelings toward the
spring recognition ceremony. Coach Haskins observes ambivalence among her athletes and is
supported by Sandra’s expressed attitude, “For me, it wasn’t anything special really...that is just
my opinion.” However for most participants, there is a clear regard for the event and an
appreciation from various perspectives. It once again demonstrates a level of caring for the
athletes as well as highlighting the value placed on academics and athletes who are academically
successful.

**Team Rituals**

Informal rituals and traditions regarding academics are scattered throughout the teams
and typically involve reward or competition to spur on academic efforts. Coach Mabel has a
competition for the highest GPA among her four classes (freshman, sophomore, juniors and
seniors). The prize is dinner at a nice restaurant each semester. “It is a pretty classy thing.”
However it is up to the class to determine the date and last semester’s winners did not collect the
reward. Brooke was part of that group, but sees it as a lapse on Coach Mabel’s part. The person
with the highest GPA overall goes as well according to Allison, and she enjoyed a dinner
“downtown” with a different class as that high achiever. Coach Wool sets the standard really
high at “4.0” for qualifying for his reward of a “steak dinner.” The extreme standard has led to
no winners. As he questions whether this practice constitutes an NCAA violation, he may claim
to participate, but raises the bar too high for athletes to attain. Assistant coaches compete for bragging rights in Coach Sumter’s program. An “internal competition,” competitive drive amongst the assistant coaches operates to the academic benefit of the team:

When grades come out, the coaches find out what their players did and there is a competition on which coach maintains the highest GPA. So when we have like a team meeting, I can remember that I had forgotten about it one day and I was interrupted with "coach, just want to make sure we recognize the mighty, five for five that I have here." They are always competing with each other. So we have that internal thing, because they know that they will be recognized. They are trying to get me to do a trophy. I don't do that, we just thank them publicly.

These informal rituals tap into the competitive nature of an athletic organization to drive academic success. As this organization demonstrates in many socializing cultural content areas, consistency and follow through are necessary for success.

Coach Haskins presents the most unique tradition involving an actual academic effort. A two-page report is required of all freshmen, based on an interview of an alumna of the program. The idea is to teach the proud legacy of the program to the newest members and Coach Haskins also surmises that the academic message of the importance of graduating is delivered during the conversation as well. The freshmen are expected to orally present their findings at the team’s annual Christmas function.

Rituals and Traditions at the team level regarding academics are limited in scope and implementation. However, that possibly boosts the energy and expectations placed on the banquet and spring basketball game enhancing the cultural and socialization value of those occasions. More consistent and prevalent are the informal traditions that create the family, supportive atmosphere agreed upon by participants as a strong characteristic of the organization and reason for student success. Pre-practice rituals such as the team circle Jimmy experiences in his life as a student-athlete or Coach Sumter’s circle complete with held hands and pre-practice
prayer serve as examples. Seeing President Samuels participating each year at Senior Day for Coach Mabel’s team, or sitting in the stands with his wife amongst the students at all competitions are rituals that reinforce the level of care at an institutional level. Coach Sumter’s depiction of the “triple play weekend” cited earlier shows how an administration engaged in the simple act of “cooking” for the athletes further portrays values of caring. Ms. Bennett is the impetus behind the cook out according to Ms. Gannon, with the ultimate goal being to show that “We just love you guys.”

Initial analysis of the rituals and traditions regarding academics would reveal a limit in quantity and influence. Deeper exploration shows an organization that critically thinks about rituals and how they can be designed to reflect academic and compassion values. Not widely recognized for their importance in socializing the student-athletes to an academic culture, they are clearly an important piece of the culture puzzle. Several of the athletes in this study have been recognized formally and informally for academic success and they typically relish in the attention. Those who did not get recognized wished they were getting the attention.

Summary

Policies, language and rituals serve as vehicles to deliver the academic culture to student-athletes at SAU. Both formal and informal circumstances are created often with the purposeful intent of socializing both coaches and athletes to the organizational values and beliefs that emphasize academics. Purposeful intent is not effective however unless commitment and follow through are demonstrated by administrators and coaches. Commitment at SAU to the academic values shows up clearly in the policies, language and rituals discussed and results in a myriad of physical and visible artifacts that represent the culture. These artifacts are impactful, because the student-athletes experience the organization’s values and beliefs regarding being productive
citizens, good students, and that they are cared about by the organization. The next chapter will explore how socialization processes reinforce the cultural content areas to further enhance the depth of SAU's academic culture.
CHAPTER VI
SOCIALIZATION PROCESSES

Policies, language and rituals serve as vehicles delivering cultural content throughout the organization. The content is directed primarily at the student-athletes and evolved from organizational values based on compassion, commitment, citizenship development, and competition. Key to the delivery of the content is the socialization processes that primarily depend on the values, beliefs, attitudes, and subsequent actions of organizational members. Understanding the structure of relationships, communication, and reinforcement within the department and the connection to organizational values reveal how SAU transmits academic culture through processes.

In-depth relationships occur within and between the three groups of socializing agents in SAU athletics. Dynamics of the relationships depend on a number of variables including: position, personal view of role, proximity, frequency of contact, and personal values. Exploration of those variables requires analysis from individual and organizational perspectives. Relationships at SAU also vary in their intensity and ensuing influence on the culture and socialization.

Communication of the academic messages and culture are both formal and informal. Staff meetings serve as opportunities to deliver strong messages from administrators, while academic services has mapped out both formal and informal strategies to communicate to both coaches and student-athletes regarding their mission. Weaved into both relationships and communication is the process of both positive and negative reinforcement of actions regarding the academic culture. Rewards are associated with many of the cultural content previously discussed but also operate on an informal, more personal level. However, organizational
members have a strong vision of the formal, visible consequences that can happen by not performing academically. Thus, an informal level of negative reinforcement for coaches and athletes exists to support the socialization process within the organization in a much less recognized approach. The socialization processes are unavoidably integrated with the cultural content leading to the congruent academic culture.

Relationships

The "family atmosphere" and "bonding" are what make the experience positive for a student-athlete at SAU according to Reggie. This perspective is not unique among the athletes and they often attribute the graduation success of the organization to these variables. Relationships at SAU reflect the value of compassion, but also commitment, competition, and citizenship development as well. The nature of the relationships however is unique and plays a different role in the culture depending on the group of socializing agents involved. For this reason, relationships must be examined from that view point.

Administrators

Ms. Bennett feels like she "rules pretty rough cause I know [the administrators] well." Evolving in her administrative career, she is no longer "worried what [the administrators’] view is of me.” She understands their jobs are difficult and involve long hours and has compassion for their personal needs and balance. However she expects their whole-hearted commitment to the institution and its mission. Her micromanagement of their work results from her past experience as a head coach and the “pressure from around me and above.” Confident in their abilities though, she speaks highly of Ms. Morris and Dr. Rollins and delegates leadership to Ms. Gannon in a number of areas and in her absence.
The other three administrators see their relationship to Ms. Bennett differently. In their eyes, Ms. Bennett is completely supportive and hands off in their work unless needed. Ms. Morris sees her as approachable if required and “not a person that is on you 24/7.” “She is a great leader,” but “expects me to get it done” in the area of compliance. “Keeping us all on one accord” is how Ms. Gannon views the strength of the athletic director. She has a deep respect for Ms. Bennett’s coaching and academic background and the success of the organization under her leadership. Ms. Gannon appreciates Ms. Bennett’s direct and forceful leadership when it comes to values like “academics, bonding, and compassion,” but allowed that Ms. Bennett does value “flexibility” in other areas. Dr. Rollins concludes the administrative admiration for Ms. Bennett, by denoting that “academics is a priority” for the athletic director. Dr. Rollins can absolutely count on support for efforts from her supervisor. It is clear who is in charge and there is a genuine respect for Ms. Bennett’s authoritative but supportive style. Ms. Bennett clearly has established herself as the leader of the culture, ultimately being responsible for determining and propagating the organizational values and beliefs.

For the other three administrators, perception of their roles within the organization sets the tone for their administrative relationships. In addition, there is the strong bond created by the long working relationship of Ms. Bennett, Ms. Gannon and Ms. Morris. In her leadership role, Ms. Gannon exacts a philosophy of “mutual respect” and does not get involved in what others “were hired to do” unless asked. Dr. Rollins “was not hired to be micromanaged.” However she is flexible in her duties and expects to be asked for assistance when needed. “I think they know that I wear a lot of different hats.”

Ms. Morris and Dr. Rollins’ positions within the organization are most closely aligned and Ms. Morris observes the potential for conflict as a result. “Sometimes I think people
stepped outside of their jobs.” As an example, she cited herself answering coach questions regarding academics when it should have been directed to academic services:

The coaches might feel they have a better relationship or better understanding from that person instead of actually going to the source, where they really should be going. What do you do when that happens? To be honest, if I can answer the question, I will go ahead and answer the question and people say you should not do that. But I go ahead and answer the question, but I tell them this is the area that you need to be going to. Coach will say “well, they are always busy.” Academic services serves a lot of students, and I know I can come across the hall to your office, because I know they'll have 10 or 15 students sitting there looking to get in. I know I can get the answer quick.” If you want to make sure it's correct, you should probably go to the source, but I guess they think we all have the knowledge of everything.

Ms. Morris's hints that her coaching background might also cause philosophical differences with Dr. Rollins’ strong views of the athletes as students. During academic services orientation for instance, she listens to Dr. Rollins discuss the athlete’s role as students and believes that a perspective on their athletic role must be kept too. But overall, she is impressed with Dr. Rollins’ work. “It has made a big difference.”

Mutual respect for each other’s work among the administrators is common, but exceptional positive chemistry exists for two reasons: the long working history between Ms. Bennett and Ms. Morris, and also with Ms. Gannon, as well as the personal values and work philosophy of Dr. Rollins. Having coached together for years, Ms. Gannon and Ms. Morris were essentially hired because of their competence and commitment to Ms. Bennett’s expressed values regarding academics and commitment to the organization. A naturally tight bond exists among the women. Coach Sumter observed a family type bond among those three because of their team connection. Ms. Bennett sought Dr. Rollins also because of her competence and commitment to the same values. However having no athletic background separates Dr. Rollins from the others. Her serious attention to her work in some ways creates a bit of isolation.

Ms. Bennett facetiously refers to the physical location of academic services as a
“dungeon.” Certainly not a “dungeon” in atmosphere, Dr. Rollins’ world is indeed separate from the rest of the organization and that is her preference. Her administrative relationships and attitude toward work are “strictly professional”:

So everything is just strictly business about the area, about the services, about student-athletes, about what the coaches are doing or what the coaches are not doing, what the student-athletes are doing or not doing. It is strictly about the work at hand.

“We get along fine” is how she characterizes her relationship to Ms. Bennett and truly appreciates her support. “There’s not a disconnect between the two of us.” But unlike her peers, the family type relationships are reserved for her immediate staff and the student-athletes. Family occurs in her world of academic services and not across the entire organization. There is not “room for a lot of playing around and silliness.”

Confidence in their roles and abilities and each other’s are very evident among the four administrators who impact the academic culture at SAU athletics. Ms. Bennett is recognized and respected for her strong leadership and the other administrators were hired in large part because of their congruence on the organizational values as prioritized by her. Their strong confidence in each other gives credibility and power to the academic culture. Dr. Rollins’ respectful but separate relationship allows her to step out and create a very powerful and influential subculture that seems strengthened by its non-familial connection to the larger culture. It allows her to exert “accountability” on the coaches that she observes to have the primary influence over the academic success of the student-athletes.

**Administrators and Coaches**

Even though the academic culture is congruent throughout SAU athletics, an organization in which a core value is competition will inherently present opportunities for conflict. The relationships between administrators and coaches signify the rare glimpse of conflict in the
organization. Driving it is the competitive value of the administrators to succeed academically and for coaches it often relates to their commitment to field a competitive athletic team.

Shortage of financial resources and the need to direct more resources to the major sports exacerbates potential conflict. The perception of conflict stands out because of the strong values of compassion and commitment to student-athlete welfare that permeates the organization.

Ms. Bennett hired six of the nine coaches utilizing the main criteria as “the ability to win,” but secondary is a central commitment to recruiting athletes who will succeed academically and matriculate through the University. Motivating her high expectations toward coaches and academics is her own 11 years of SAU coaching. Her teams won championships and she does not recall one of her athletes ever being ineligible for academic reasons. Her frustration with some coaches regarding the level of student recruited is evident:

So I have to work on that and try to give [the coaches] an understanding – I don’t care how Bozo the kid is. You brought them here, you try to work it out. Until the last day, it’s on you first of all. And I do throw my hands up. Often I say we have to let this kid go. We’ve done everything we can do. It’s just not working and that happens. But that responsibility has to be on us as administrators and coaches, when we bring these kids in, and not on the kids. You have to make a judgment and you don’t sign everybody. You can’t be greedy, because they can really throw the ball in the hole or run real fast. And you see out of high school, there were some real issues and problems going in. And sometimes when you signed kids who are borderline academic, I want to see effort from you. You understood that when you signed them. You can’t put that on Dr. Rollins. You can’t put that on the University. To be really good and do it in intercollegiate athletics like it should be done – that’s what you took upon yourself when you decided to be a college coach. I try not to give them any breaks or make any apologies for the efforts that have to go into getting that done.

She recognizes that periodically circumstances occur that are beyond the coach’s control regarding the failure of a particular athlete. But primarily, she holds both the organization and especially the coach accountable for the overall academic experience of the student-athlete.

The star athlete who is not performing academically is of particular concern, as “that’s one thing that I am really working on with a couple of my critical head coaches…. “Don’t go
jiving me, I did this.’’ The coach has the ultimate power in controlling the playing time of the athlete and that needs to be withheld if the student is not making the effort academically. “Let’s convince them (student-athletes) that they have to study to play ball.” She has seen a student-athlete turn around by utilizing this strategy. This approach is reserved for the male athletes who typically mature later according to Ms. Bennett. She reinforces that the ultimate goal is to see the athletes “do well in life,” and what works best but takes more effort from the organization is “to teach them to do it themselves rather than to do it for them.”

Ms. Bennett sees her role transitioning from a “coach’s AD” to a “real AD.” As a “coach’s AD,” she incorporated too much empathy for coaching concerns and resources regarding athletic competition. For example, providing additional hotel time prior to away games “to get their minds right.” As a “real AD,” she has to make decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis for the organization. Additional hotel time means not only more expense for the department, but also missed classes for student-athletes. Recognizing these costs represents her perspective of “maturing as an AD.” Though she sees her relationship with the coaches as “overall good,” she believes that if she is “really doing my job…I might not be as likable.”

Strong values about academics and student-athlete welfare are clearly evident in Ms. Bennett recollections about her interactions with coaches. She sees her coaches as very competitive, especially for financial resources. Ultimately this competition creates conflict not necessarily between coaches but with her as the administrator distributing the resources. By pushing her values on citizen development, she ultimately keeps the coaches grounded and focused on academics. Ms. Bennett’ relationship with the coaches reveals a definitive picture of where the organizational commitment to student-athlete academic success originates. As a “real AD,” she possesses undeniable authority and influence in her cultural and socialization role.
within the organization.

As the “peacemaker,” Ms. Gannon embraces the value of compassion. After providing for the needs of the students, she sees her chief duty as being a mentor to the coaches. Like Ms. Bennett, she uses her own coaching experience as a guide and intends to not let any of them “experience what I felt I had to go through as a coach.” Her success in this role recently led “a couple of head coaches to suggest that I start doing development workshops for the assistant coaches.” The coaches have unique personalities and each program reflects that personality in a positive way according to Ms. Gannon. Her only concern involves compassion for the student-athlete, citing a couple of coaches “don’t get that.” Students want “to know that you care.” Ms. Gannon’s values and role in the organization leave her the least conflicted with the coaches. She intends “to make sure that at least there is somebody looking out for them, and that they just don’t fall off a cliff and they never knew a cliff was there.”

Ms. Morris observes the nature of role of compliance administrator as inherently creating disagreement with the coaches. Having coached with Ms. Bennett, a background of athletic and academic success in coaching guides her perspective. Like Ms. Bennett, she holds the coaches accountable and expects them to perform all of the functions necessary for the athletes to excel academically. Coaches not taking responsibility for the academic ineligibility of their athletes are clearly an irritation:

“That’s your fault why your kid is ineligible, cause I am a former coach.” I tell them quick. I am a former coach, and when I was coaching we did not have one student-athlete ever ineligible. And I was the person who’d dealt with academics when I was coaching. We had one kid who was at risk, and I know I had to go to every one of her classes every day to make sure she was there every day. I went to her class. I was here on campus at eight a.m. checking in. I would go get her to go to the next class at nine o’clock every day. So I understand.

Overall the relationships are “kind of friendly,” but can be “stand-offish” with some individuals.
Physical location of her office impacts the quality and quantity of coach relationships too. Across the hall from Coach Ross’s program combined with an open door policy leads to a closer relationship to his program than those located elsewhere.

Coaches’ competitive nature is noted by Ms. Morris also, which creates conflict for her. “They all feel like they are number one,” leading to accusations that Ms. Morris favors certain programs in the timeliness of the athlete certification process. Coaches perceive compliance as “trying to catch them doing something.” Her goal is to have the coaches believe her role is to “educate” and prevent them from getting into trouble “by doing things you are not supposed to be doing.” Ms. Morris’s experience as a coach under Ms. Bennett’s leadership has led her to embrace the same values and work at transferring those to the coaches. Ms. Morris believes a coaches’ responsibility is to look after your student-athletes and ensure their personal success.

Dr. Rollins reinforces the attitude of holding the coaches accountable. Due to the quantity of direct contact with student-athletes, she believes coaches are the biggest organizational influence on student-athlete academics. She recognizes that she needs coaches to agree with and adopt her policies and services for her unit to be effective. The relationship with coaches is “good,” but she jokes that “they like to stay away from her” as well. Holding them accountable is what causes the potential for conflict according to Dr. Rollins. She explains her accountability strategy with a recent policy initiative to obtain academic progress reports from faculty for each athlete:

Because I told [the coaches] in my e-mail, I let them know that if a student-athlete is not successful – I let them know that everyone is important in this. “So if you want your student-athletes to do well and you want to stay out of [Academic Progress Rate] trouble, I would suggest that you get these cards back.” I know how to word it up. I know how to talk to them and they respond. They really need to respect what we do here. It's a matter of respect. If they want to say that's a threat or me being powerful or controlling—that's on them. Cause really at the end of the day, it's covering their behinds and it's going to make them look good. When it's all said and done, they are out recruiting students. They are
going to get to say, "My students all graduated in 3 1/2 years. My students all made the honor roll – my, my, my, ...." And they will probably throw in what the academic services will do here. I am just a realist. This is how they would do it. So ultimately it makes them look good at the end.

Overall, Dr. Rollins is pleased with the response from the coaches and appreciates their efforts. However she is also clearly disappointed with a couple of programs in which there is "little participation, little involvement, little engagement.” Dr. Rollins does not come from a coaching background, but is motivated by competition in addition to her academic “ministry”. She is well aware of the academic statistics for the conference and state institutions and relishes in SAU’s high status. Her relationship with the coaches is truly a socializing force when it comes to the academic culture. Her role and successful work is taken very seriously by the organization and the coaches know and respect that.

Examining the administrator and coach relationship from the administrator perspective reveals a strong power structure in the organization. Values, beliefs and attitudes regarding student-athlete welfare are tenaciously held and disseminated from Ms. Bennett and the other three administrators. Their perspective on the coaches reveals an inflexibility regarding the coaches’ responsibility for the academic success of their athletes. Evidence of the influential hierarchy of power is demonstrated in the coaches’ perspective of the relationship as well.

The authority and power of the administrators solidifies further after examining coach and administrator relationships from the coaches’ perspective. The coaches respect and admire the administrators by for their support of the athletes and programs as well as their commitment to excellence in the organization. Contrasting the administrative perspective of the relationship, only a few hints of conflict emerge from the coaches. Coach Holt indicated that the respect and lack of conflict in part results from understanding they are being held “accountable” by the administrators. All four administrators are valued, but varying administrative roles places more
emphasis on relationships with Ms. Bennett and Dr. Rollins.

Often mentioned positives of the relationship with the administrators highlighted by some coaches are accessibility and support. Coach Holt and Coach Overby both highlighted the ease in talking to them and their quick responses. “I can talk to them about anything… I don’t feel intimidated to talk to them” underscores Coach Holt’s optimistic view. Coach Overby finds himself communicating with administrators at least “a couple of times a day” about any issue where he needs assistance. “They do everything they can to help us out…. I think it is a very good relationship.” Administrators are seen as supportive in providing resources as well as giving equal attention to all the programs. Coach Ward truly appreciates the administrative efforts in financially supporting his program as he tries to rebuild it, while Coach Elam is one of several participants to underline the appearance of administrators at all athletic events. To him, their attendance demonstrates their overall support from major to minor programs. Despite the accessibility and high level of support, Coach Holt makes clear that the coaches are not “babied” especially pertaining to academics. The administrators have a “high level of expectation” for the coaches and the academic performance of their programs.

Ms. Bennett and Dr. Rollins are most often discussed by the coaches related to administrative interactions. Because Ms. Bennett is generally observed as a “great leader” as described by Coach Ross and Coach Ward, deference and respect pervades their discussions of her leadership. Her educational, athletic and academic background provide the credibility and her actions on values of commitment and citizenship development place her squarely as a role model and authority figure. However, Coach Ward recognizes that along with President Samuels, she is the one person he needs to please to keep his job. The coaches concede that Ms. Bennett has most certainly evolved into a “real AD” as she terms it.
Part of this new approach includes being a motivator. Coach Mabel explained Ms. Bennett’ reaction to natural pessimism about financial issues:

Once in a while, when Coach Bennett senses we might be down she will pull us in and say look we have each other. We will work through whatever we need to work through. Right now we are having huge budget crises here. We are kind of all bonded through that.

Coach Mabel believes that Ms. Bennett is a primary component in unifying the organization around central values. As the authoritative and respected leader of the organization, her relationship to the coaches is significant in socializing them to the values that influence the academic culture.

Dr. Rollins’ commitment to her academic responsibilities creates a strong connection to the coaches. Observing them to be the most critical personnel for academic achievement in the organization, her policies are often directed at them and essentially produce opportunity for interaction. Her policies of commitment and follow through are recognized by the coaches and she is appreciated and highly respected for her work. “She’s real smart and passionate about what she does…. She’s always trying to do things to make sure she is ahead of the game” explains Coach Davis.

Asked who they communicate most about academics, Dr. Rollins is almost always the response. The Friday memo is a communication tool that seems to heavily drive her relationships with coaches. Coach Sumter is not unique in her timely and strong response to the weekly updates:

I talk to Dr. Rollins because if that Friday memo has anything on it alarming to me, somebody missed something by one hour or anything. Because they only get three chances in her study Hall. The third offense, you are kicked out of study hall. And we don't want that to happen. So if anything comes up Friday morning when I see it, I give her a call. And I will bring the athlete in and get them running to make sure they get everything together. I probably spent a lot of time on the phone with her and her staff just to make sure that we have things in order.
Although some relationships might be inspired by the Friday memo, other coaches indicate the relationship is ongoing. Coach Mabel is especially complimentary of Dr. Rollins and constantly communicates with her to understand the performance and progress of her athletes. Her appreciation for Dr. Rollins is based on the observation that “she is an outstanding person” and is truly committed to the success of her student-athletes. Coach Mabel considers Dr. Rollins “a friend.” The “friend” style relationship is unique between coaches and Dr. Rollins. Most see the relationship as professional and understand that Dr. Rollins holds them accountable with repercussions for non-compliance with her requests and policies. Dr. Rollins’ relationship with the coaches operates on two levels regarding the socialization to the academic culture process. Her commitment and hard work are completely evident and generates respect and appreciation. Accountability is connected to an influential positive and negative reinforcement process that will be discussed shortly.

Conflict is apparent from some coaches’ perspectives, but ever so slightly. Having once been “rocky”, resolved conflict is how Coach Haskins characterizes her relationship with the administrators. Resolution occurred through “open communication” and consensus; she feels the organization “is headed in the right direction.” The strongest criticism came from Coach Davis, who feels as if the administration is “weak” on fighting for financial resources for the organization. She advocates for a more “aggressive” approach to fundraising and more emphasis on winning at athletics than she believes is currently present.

A slight value disagreement appears between Dr. Rollins and Coach Holt regarding academics and accountability. Dr. Rollins holds the coaches responsible for the academic outcomes of their athletes. Coach Holt places the responsibility for academics squarely on the shoulders of the athletes:
I make [the student-athletes] responsible for their matriculation through the University. I don't care what [Dr. Rollins] says. It is not me. It is not our athletic director. It is not a professor. It is their responsibility. I make them keep their own files. I keep a copy of what they need to do. I make sure everyone does a program of study, their schedule, and their goals. I keep a copy here in my office to reference if I need to. I make them responsible to talk to their professors and counselors.

Citizenship development is the central value for Coach Holt and placing academic responsibility on his athletes is a component of that value. This perspective does appear to place him at odds with one of Dr. Rollins’ chief beliefs about achieving academic success. This variance is the only one cited between coaches and Dr. Rollins. Overwhelmingly, the coaches support for her work and approach is positive.

Coach and administrator relationships at SAU are characterized from both sides as professional. Family type relationships do exist in individual situations. For example, Coach Sumter is so closely connected to her three former coaches, who are the current administrators that her motivation is often not to disappoint them because she considers them family in a very parental sense. In either situation, power is held by the administrators and core values of commitment, and citizenship development are especially emphasized through the relationships and interaction. Power is not without compassion and support. As Ms. Gannon facilitated an administrator meeting, high on the agenda is “Go Big Blue.” That phrase introduced a reminder to attend all athletic events to make sure both athletes and coaches know that they support them.

Coaches

SAU coaches embrace the value of commitment to student-athlete welfare and citizen development. Competition and winning is also of prime importance and one impetus for why they chose this profession. These organizational values combine with physical and organizational separation of programs to structure the relationships among coaches. An
atmosphere of professional support prevails, but the tight knit family atmosphere that characterizes other relationships within the organization is not apparent among the coaches.

"We root for each other.... We have to root for each other" is how Coach Holt describes the supportive aspect of the coach relationships. A united front is necessary for the success of each program. Coach Holt views the peer support as a "family atmosphere," but most coaches concede the atmosphere is often more "professional" as Coach Davis terms it:

I mean, that's about the best way I can describe it.... Mainly, we just do our jobs and outside of this, we see each other now and then. We see each other at the games. But everybody sits together. It's a pretty good atmosphere as far as that's concerned. Everybody knows if you need anything, you can ask. But if you don't ask, I'm going to keep doing my job. I'm going to stay in my domain, and if I need some assistance I know where you are. And I know you'll help me if I need help.

Treating each other with "respect" are views both from Coach Ross and Coach Mabel. "A classy group of people" is how Coach Mabel further expands the theme of "respect." Other than attending each other's games, recruiting efforts are cited as a primary action of mutual and professional support. Coach Sumter, Elam and Mabel described efforts of looking out for exceptional athletes for other programs while doing their own recruiting.

Close relationships among coaches do exist. Coach Overby expresses deep appreciation for Coach Ross and his mentoring. He has "gotten to be pretty good friends with him" and has sought Coach Ross's advice concerning "certain issues that come up with my job." The advice is valued because of Coach Ross's extensive professional experience as well as his status as a major sport coach. In part, closeness of relationships is driven by physical location. Both Coach Sumter and Overby describe closer family type relationships among peers located along their hallway, where ongoing daily interaction occurs. Five programs are located along this hallway and the other four are located in completely separate areas of campus. Connection to those coaches in different areas of campus presents obstacles to developing a familial relationship.
Although the administrators observed an atmosphere of competition between the coaches, only Coach Haskins highlighted it as characterizing relationships among her peers:

I feel like sometimes things get divided, because some programs have more money than other programs. We know that football and basketball are the money-making programs. And some people look at, well, we get more than them and sometimes that can cause a division.

The competitive drive keeps the coaches focused internally on their programs. Responsibilities for them are perceived as building winning programs and helping their student-athletes succeed in life. Significant time and energy spent with their own programs naturally create separation from the other coaches.

Coaches have a genuine sense of collegiality, but the lack of physical opportunity for interaction and a deep commitment to their own programs serve as obstacles to development of the more intense caring relationships present in other parts of the organization. Administrators and coaches are both committed to the overall success of the student-athlete and those relationships receive the bulk of their focus and energy. The intensity placed on relationships with the student-athletes creates a critical piece of the academic culture socialization process.

Administrators and Student-Athletes

The four administrators express and display a deep commitment to academics and compassion for the well-being of student-athletes. Student-athletes confirm their recognition of the administrative support and describe a number of administrator actions that have influenced their personal commitment and behavior toward academics and the organization. However relationships with the administrators are unique and dependent on the nature of administrator roles as well as the perspective on their work responsibilities. Student views of the relationships rely on year of matriculation, team affiliation, and academic status.

"I'm busy." Ms. Bennett admits that the demands of her position do not leave much time
for direct relationships with student-athletes. However she does confess to being closer to some programs than others. Coach Ross’s team commands the most attention because of its close physical proximity to her office and its status as a major sport. James confirms the connection:

Ms. Bennett, she comes to practice, several times. That's a lot of times for an AD to come out and watch ... And being a lady, not to be sexist or anything, most ladies don't like [our sport], but she's in love with the sport. She loves her job and loves what she do. We have great bonding with her. We buy her a gift every year to show how much really care for her.

She is also unsurprisingly connected to Coach Sumter’s program as it is her former team and she coached Sumter herself. As Sanaa mentioned, Ms. Bennett is quick to admonish any lack of athletic effort to the student-athletes, even in casual pick-up games. Ms. Bennett recognizes that she is engaged directly with the student-athlete, but firmly believes her role is as an advocate and not “to have a hold and touch with me:”

They need somebody who is going to care whether they really, really graduate; whether the coach treats them right and doesn't get rid of them because they can't play as well he thought I could and now he really wants to get rid of me so he can sign someone else. Is there someone who is really ethically making those decisions on the front end and protecting me in those ways? That's what student-athletes really need in a leader and they don't really need to see that leader. Sometimes we get too engaged in being out on the practice field, in the locker rooms.... They need someone who is going to fight for them and step out and talk on their behalf and really try to provide an atmosphere where the student-athlete will thrive and be successful in. That's what I really need to be doing.

A number of athletes do not indicate a personal connection with Ms. Bennett, other than seeing her at their events and appreciating her support. Despite her demanding administrative schedule, Ms. Bennett is visible and engaged with student-athletes. The outcome is socialization to compassion and competition, the values of the organization.

Dr. Rollins’ role and personal beliefs permit her often to be the most connected to the student-athletes. Her study hall, freshman meeting and academic advising policies structure opportunities for much more interaction with the student-athletes than the other administrators.
These interactions are enhanced by Dr. Rollins’ embracing a maternal role as an administrator. She purposefully avoids acting as the “stern administrator” who admonishes the student-athletes without empathy and in contrast seeks to teach and “mentor.” She believes positive outcomes directly arise from her approach:

I will talk to them as if they were my own son or daughter. And it doesn’t matter who they are. And I get really good reviews from that. They appreciate it, because they know from our conversation that only a person who cared about me would do this. And for me, I know it works because I never had that problem again with that kid. In fact they will be my example of doing the right things.

Student-athletes comprehensively confirm the close connection to the Academic Director and the positive impact of the relationship.

Michael characterizes Dr. Rollins as a “friend,” relishing the ability to “go to her about anything.” Contrasting their relationships with the other administrators, Leigh and Sandra had the “closest bond” with Dr. Rollins and felt like she was truly the only one who was compassionate about their lives and success. Leigh explains her personal experience:

She was always encouraging me to do better and keep on the path that I was going. It was like, any other administrator, I didn't feel like they really took the time to ask me how I'm doing as far as classes. It was only Dr. Rollins, who did that.

The positive views of Dr. Rollins from the student-athletes are not surprising given her visible commitment and compassion for them each day in the academic services center. Academic successes are physically and emotionally greeted with a sincere and personal joy.

Definitely an advocate for student-athlete welfare with “everything I do,” Ms. Gannon’s manages her responsibilities with “their best interests at heart.” She is “here primarily to oversee student-athlete welfare.” Priding herself on knowing all of the athletes personally whether from minor or major programs, interaction with one of Coach Overby’s athletes at a SAAC meeting revealed her knowledge of the personal life of athletes from smaller programs.
She expressed no hesitation in intervening on behalf of an athlete with a coach if a “concern” is brought to her attention. Mary articulated the deepest affection for Ms. Gannon, calling her “Mama Gannon.” She appreciates Ms. Gannon’s compassion and honesty, as Ms. Gannon will “let her know when she is doing wrong … and when she is doing good.” Jimmy just appreciates simply being asked “How it’s going?” upon seeing Ms. Gannon, which “means a lot” to him. Her position is not geared toward as much structured opportunity for interaction as Dr. Rollins. However, crisis intervention leads to powerful relationships and like Ms. Bennett, she is connected to Coach Ross and Coach Sumter’s athletes for similar reasons. Overall her commitment and compassion add to the overall positive view and relationships that the student-athletes have with administrators.

Ms. Morris’s role possibly limits her the most in directly engaging with athletes. Her values regarding student-athlete well-being mirror those of the other administrators, but compliance issues leave her mainly dealing with coaches and administrators. Her proximity to Coach Ross’s programs connects her mainly to those athletes. Tyler conveys a sense of appreciation for her “behind the scenes” work. Mary is the only other athlete to specifically mention a relationship with Ms. Morris and characterized it as a very personable and positive one.

Attitudes and beliefs about student-athletes are the same among all four administrators and they do guide relationships. Providing opportunity and access are deep and meaningful attitudes and behaviors, because of the strong commitment to the personal success of the athletes. Dr. Rollins is structured to have much more opportunity and access, and is held in a different category for most athletes. Deep relationships are not a requirement for impact though. Being asked in passing “how’s it going,” being called by name or seeing administrators at games all
indicate to athletes that they are cared about by the leaders of the organization. Feeling cared about by the four administrators inspires commitment from the athletes to the organization and socializes them to the organization’s expectation that they succeed academically.

Coaches and their Student-Athletes

During preseason before the academic year started, James stated that he sees his coaches up to 12 hours per day. The average is five or six hours per day during the three month season, with conditioning and off-season practices providing plenty of contact hours as well. So much time is spent together between practice, meetings, conditioning, and competition in the context of emotionally charged athletic contests and tenuous scholarships that the relationship between coach and student-athlete are naturally the most intense and influential in the socialization process for the academic culture. Quasi-parental relationships are strongest here as coaches take the values of competition and citizenship development very seriously. Embracing those values puts coaches in roles with clear parental functions: disciplinarians, motivators and teachers.

However, SAU coaches do not see themselves as parents to the same degree. Most strongly identified with the role are Coaches Ross, Sumter and Elam. Coach Ross sees his athletes as his sons and takes responsibility for ensuring their personal success at SAU and in life more so than their competitive success. That is his “doctrine” and he talks very little about the sport to the athletes. Discussions of athletic competition are delegated to the assistant coaches. “Discipline and hard work” are the key tenets in his program and he has high expectations for the athletes’ overall behavior. Every interaction is an opportunity to “preach” about what he believes are the ingredients for a successful life. James and Tyler reiterate that messages of education, being role models, and behavioral expectations are “pounded” into them by Coach Ross. The athletes do not perceive the Coach’s communication as lecturing and badgering though. Ultimately, Coach
Ross's "encouragement and support" is a critical element for the high graduation rate on the team according to both James and Tyler.

Coach Sumter sees her athletes as her "children" and her athletes conversely see her as "mom." The mother and daughter type relationships manifest in compassionate behavior and responses from both coach and athlete. The players constantly check on Coach Sumter in concern for her well-being and seek to make her proud. Daily communication by e-mail, visiting the office, or texting both her and her husband are characteristics of the close knit team. The communication with Coach Sumter involves "sharing too much with me sometimes," but she is "grateful that the majority of them are comfortable sharing a lot of things with me."

Academically, Sanaa and Monica do want to make her proud. Disappointing their "mom away from home" with poor grades presents significant motivation to do well in the classroom according to Sanaa.

Coach is like your mom. You do not want to disappoint your mom by getting D's and F's. And then you know when you get that you have to face your mom. [Coach Sumter] is your mom away from home. If you are not doing what you are supposed to, she will give it to you. But it is out of love. She knows that you can do better.

Monica has dealt with that experience and explains how it changed her views on academics:

One time I failed a test --a mid-term or something. She asked how it went and I said I didn't do too well. I just looked at her face and I could see the disappointment. It reminded me of my aunt who raised me and seeing that look of disappointment. I never want to see that look again. That was motivation enough for me to say, I am going to go to class and do my best. She is like our mom and you never want to disappoint your mom.

The family culture of Coach Sumter's team operates on a foundation of a number of associated values including compassion, respect, and citizenship development. Expectations of academic success from Coach Sumter combine with the family culture to motivate the athletes to achieve and not let their athletic family down.
Discussed in chapter 4, the authoritative father is how Coach Elam sees himself and Kelly concurs. The “father-like qualities” relates to “working on us as a person” versus an athletic competition focus. “More than just grades, it’s like he wants us to be better as a whole.” The remaining coaches did not place themselves squarely in the role as authoritative parent, but still embraced similar attitudes and values resulting in similar parental type functions and results. Coach Davis feels close to her players as a “players coach,” but her athletes see the relationship a little differently. “Father...strict...dominant” are terms used by Mary to describe her relationship with her coach. Discipline and being “pushed” is a theme for Coach Davis’ program. Coach Holt is a self-described mentor and teacher to his athletes, but Jimmy clearly saw him as a father figure as the second “most influential man that I have been around” other than his own father. “Invested in their success” is how Coach Mabel feels committed to her athletes and supports this notion with “open communication” and an “open door policy.” She feels like she has a “pretty good relationship” with her players. Phyllis echoes that Coach Mabel is very “approachable” and Allison knows she cares about the players. Having players who cannot make it home for Easter come to her own home for dinner is one way that Allison cites Coach Mabel’s compassion.

Not every athlete has the same relationship with their coach. Personal variables for athletes sometimes impact the quality of the bond. Jimmy is far away from home, while Reggie is local and has the support of his family. A closer bond exists between Jimmy and Coach Holt due to Jimmy’s personal need for local familial support. Chad expresses a deeper engagement with his academic discipline than his athletic pursuits. Kelly describes a closer connection to Coach Elam than Chad. Of course numerous other factors will influence the quality and
influence of the relationships. Coach Ward recognized that it is partly his job to understand that each of his athletes are unique and he must find a way to work with each individual personality.

Despite the recognition that slight differences exist in how athletes experience the relationships, there was almost a consensus that positive relationships existed from both the coaches and athletes’ perspective. The only exception is Coach Haskins. Her style as a coach is self-described as “hard.” She recognizes her style results in “drawing some to me and some will draw from me.” Outside of the field of competition, she “likes to have fun” and has developed “long lasting relationships” as a result. Leigh and Sandra represent both sides of the spectrum. Leigh’s relationship with Coach Haskins “grew” with their off the field “conversations.” Sandra found her relationship with Coach Haskins inversely beginning strong and ending poorly after Sandra “put up a wall” to Coach’s tough style. Coach Haskins’ program exemplifies that the nine programs represent varying degrees of family type cultures. They range from the sisterhood of Coach Sumter to the tough love of Coach Elam with the mentoring approach of Coach Holt in between. Despite the differences in approach, each coach carries basic values critical to family culture: compassion, citizenship development, and commitment. The result is the development of athletes who care about and respect the coach. The respect and caring motivate the athletes to achieve academically to make them proud and also to receive that parental praise. Dr. Rollins believes coaches have the biggest influence on the academic success of athletes at SAU. The positive family type relationships between coaches and students are a key process in driving the academic culture.

*Student-Athletes and their Peers*

Student-athlete relationships with their peers mirror that of their coaches. Quantity and quality of interaction with teammates leads to the formation of deep bonds, while there is a
feeling of general support and kinship with peers on other teams. Athletes are encouraged by their coaches to make every effort to attend other teams’ competitions and vocally support their peers. Coach Sumter’s team was visibly and vocally very supportive at one of Coach Davis’s games, sitting on the front row until the end. James and Tyler describe their association with other athletes in the organization as “real good,” but the relationship is limited merely to attending each other’s games. However, they consider their team to be a “brotherhood”, representing a significant difference in intensity within their peer relationships. As a socialization process impacting academic culture, peer teammate relationships is the locus in which the most influence occurs.

Monica notes that significant interaction over time with teammates is necessary to “unite and bond” them to compete at the highest level. Her team makes an effort to eat breakfast and lunch together and observes the other teams together in the cafeteria as well. For Sanaa, the time off the field spent together is not coach-influenced and is done “willingly, because we enjoy each other’s company.” Off the field time is a key indicator of the depth of the relationships. Mary, Allison, and Jimmy all chose to live with teammates. Teammates spend more time with each other than any other socializing group in the organization. Expectation exists that they will socialize each other regarding academics.

Teammates teach each other the importance of academics in two ways. Proximity and time together creates an academic support network. Allison observes that her teammates motivate each other academically by studying and doing homework together “in our apartments.” “If we need help then we can go to each other” is how Angela describes her mutually beneficial academic relationship with her teammates. This relationship has developed for her after only two months on the team, having received help “on a couple of papers” while
assisting a teammate “with their computer.” Having teammates who are matriculating in the same major connects Jimmy academically. They assist each other in difficult assignments, but Jimmy cites a different motivation for the support:

It is very important, because at the end of the day if you don't pass your classes you won't be eligible. And if you are not eligible, you can't compete. And if you can't compete, you are no good to the team. So we help each other out, so that everybody can be eligible and we can have increasing chances of winning the conference.

Peer pressure to keep each other academically eligible is the second way that the athletes teach each other the academic values they have learned in the organization.

In some instances, peer pressure is shaped by the coach. Coach Sumter explains that collective punishment for a breach in her class attendance policy has been quite effective in creating a culture of academic peer pressure:

There have been times when I will punish the entire team when somebody is late. That helps for them to hold each other accountable. If somebody wasn't in the class and a teammate did not call to check.... If there are two teammates in the same class and I found out that you didn't call the check on your teammate to see where she was, then I am bringing in everybody. Everybody has to run. So now when they are in that class, they are texting and calling—“where are you?” So they end up schooling each other with having to stay on top of things.

An “atmosphere of excellence” and “holding everyone responsible” is Coach Holt’s intent regarding academic success. The outcome he observes is his athletes questioning anyone “who is bringing the GPA down.” Ultimately on his team, “it becomes uncool to get bad grades” and his athletes recognize that “you are not helping the team...you cease to be eligible.”

Critical to the academic peer pressure process is the upperclassmen and freshman dynamic. SAU upperclassmen student-athletes feel a responsibility to teach incoming freshman the significance and necessary commitment to academics. A combination of role modeling and instruction is how Sandra experienced upperclassmen academic influence:

For me it was coming in and seeing everyone else is doing it. Everyone else doing what
they were supposed to do. So I'm like, "well this is how you do it, because I see my teammates in study hall." Because when I came in, I didn't know where anything was, so my teammates would come in and they were like "you have to go to study hall because it's important."

Coach Elam sees it happen after his first team meeting where he spends about 90% of the agenda on academics. "After that meeting, those kids are hanging around for another 30 or 40 minutes and the older kids will tell the younger ones what they should or should not do." As part of Coach Holt’s team, Jimmy learned from the upperclassmen “some of the things not to do and what was cool.” Committed to his teammates, he intends to return the favor and takes a special interest in ensuring positive experiences for the incoming freshmen. One day during practice, the athletes were engaged in warm-ups. Coach Holt, admonishing a new athlete for not following stretching instructions properly: “If you are not going to listen to me, I do not want you on my team.” Immediately an older athlete halted his practice to attend to the newer athlete and assisted the coach by teaching the proper technique. By totally ignoring it, Coach Holt appears to expect an intervention from the older athletes.

Ms. Gannon realizes the power of the upperclassmen influence:

Now if you have a good core of seniors, a lot of times the seniors will put those expectations on the underclassmen. They will say, "look, this is what this program is all about. Nobody is going to come through here unless you uphold this standard." There is a lot of peer pressure.

Vital to the academic socialization within the student-athlete peer relationships is the origins of the expectations. Ms. Gannon explains that high expectations are created by the administrators and coaches and if they are effective in delivering the message of those standards, upperclassmen will ensure that freshman know that academic and behavioral excellence is expected. The structured life of a student-athlete provides variables that create intense relationships with teammates, creating a context in which they may socialize each other to academic values, beliefs
and attitudes. At SAU, the strength of the academic culture socialization process lies in the ability of the administrators and coaches to teach the student-athletes expected academic behavior along with the value of compassion and then in turn internalize and reinforce it with each other.

**Relationship Summary**

Isolating relationships as a singular process and component of the academic culture at SAU is difficult. Communication and rewarding, processes to be subsequently discussed in this chapter, are intertwined with the state of the organization’s relationships. Thoroughly analyzed as cultural content in the last chapter, policy significantly shapes relationships. For example, Dr. Rollins’ policies require the student-athlete to spend a considerable amount of time in her facility creating a setting for developing close relationships. Punitive physical policies, like Coach Ward’s running for missing study hall, reinforce the authoritative coach to student-athlete relationship. Examining the organizational relationships as a whole does reveal core values that shape the culture and a clear hierarchy of socializing agents that shape the socialization process. Compassion, competition, citizenship development and commitment facilitate the nature of the relationships along with other variables including role and physical location.

The organization exhibits the values of compassion and commitment found in clan organizations, but it is by no means a flat organizational structure (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Administrators hold definitive authority over the coaches, while the coach and student-athlete relationship mirror the same structure. Hierarchy within student-athlete relationships reveal upperclassmen holding and using influential power. SAU coaches certainly have broad experiences and bring their own academic values to the organization, but the academic culture emanates from the top of the organization. The four values are embraced at different levels by
the coaches, who with their individual styles shape the academic attitudes and beliefs of their athletes. The athletes are taught by the coaches to reinforce those attitudes to each other. In the end, all levels of relationships contribute to the academic success, albeit some more than others.

Communication

Effective communication is another process critical to the success of transmitting the academic culture at SAU. Occurring at each level of the organization, at the top communication assumes a formal representation specifically designed to embody the values of the organization. Informal communication necessary for socialization occurs with more frequency at the coach and student-athlete peer level. In both instances, the communication enhances and defines the nature of the other relationships.

Dr. Rollins

“Dr. Rollins is a great communicator.” As the second person on the organizational chart and responsible for three of the minor sport programs, Ms. Gannon communicates the most with Dr. Rollins about academics and sincerely appreciates her thoroughness. Consistent communication about the everyday status of the academic efforts of student-athletes arises from Dr. Rollins. Formal academic communication serves to transmit information concerning official policy and is chiefly directed at the head coaches because she knows she needs their commitment to be successful. Secondarily, it is targeted to administrators to keep them informed and to ensure reinforcement and support when necessary. Support is required primarily when academic concerns surface with athletes. A series of written formal communications originate with academic services. However, the Friday memo is the primary formal instrument of academic communication in the organization and is designed to have substantial influence on both coach and athlete.
Mentioned earlier as a component of enforcing mandatory study hall and freshman meetings, Dr. Rollins believes that the Friday memo is “so valuable” as a communication instrument to assist the coaches in monitoring the individual academic progress of their students. In addition, it serves to “give [the coaches] updates on what is coming up as well.” She has “strong” expectations that the coaches will respond to any issues reported. “When we have things that do not look very well, I am expecting them (coaches) to fix it.” “Hard work” is a characteristic of the academic services area with total commitment to student-athlete well-being, so a “non-response” from a coach “does not sit well.” Hard, intensive work is involved.

Academic services must monitor and evaluate the mandatory four-hour study hall and meeting attendance for up to 80 athletes per week. The data is then disaggregated for the nine individual programs.

Dr. Rollins believes the coaches appreciate the weekly report. Coach Ward takes the Friday memo seriously and reports an immediate response if there are issues with this players:

If they have two or three negatives on there, I will call her Monday morning or if it’s not too late, Friday afternoon. I’ll ask what happened to "John Doe." And she will say, "he's being rebellious" or "he didn't come." So then I will call him in on Monday, and get to the bottom of what's going on. And depending on the severity of the situation, they might have to run early in the morning. Six o'clock in the morning with an assistant coach present.

“Negatives” refer to missing required study hall or freshman meetings. Coach responses to the memo are influenced by a number of motivations and are driven by the core values of the organization. Competitive drive and the need to keep their athletes eligible as well as their own commitment to the citizenship development of that athlete shape the actions taken. They do not want to see the students fail, and the Friday memo indicates potential trouble. And the coaches do not want to get in trouble with Dr. Rollins. Positional power is inherent in Dr. Rollins’
academic communications and the power is contained in her own commitment and authority, but
is backed up by potentially evoking the responsive authority of Ms. Bennett.

“If you’re [a student-athlete] making me look bad, it’s not going to be good for you.”

That is Coach Davis’s sentiment regarding a negative student-athlete report from Dr. Rollins.

Coaches know that consequences are attached to communication from academic services when
there is no response. Coach Sumter explains:

The word spreads, if you are not doing well as a head coach, you receive an e-mail from
the athletic director. “What is going on? Why didn’t this person get these forms turned in
to Dr. Rollins’ office? What is going on with your players?” So because I don’t want to
get that e-mail, I am on top of my girls. If Dr. Rollins needs this information by Friday,
when she sent her memo to Ms. Bennett...it will say Coach Sumter’s team is checked off.
We have gotten our things done. I guess that is how everybody stays on top of it.

Dr. Rollins’ communication strategy concerning academic issues is to first address it directly
with the students. The intervention is effective “60%” of the time without having to involve the
coach. Student-athlete failure to tackle their academic issue results in coach contact. Thus,
“30%” of academic concerns then are addressed by working directly with the coach “And if it
doesn’t work with the coach, then I will go and talk to Ms. Bennett and I know something will be
done.... So if they are not doing what they need to do, I will let Ms. Bennett handle it and then it
will usually get done.” The Friday memo delivers straight informational content, but its
enhanced effectiveness lies in the organizational message holding the coaches ultimately
responsible for taking academics seriously.

The AD factor is observed in another of Dr. Rollins’ communication initiatives to
monitor the academic progress of the athletes. The “blue cards” are distributed to coaches mid-
semester for each of their athletes. The cards are then disseminated to the athletes, who take
them to each of their instructors. Space is provided on the cards for feedback on grades,
attendance and other comments concerning academic performance. Dr. Rollins holds the
students "accountable" for returning the completed cards to her within the deadline. The coaches are being held accountable and "getting graded" for the students turning them in by the deadline as well. She observes this system to be "the best return that we've gotten ever." E-mails to the coaches transmitting her strong expectations are copied to Ms. Bennett. An e-mail is sent to each coach thanking those who have complied. Despite being pleased with the results, she is disappointed with the efforts of two coaches and admonishes them, but extends the deadline by a day. Ms. Gannon and Ms. Bennett are copied on the e-mail. A strongly worded follow-up e-mail appears from Ms. Bennett shortly after the original, containing praise for those compliant and commanding the non-compliant to directly respond to her and Dr. Rollins as soon as possible with explanations.

"Calling [the coaches] out" works according to Dr. Rollins. She noted an immediate response with the distribution of her e-mail and Ms. Bennett' follow-up. The e-mail strategy is a reflection of her attitude that she "doesn't play" when it comes to academics. Obviously, neither does Ms. Bennett. This communication demonstrates the organizational values of commitment and citizenship development in action as well as the authority and power structure that drives the socialization process. Despite a professed commitment to academics throughout the organization, the organizational leaders' expectations are not always fully met and their reinforcement of the culture is consistently necessary.

The organizational conduit for communication is Dr. Rollins. Every coach, with the exception of Coach Elam, reports communicating about academics the most with the academic services director. Interaction does not just take the form of Friday memos and responses, for many is an ongoing dialogue about the academic state of their athletes and the program. Coach Mabel represents that type of communication:
I am just always checking in with her. Like how are students doing. Just making sure that they are turning in paperwork that they need to. If there is any problems that I need to know about, I ask her to let me know. I communicate with her a lot because I am bringing in freshman or people for visits. I am sending her a trail of paper. I am following up with her a lot on that.

Meaningful relationships between student-athletes and Dr. Rollins also provide another element to the communication with coaches:

They may come to Dr. Rollins and say, you know, “I’m having problems at home.” Usually it’s because she’s asking them why they did not do well on their test. And then they may come up with all these other excuses as to why they didn't do well. And then they will start talking about things that happened outside academics and athletics and then she relates that to me. They can depend on her not to go to the administration, but usually she will try to give me an FYI. She might say, “you might want to look for this, because your student-athlete came to my office today and expressed this.”

Coach Davis expresses a deep appreciation for her ongoing communication with Dr. Rollins for both her role in the academic success of athletes and the enhanced knowledge provided to help her manage her program.

Despite having two additional staff in academic services, students often report communicating the most with Dr. Rollins about academics. Not required to attend study hall, Jimmy still finds himself in the academic center at least twice per week reporting his progress to Dr. Rollins and receiving her encouragement and advice. Allison and Tyler also attend study hall consistently, although not required, to continue a relationship with the academic staff and offer assistance also. Dr. Rollins’ role in the organization as the chief academic person certainly predisposes her to the likelihood of being the most prolific in and sought after for communicating about academics within the culture. The nature and quantity of her communication are enhanced by the commitment to her work and belief in her responsibility to student success.

Meetings with Coaches
Four unique meetings essentially serve as additional formal communication channels for academic issues. Occurring most frequently is the administrators meeting. Present are the leadership persons for each athletic, business and well-being unit in the organization. It is a weekly opportunity for Ms. Bennett to update the administrators on the current business of the University as well as athletics. Each person present also updates on their own unit’s accomplishments and efforts. Dr. Rollins perceives the discussions to be motivational:

I gain a lot of motivating stuff from that...when people give weekly reports on how well their area is doing, how well the staff might be doing or praising the student-athletes’ academics. That motivates me to do more, when I hear positive comments about how well academic services is handling their job with student-athletes. But we do have some nice, interesting meetings that tend to be pretty motivating.

She is grateful for the chance to “get engaged and involved” with the rest of the organization.

“The meeting is very controlled by the athletic director” according to Dr. Rollins and that is also apparent from observation. As updates move from person to person around the table, details are confirmed by Ms. Bennett and tasks are delegated regarding upcoming events and policy implementation. Dr. Rollins’ report brings praise from Ms. Bennett especially as it concerns her communications through the Friday memo and monitoring academics via the blue forms. Unbeknownst to Dr. Rollins, Ms. Bennett has brought the communication instruments to the attention of the President’s council in order to praise the good work being done by academic services. Dr. Rollins was pleased that the efforts of her area are being recognized. The seed of an academic policy was born during the meeting as a result of Ms. Bennett’ concern related to a report from Dr. Rollins. Dr. Rollins relayed that she was troubled by an increase in course withdrawals due to the student-athlete’s aversion to certain professors. Clearly the emphasis on developing the athletes as citizens became apparent as Ms. Bennett initiated a discussion about the “life skill of dealing with people you don’t like.” The terminal point of the conversation was
a directive to "create a policy" geared toward not letting students drop course under those circumstances.

Ms. Bennett' leadership style also became apparent during the meeting as they made final preparations for an on-site visit by peer reviewers for their NCAA certification. She was adamant that individuals speaking to the visitors are "not told what to say." "Transparency" is valued as she "wants them to be honest." With these statements Ms. Bennett demonstrated a confidence in the quality of her organization and a belief in direct, sincere communication. This meeting was very amicable and Dr. Rollins conveyed that is typically the case, although disagreements can arise. Administrator meetings socialize the top level of the organization to an emphasis on student welfare and academics and develop camaraderie focused through a singular organizational effort. It comes at the direction of Ms. Bennett.

Ms. Bennett also meets with the coaches on a regular basis. Interestingly, these gatherings typically arise in conversation with coaches when discussing the possibility of consequences for a lack of academic success for their programs. Coach Holt explains that Ms. Bennett will "say something if it seems like there is an institutional problem where you are not handling your athletes" in relation to academics. Getting "called out" is simply how Coach Elam refers to it, although he adds that it does not happen often due to the overall SAU coach commitment to academics. Both Coach Mabel and Holt also related that the meetings are utilized by Ms. Bennett to motivate and bring them together around issues of overall organizational and student-athlete success. Administrator and coach meetings are quite definitively led by Ms. Bennett and as a result the importance of academics is clearly understood and addressed when she observes the need.
Ms. Morris holds monthly meetings with all coaches to discuss the various aspects of compliance including academic eligibility. Her goal is to provide education and she utilizes a variety of activities including quizzes to engage the coaches. The strategy is in response to the recognition that some see the meeting and material as burdensome. Ms. Morris’s perception of the coach attitudes toward the meeting seems well-founded. Coach Sumter explains:

But then when we come together for that once a month compliance meeting, we don't all want to be in there for three hours. So get over there on time, ready to go. Don't come late...you don’t ask a whole bunch of questions, if you don’t want to be there all day.

Not a favorite meeting for coaches, it does reinforce and instill the professional expectation from the administration that the organization will be “academically strong and have a strong foundation in NCAA compliance” as Ms. Bennett phrases it.

Meetings with Students

Academic services orients athletes to their policies immediately preceding the start of classes in the fall. Dr. Rollins’ tone in the meetings is “intentional” and she describes it as “authoritative but caring.” The purpose is to communicate that academic services is “serious” and when student-athletes enter the center they need to have a corresponding attitude. “I can not have them come in here thinking that they can come in and dominate and control us.” A month after the meeting, Angela and Thomas recall it as effective in orienting them to the center and the academic expectations. James also reflects on the effectiveness of Dr. Rollins’ orientation strategy:

She has a serious and compassionate tone at these meetings. I mean, she is the nicest lady in the world to talk to, but at the same time, she is serious about her job and promoting academics at this school.

Formal socialization for athletes to the academic culture begins with Dr. Rollins. She knows it and ensures that she makes a significant impression.
Organizational communication at SAU certainly occurs informally through e-mail, phone and passing conversations. Most recognized and discussed for their significance to socialization are the formal processes however. While the atmosphere can be family like, meetings often take a serious tone. And when Ms. Bennett is involved, Coach Sumter observes that meetings become “more on point” and focused on “handling business.” Meetings provide opportunity for the two most influential drivers of the academic culture, Ms. Bennett and Dr. Rollins, to deliver the necessary values required for academic success.

*Informal Communication*

Informal communication concerning academics occurs at the team level. The largest programs have at least weekly meetings between the head coach and assistants, at which academics is the top agenda item. Coach Ward, Ross, and Sumter delegate academic monitoring to assistants who are responsible for a determined number of individuals. Weekly meetings with the assistants are expected to reveal any issues and efforts to ensure academic success for at-risk individuals. Athletes from these three programs report communicating the most about academics with their appointed assistant coach for this reason. Assistant coaches take the responsibility seriously because their head coaches take it seriously. The result is weekly academic communication concerning individuals at two levels of the organization.

Team meetings provide opportunity for all coaches to directly communicate the academic message to students. Coach Elam’s initial beginning of the year meeting with his athlete’s addresses academics with the intention of creating “some kind of fear” in relation to not succeeding in the classroom. Utilizing a large team and individual meetings, Coach Holt breaks down the academic expectations and guidelines to the “smallest increment.” This strategy ensures their comprehension and then responsibility and accountability is forced on to the
athletes. "They can't claim ignorance." Reggie appreciates the meetings with Coach Holt and sees it as evidence of compassion and a metaphor for family:

Just getting that reiterated to you on a every other day basis can definitely be some times motivating to see that yeah somebody does care. So yeah, I am going to take the initiative and do what I have to do. It's like at home, if you don't get some type of care from your parents you are going to run wild and do what you want to do. You have to have some type of support.

Enhancing informal communication at the team level as well as the projection of caring is the pervasiveness of the open door policy. Visiting any coach in their office would typically find more than one athlete present typically just hanging out and not there for any official reason. Coach Ross's policy is even signified by the sign on his door, reading "if you are a player walk right in." Inundated by her athletes in her office, Coach Sumter finds she has to "kick them out" to get work accomplished. "An open door policy" contributes to the great relationship that Coach Mabel feels she has with her players. Accessibility in open and honest communication between coaches and athletes assists in creating the sense of family and caring that characterizes the organization.

Finally, the word of mouth peer network enhances the power of the attendance policy. Coach Davis observes it to be the most powerful tool in teaching academic expectations to the student-athletes. To her, the athletes recognize department policy consequences are real because when an athlete gets punished, word spreads and it spreads quickly. "One thing can happen right now to one of the athletes and every athlete would know by the end of the day, even if they are off-campus...every athlete and every former athlete."

*Communication Summary*

SAU athletics is distinguished by communication processes that operate formally and informally, both serving to strengthen the transmission of the values, beliefs and attitudes
surrounding the academic culture. Academic services and specifically Dr. Rollins provide much of the impetus for formal academic communication that denotes the seriousness and commitment associated with the educational component of the organization. Reinforcement from Ms. Bennett in meetings and by e-mail clearly delineates the power structure and where the academic culture begins. Further commitment emanates from team communications as well as compassion actually demonstrated organization wide through open door policies. The administrators and coaches are very accessible to both students and coaches with the outcome being an atmosphere of familial support and collegiality. Communication also shapes the relationships discussed as the first socialization process in this chapter and also intertwines with the final socialization process to be addressed: reward and consequence.

Rewards and Consequences

Participants found difficulty in offering significant responses to inquiries of whether they were rewarded for academic success and punished for academic failures. Ms. Morris and Coach Holt initially replied “I don’t know” when posed with the question. Perceptions of the reinforcement process vary according to coach and student and by the concept of reward and consequence. Rewards are viewed as virtually non-existent for the coaches with some recognition of limited verbal praise. Students acknowledge and appreciate the ceremonies discussed earlier as the reward system in place for them. Consequences take on a much more tangible awareness for the organization and are often connected to the structure of NCAA policy. The negative reinforcement process recognized by the organization is formal. Not directly visible, a meaningful informal reinforcement process operates throughout the organizations’ policy, language, rituals, relationships and communication. Administrators, coaches, and students are grateful for the informal rewards, which mostly occurs through verbal praise from
coaches or administrators. More powerful to the academic culture are the layers of informal negative reinforcement distributed by Ms. Bennett, Dr. Rollins and the coaches. Commitment to academics and student welfare drive the punishment system and delivers the message to students and coaches that the organization means business when it comes to academics.

**Formal Rewards**

The rituals described in the previous chapter serve as both cultural content and process. The spring basketball game and end of year banquet are acknowledged by the entire organization to be the principle formal reward systems. Emphasis placed on the events by Ms. Bennett and Dr. Rollins, as the chief architects, creates a strong academic culture and socializes the organization to the importance of academics. They operate as formal processes by handing out tangible awards to qualified students whose academic efforts are positively celebrated and reinforced. Informally, students are inspired to work harder to be formally recognized and not left out of the ceremonies. Coaches are also informally reinforced by design at the basketball game by Dr. Rollins. Including coaches in the ceremony, informally “grades” them by the number of athletes they have standing with them on the gym floor.

Notable from the coaches’ perspective is that they lament a lack of formal rewards for them. Ms. Bennett identifies Dr. Rollins as the only administrator being formally evaluated for academic success, because “it’s connected to her job.” Coaches are also evaluated based on how their athletes are doing academically as part of a formal process. However, no “merit raise” is given for academic success and Ms. Bennett believes “we don’t ever get the proper attention” from the institution for the organization’s educational accomplishments. The irony is recognized too in that conference championships are easily recognized monetarily with a bonus request from the institution while academic successes are not. Coaches see no formal rewards for academic
success and some express disappointment at not receiving monetary incentives as they see occurring at other institutions. Coach Elam holds the opposite view in that rewards should not be given to coaches for academic success, because it is part of “doing our job.”

Informal Rewards

Positive reinforcement for coaches and administrators exists as verbal praise and chiefly from Ms. Bennett. Her positive feedback is truly valued and reflects her leadership in driving the academic culture. Ms. Bennett recognizes verbal praise is the chief reward and ensures that she consciously incorporates it as part of her emphasis on academics:

“We spend time congratulating them pretty well. I brag about it in the president’s Cabinet. Those are the things that we actually take to President’s cabinet. This softball team has done some great things nationally with their GPA, and that will actually be in the president’s Cabinet minutes and they really get acknowledged for those kind of things. We don’t have such a thing as a merit raise here, so whatever you do you are not going to get a raise, but you might get a pat for it.

“Patting” is not her preference, but she identifies the need in the organization especially in the absence of monetary reward:

I was just a coach, and I was an old-school athlete and I just didn’t need to be patted. There is a lot of patting that needs to go on around here... and if that helps them do it then fine. It’s a little weary. It goes back to... I’ve got some good people and they do some pretty good things. In order to keep them... that’s just some of the fleas that comes with the dogs. Because I might [not really be able to] replace them. I might not have enough money to replace them with somebody like them. So if some of these hang-ups are what they bring to the table, I’ll go for it.

Coach Overby’s observation of the verbal praise by administrators mirrors that of many of the coaches. Adding to the power of the positive reinforcement is the location, typically in meetings with all of their peers.

Praises are bigger than raises.... Dr. Rollins will say something. Coach Bennett. Coach Gannon. We will have our coaches meeting, and if a team does really well with GPA first semester, they will announce it. It is what you work for. You work for praise like that.

In addition to the public praise at meetings, Coach Sumter welcomes personal e-mails from Ms.
Bennett that says “hey, way to go…” in recognition of her teams’ academic success. Despite it being an antithesis for her personality, Ms. Bennett has implemented an informal praise system for academics that serves to reinforce the coaches to the organizational commitment to education.

The informal praise system for athletes has been highlighted previously and is characteristic of the family atmosphere within the organization. It is obviously quite prevalent in academic services and is in large part responsible for students still spending time in academic services although not required. Dr. Rollins’ sincere delight at seeing improved grades from an athlete provides significant reinforcement. Her verbal praise is loud enough so that anyone present in the room is witness and is typically accompanied by maternal hugs.

**Formal Consequences**

The organization does not perceive formal consequences to occur very often, especially from the coach perspective. However, punishment is a recognized component of organizational policy and is purposefully designed to confer the gravity of academics, most prominently by Dr. Rollins but also by the coaches. Like rewards, punishment serves both as cultural content and socialization process. As policy it represents the commitment to academics and the seriousness placed on that commitment. The severity of the consequences and the willingness to implement the punishment effectively socialize both students and coaches to the idea that academics is “strictly business” as Dr. Rollins terms it.

Discussed in the last chapter, the primary academic policy in the organization emanates from academic services and involves attendance, study hall, and freshman meetings. Infractions are reported to coaches and administrators with ultimate consequences of being excluded from academic services and loss of scholarship for attendance issues. Dr. Rollins sees consequences as
an instrument in creating a positive environment in her area:

So we are able to control and do whatever is necessary to make this environment a very warm, friendly and learning one and that's kind of how it is supposed to be. No one or two student-athletes will come in here and disrupt or interfere with the setting that we have created for student-athletes who need help. So we control and take care of whatever punishment on that end.

The power of the consequences is evident. Thomas’s attitude toward study hall was shaped after only a few weeks on campus as a result of receiving punishment for missing a study hall. Word of Coach Ross’s scholarship reduction for an athlete’s attendance concerns quickly filtered through the entire organization making a significant impression on both coaches and athletes. Punishment is real and of consequence and that makes it effective as a part of the socialization process.

Common among the athletes as well is the knowledge that academic failure simply results in the loss of eligibility to play. For them, ineligibility is the ultimate punishment. “If you flunk, you are off the team.” Tyler directly posits the sentiment and both he and James denote that they have seen it happen within every program. Academic motivation results from prospects of letting teammates down, loss of scholarship and denying the competitive drive. “Nothing is worse than being on the sidelines and watching your team play.” Lara and the other athletes see it as truly the most severe punishment. It is influential because they have seen it in action.

The external environment has largely shaped coaches view of punishment for themselves regarding academics. Most coaches cite the NCAA’s Academic Progress Rate (APR) and the potential loss of scholarships as their primary punishment for lack of academic success. Coach Sumter states that while her program has not experienced any issues, others have and the administration takes steps to address low APR:
But with APR, if you have below a 925 you have to put together an academic plan and of those sports whoever they are – they had several meetings to put together an academic plan. And then several meetings throughout the year to make sure they stuck with the plan. We have not had that experience.

Coaches understand that academic failure results in job loss according to Coach Ross. He observes that students failing at academics threaten a coach’s career just like losing games, except “losing games is a little more up front than academics.” Despite recognizing the severe consequences of both NCAA and organizational policy, the coaches do not cite a specific example of it ever occurring. “I haven’t had to experience that or any other coach being punished” according to Coach Elam, who is the longest tenured coach in the organization. APR is a very real concern for coaches and the administrators. “Cause if you publicly get embarrassed by the NCAA because of your APRs and stuff like that, you will get the President’s attention and my attention.” Like the informal reward system, Ms. Bennett is the key to the informal consequence system that clearly can reinforce coach attitudes toward academics.

*Informal Consequences*

Coaches are recognized by both Ms. Bennett and Dr. Rollins for their significant impact on academics. Knowledge of their influence and expectation of their commitment to academics brings swift and significant negative reinforcement sanctions if there is an issue. Dr. Rollins appreciates and counts on Ms. Bennett’ strong reactions to e-mail pronouncements of coach non-compliance like described in the blue card progress reports previously. Coach Sumter provided insight that she complies with any academic requests to avoid any negative e-mail. The coaches make it clear that punishment comes in the form of negative feedback in front of peers at coaches meetings as well. Coach Holt explains that Ms. Bennett’ intention is not to “embarrass,” but to “create a sense of we are in this together…graduating is something that we do.” For the coaches,
they recognize the severity of potential APR problems but the wrath of Ms. Bennett is more real to them and has more impact for that reason.

Student-athletes experience informal consequences on three levels and all from their coaches. First, the potential for physical punishment in the form of running looms as a reality. Physical discipline for academic infractions are described by many of the coaches often to reinforce Dr. Rollins’ policy. Phyllis describes running for Coach Mabel as a direct result from “not complying with something for Dr. Rollins…. She backs her up.” Secondly, the emotional reprimand of disappointing a parental figure in the form of the coach can be devastating. Sanaa much prefers physical punishment:

I would rather run 200 miles than to see that look on her face. And because that face shows you that first of all she is disappointed. Second of all that you could have done better. And third of all that she really cares and you really let her down when she believed in you the most. Not only did you let her down, you ultimately let yourself down. For her to hold the reins on you and love you and take care of you, she doesn't have to do that. She cares about you, how your mom cares about you. You know that first month after the baby is born, you got to feed it every two hours. That is how she is. She's checking up on us, “Where you at? Don't you think you need to be getting some shots up? Don't you think you need to be studying for this test?” Ultimately, that works.

The powerful familial bond in Coach Sumter’s program and her high expectations for her players creates intrinsic motivation through the potential of the negative emotional consequence of “disappointing” her. Finally, the athletes face the possibility of being public admonished in front of their peers much like their coaches. Coach Elam refers to it as “embarrassment for success” and sees it as a “motivational” tool to not be in that situation next semester. Similar in his approach, Coach Ross recognizes those that do well and “those that don’t do good too” in team gatherings. Each program is unique however, and the athletes will experience these punishments to differing degrees depending on the beliefs of the coach and what they perceive to be effective in shaping the academic behavior of their athletes.
Positive and negative reinforcement systems exist in SAU athletics. Visible to the organization are the formal rituals and policies in place through academic services and externally through the NCAA. Academic cultural content and processes are reinforced by the reality of punishment and reward primarily implemented and supported by Dr. Rollins and Ms. Bennett. The organization is committed to student-athlete welfare and contrary behavior is not accepted. Informal systems of reward and punishment are especially critical for the coaches, who truly don’t feel connected to any formal organizational system of reinforcement. Ms. Bennett consciously shapes the system and essentially generates an effective socialization process as a result.

Summary of Socialization Processes

Values, beliefs and attitudes shape the socialization processes in SAU athletics. Fortunately for the student-athletes, the core values are directed at ensuring their academic and life success. Systems of communication and reinforcement are designed formally and informally to enhance academic achievement. Coaches are involved in the construction of the processes and are counted on to enact many of the communication and reward strategies. However, analysis of socialization processes most clearly defines relationships that reveal the hierarchy and influencing power structure in the organization. Administrators set the standards for the academic culture, while Ms. Bennett and Dr. Rollins are actively and strongly delivering the expectations of academic achievement and corresponding behavior to the entire organization. Despite their authority, socialization also rests in the close bond between coach and athlete. Ultimately SAU’s academic cultural content and socialization processes mirror the values of commitment, compassion, citizenship development, and competition. The outcome is a congruent and synergistic culture guiding SAU to accomplishments not easily attained by similar
organizations.
CHAPTER VII
DISCUSSION

NCAA statistics demonstratively indicate that the SAU athletic department is different. South Atlantic University is an exemplary HBCU, graduating more of its athletes than others (2007 NCAA Report, n.d.). Despite significant struggles for most NCAA Division I HBCUs in graduation rates, SAU succeeds. The overall low rates of graduation at HBCUs attracted both NCAA and national media attention. In order to explain the lack of success, the NCAA assigned insufficient financial resources as the primary cause for the concern (Carey, 2006). Financial resources certainly are a factor (Carey, 2006). However, SAU's athletic program performs exceptionally well in graduating its student-athletes yet faces the same resource obstacles. Absent financial resources as the sole determining variable, extensive literature and research connecting performance to organizational culture provides credibility to the likelihood that SAU has developed a positive academic culture that enhances student-athletes' success. Additionally, an effective socialization process is necessary to transmit the culture through the organization and most significantly to the student-athletes.

This case study was undertaken to understand the role that organizational culture plays in the academic success of SAU in graduating their athletes and how the organization effectively socializes their student-athletes to a positive academic culture. The conceptual framework that I proposed for this study combines components of Wiedman's model of undergraduate socialization (1989) with elements of cultural content (Chao et al., 1994). My model of the combined elements provided me the means to study and comprehend SAU's exceptional performance transmitted through its organizational culture.
This chapter provides a summary analysis of the relationship between the data and the conceptual model presented in Chapter III. I discovered unique aspects of culture and socialization at SAU athletics that force the development of a refined model representing the exemplar circumstances. I observed five critical interactive components that contribute to the achievement of a positive and congruent academic culture. Recognizing that each NCAA Division I HBCU retains their own unique environmental variables, enough common ground exists to suggest applicable lessons learned in the SAU model. Lastly, the implications for continued research are conveyed in light of a dearth of research regarding the phenomenon and this study’s positive findings regarding culture and academic performance.

My Original Conceptual Framework: The Fit

My conceptual framework (see page 53) provided an apt lens for gathering and organizing the data. The three major components of the model (socializing agents, cultural content, socialization processes) served as an effective guide in supplying insight to the overriding research questions. The four research questions focused on understanding the nature of the impact of socializing agents, organizational relationships, cultural content, and socialization processes on the academic culture. The final query was whether a congruent academic positive culture exists in the organization.

While Wiedman (1989) suggested external socializing agents impacts the developmental experience of the undergraduate student, I chose to focus on the internal organization and selected the three primary department groups engaging directly in the lives of the student-athlete for scrutiny. Time demands and intense engagement in the athletic department limit the impact of external socializing groups on the student-athlete and boost the influence of administrators, coaches and peer athletes. I theorized the existence of formal and informal interactions among
the groups and that one group might prevail as dominant in authority and influence, with a congruent positive academic culture reflecting that groups values, beliefs and attitudes. This prevailing culture would in turn influence development of the cultural content and socialization processes that ultimately lead to the academic culture being accepted and internalized by SAU student-athletes. Further, I felt that interactions between content and process would enhance overall socialization.

This framework essentially provided me with a linear model containing an assumption that categories within processes and content were of equal significance and influence. Formal and informal designations were assigned equal weight as well. My categorization of the data and understanding of the overall culture and socialization processes was accomplished by utilizing the conceptual framework. However, SAU's exemplar model emerged as more intricate, circular, interactive, and asymmetrical than my original framework posited. A review of how the data fit and does not fit into the original conceptual framework generated a revised model better suited to explain more accurately the academic success of the organization.

Socializing Agents

Past research regarding undergraduate socialization suggest student peer groups as the most influential of the potential socializing groups on campus (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Less frequent interaction serves to prevent administrators from significantly influencing socialization, while the opposite is true for coaches. The experience for SAU student-athletes does not corroborate these findings. Administrators at SAU are committed to overall student-athlete well-being and pride themselves on having close relationships with many of the student-athletes. The structure of administrative roles creates differing levels of personal connection however. Administrative duties keep Ms. Morris and Ms. Bennett tied to working
with staff and other administrators, while more student-focused responsibilities allow Ms. Gannon and especially Dr. Rollins to engage in more meaningful relationships. Despite Ms. Bennett’s declaration that she better serves the athletes by focusing on advocacy rather than relationships, many of the student-athletes acknowledged her directly for her support.

The four administrators clearly belong in the framework as socializing agents because of their compassion and commitment for the student-athlete as well as the powerful authority they have created and hold in the organization. Each leader is respected by the coaches for their competence and support and by the students for their caring attitudes toward their personal success. The original framework indicates that socializing agents occur in a formal and informal context. Although Wiedman (1989) most strongly attributes the informal label to student peer groups in his model, for SAU athletics, applying the formal and informal label to each level is appropriate. The administrators create and enforce academic standards and policy structuring them as formal socializing agents in the organization. The sense of compassion and maternal relationships with student-athletes also shapes them as informal socializing agents.

The socializing influence of coaches is more visibly demonstrated in past research (Adler & Adler, 1985; Harvey, 1996, Scott, 1997). Extensive interaction combined with the intensity of intercollegiate athletic competition and the coaches’ definitive authority over the athletes’ playing careers and scholarships will lead to potentially intense relationships. Coaches at SAU play similar roles. Representing the perspective of formal socializing agents as the authoritative coach, they create and enforce policy related to the program. Like the administrators, compassion for student-athlete success and well-being creates familial type relationships and represents the informal influence on the student-athletes. While possessing their own strong values geared toward academics, coaches are appreciably impacted by the administrators and
their compassionate but authoritative styles. Expectations of congruent values regarding academics are made very evident by the administrators. Coach or student-athlete actions not in agreement with those values are addressed with consequences. Oppositely, organizational value driven actions and behavior receive formal and informal reward.

SAU student-athletes socialize each other by way of reinforcing the academic culture transmitted to them by the administrators and coaches. The inordinate amount of time they spend with each other combined with the significant focus on athletic competition develops close bonds and creates opportunity for influencing each other’s values, attitudes and beliefs. They belong in the framework as a socializing agent, but they operate differently than past research would indicate.

The three groups belong in the framework with the formal and informal labels. However, elaborations are necessary to understand the intricacies and differing degrees of influence the three groups offer. First, an unmistakable hierarchy exists in the organization and the weight of the socializing influence corresponds to the hierarchy. Administrators are solidly at the top of the organization and promote their tough love approach. Appropriately as the AD, Ms. Bennett has set the vision for organizational excellence in academics and purposefully taken the actions necessary to implement the vision. Perhaps, one of the most influential actions taken was recruiting and hiring Dr. Rollins for her distinction in athletic academic services. Dr. Rollins is charismatic and brings a passion and commitment to academics that deeply impacts both student-athletes and coaches. A new culture and socialization model explaining SAU’s success must indicate the weighted influence of the administrators.

However, the influential hierarchy includes two other levels. Close relationships with coaches and their positional authority place them at the second level of the socialization
hierarchy. The first two levels are so strong that the peer group does not act as a culture creation agent, but as reinforcement and support. A level of hierarchy does exist within the peer group as upperclassmen have been shaped by administrators and coaches to communicate academic expectations to incoming freshmen. A new model must account for the three level hierarchy of socializing agents that reflects the dominant authority and power emanating from the top of the organization.

**Prevailing Values, Attitudes and Beliefs**

The final assumption made in the first component of my framework is a set of prevailing values, attitudes and beliefs emerges from the dominant socializing group and proceeds to shape the cultural content and processes that comprise socialization to the SAU academic culture. This component of the framework is a perfect fit. Four clear organizational values originate with the administration: commitment, compassion, citizenship development, and competition. Commitment encompasses a feeling of dedication to student-athletes, the institution, the athletic department, and hard work in service to the first three entities. For Ms. Bennett, serving the institution is her first responsibility with her commitment to the student-athletes coming in as a close second. Student-athletes are priorities for the other three administrators. The family atmosphere and familial relationships signal the spirit of compassion that begins at the top and spreads through the entire organization. A firm belief surrounds the duty of the organizational staff to develop good citizens. Athletic success is a goal, but comparatively small compared to the investment in ensuring the athletes succeed in life. For SAU athletics, the message of good citizenship means being a good student, graduating, behaving maturely in college, serving the community, and establishing a productive professional career. Competition is a value that does not apply merely to athletics. Winning at academics motivates administration and coaches in
their efforts in working with student-athletes. The four core organization values directly influence the cultural content and socialization processes critical to the academic culture and its transmission.

Socialization Content

Policies, language and tradition are critical elements in understanding the culture and socialization journey for student-athletes. Like the socializing agent component of the framework, revisions are required based on the discovery that parts of the cultural content carry more influence than others. That concept also applies to formal versus informal content. Policies enacted through academic services serve notice that classroom success is taken very seriously. Effectiveness derives from the creation of interactive opportunity with student-athletes who require the most attention and active enforcement of policy throughout the organization. Dedicated implementation of the policy and the presence of real consequences make the formal policies a more significant factor in the culture than the informal. Augmenting policy is the overall program design. Policy details are specifically geared toward enhancing student-athlete success and their implementation engages the efforts of the coaches to strengthen the outcomes. Well-designed policy coupled with their thorough execution makes policy a more significant socialization mechanism than language and ritual.

Certainly, both language and ritual are important cultural factors. Both verbal and nonverbal informal language, serves to transmit values of compassion and citizenship development. Two formal rituals are recognized for their positive reinforcement of student-athlete success, but also operate informally to motivate coaches and students to seek academic success in order to obtain the formal recognition. Revising the framework in light of the acquired data for socialization content means placing the formal policy created by academic
services in a larger role, while understanding the importance of informal language and the two valued formal ceremonies. In the case of all of the content, I found solid connections between the four core organization values and cultural content creation.

Socialization Processes

The findings reflect the same for the process component of the framework. Relationships are highly influential and truly drive the socialization process. Organizational authority and power stemming from the hierarchy characterize formal and informal relationships. Exploring the dynamics of the relationships between the three socializing groups reveals how the academic culture is transmitted from administration to coach to athlete and then among the athletes. Communication and reinforcement are integral socialization processes, but rather than standing independently they represent critical aspects of the relationship component. Formal communication from the administration to coaches serves to reinforce the hierarchy and transmit the values of commitment and citizenship development. Informal communication at team levels and among peers reveals the compassion in the organization often found in pervasive accessibility of the organization staff to student-athletes. Peer word of mouth networks create the informal communication channel that reinforces the academic culture. Positive and negative reinforcement is highly formal for student-athletes and informal for coaches. Hierarchy, authority, and power in the organization determine the structure of the reinforcement, again characterizing and shaping departmental relationships.

Analyzing the findings related to socialization processes clarifies that the successful model of culture and socialization at SAU is not linear, but definitively intertwined, circular and reinforcing. The connection between relationships and academic policy serve as an example. Dr. Rollins’ study hall, freshman meetings, and advising policies each serve to create extensive
interaction with student-athletes reinforcing tight bonds between the academic staff and the
student-athletes. In addition, significant consequence attached to non-compliance with these
policies strengthens the authoritative hierarchy between administration and student-athletes.
Strongly worded e-mails from administration to coaches bolsters policy implementation while
shaping hierarchical relationships also influenced by the negative or positive reinforcing tone of
the communication. Informal compassionate language as cultural content strengthens
relationships between staff and athletes as a socialization process. Examples of
interconnectedness between specific cultural content and socialization process are numerous and
intricate. Circular, reinforcing patterns have to be acknowledged as a vital element to the new
model.

The outcome of the combination of the three components as indicated in the conceptual
framework: student-athletes having been socialized to the values, beliefs and attitudes of the
organization are integrated into the positive academic culture. This is clearly the end result at
SAU. Student-athlete socialization however, exists as a component of the overall strongly
congruent academic culture that encompasses the three socializing groups. Understanding
SAU's success must be perceived from the vantage point of culture creation and socialization as
it applies to all socializing agents in the organization. Each piece of the conceptual framework
adds to the knowledge surrounding the cultural aspect of SAU's academic success. The results
however suggest a new model reflecting differentiated levels of influence and interconnectedness
will more accurately describe the path to developing and sustaining a congruent academic culture
and related academic success for the student-athletes.
An Exemplar Model

Represented in Figure 4 is my revised model explaining the creation of a positive academic culture and the socialization process at SAU. Five essential steps characterize a circular pathway to their congruent culture. Each builds upon the next in the progression, but interconnectedness is also visible and inherent to the outcome. A strong hierarchy of power in the organization exists as indicated in the results. The journey begins with the leadership.

*Figure 4. SAU Academic Culture Model*
Strong Visionary Leadership

Leaders initiate organizational culture creation by impressing his or her values, beliefs, and attitudes on the organization from the beginning (Schein, 2004). Ms. Bennett transitioned from coaching to athletic director in large part as a reaction to having experienced inadequate leadership from previous athletic directors. As a long time insider, she had a clear vision of the needs and priorities for the organization and how it should be approached. Based on having "weathered some storms" regarding academic issues and compliance, her vision for the organization was based on a solid foundation in academic success and NCAA compliance. The academic versus athletic vision set the standard for the organization. SAU administrators admire her direct and honest communication style. Her expectations regarding the academic vision are visible in all forms of communication and widely acknowledged by the staff. Setting a vision and expectations is the starting point for the congruent culture. Understood by Ms. Bennett also was the need to surround herself by competent professional staff who embraced similar values. For those reasons, she hired her two former assistants and Dr. Rollins as administrators. New coach hires are also based on these criteria. Strongly believing in her values, Ms. Bennett demands the same from all staff. Commitment to the institution and especially the well-being of student-athletes is a requirement, not an option. Everyone is held accountable to that commitment.

Dr. Rollins presents strong visionary leadership from the academic side. More than merely embracing the same values as Ms. Bennett, she has created her own strong subculture in academic services. Clear to the entire organization is the seriousness that she applies to her work and her compassion for all student-athletes as students. Students and coaches are well aware that she holds them accountable for following her policies and academic efforts. Deal and Kennedy (2000) cited "heroes" as a fundamental component of a strong organizational culture (p. 14).
Culture heroes model organizational values, serve as motivators, and lead based solely on their vision for the organization. Ms. Bennett and Dr. Rollins are heroes in the academic culture and socialization process at SAU.

Core Values

Ms. Bennett’s leadership reflects her core values regarding the organization’s purpose. Values of commitment, compassion, citizenship and competition serve as the foundation for the cultural content as well as the socialization processes. The visibility of the values permeates everyday life in the organization. Meeting agendas prioritizing support for athletes in family crisis reflect compassion and commitment to student-athlete well-being. Post game speeches about off the field expectations demonstrate the focus on citizenship development. Coach Mabel’s high GPA standard for her athletes reflects the competitive drive to win academically. The numerous examples of cultural content and socialization process described in this study can all be linked to the four core values. The values clearly belong to Ms. Bennett and she has imposed them on the organization. It does not mean that administrators and coaches did not bring those values with them to the organization. To the contrary, their backgrounds often reflect a solid grounding in those very same values. It harkens back to strong visionary leadership. Hiring people of similar values, beliefs and attitudes is essential to building and maintaining a strong culture.

Purposeful Design

Educational environments achieve success when “designed with an understanding of the dynamics and impact of human environments” rather than by “chance” (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 2). Ample evidence suggests that thoughtful consideration in creating cultural content especially in policy and ritual and in the socialization processes of communication and
reinforcement contributes significantly to SAU's overall congruent culture. Perhaps the best example lies in Ms. Bennett efforts at ensuring the spring awards banquet reflected the organizational priority of academics by making the academics trophy "look the best" and presenting it as the finale.

Policies are designed to have students exceed academic benchmarks and understand the organizational seriousness regarding academics through the gravity of the non-compliance consequences. The layout of the academic services center creates an atmosphere for rule enforcement encouraging work and not play as well as collaboration and support.

Communication instruments are designed to reinforce the hierarchy and place emphasis on transmitting core organizational values. The most meaningful reinforcement strategies occur informally between administration and coaches. The power of public praise and admonishment is recognized by administrators for their value in impacting attitudes and subsequent actions. Coaches engage in academically-focused design through efforts such as Coach Mabel's taking mobile phones away on trips and Coach Sumter's collective running for the course attendance transgressions of one athlete. Both serve notice on the commitment to academics and are designed to make an impact. A positive academic culture in part exists for the entire organization because academic culture is consciously considered when designing and implementing policy and process.

*Caring Individuals*

SAU athletics is characterized by individuals who view themselves and others as family members: mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles and cousins. This perspective transpires from the top to bottom of the organization. Family in SAU athletics is a metaphor for a caring organization. By referring to each other as family translates into members either feeling
cared about or caring about their peers and colleagues. The result is a genuine concern for personal success of individuals rather than strictly athletic worries. Extensive use of caring language both verbally and non-verbally are the outward signs of the family type culture and serve to reinforce the value of compassion. While not everyone connects to the family metaphor, the view of personal responsibility to support everyone in the organization and especially the student-athletes is common. Administrators, coaches and student-athletes feel emotionally connected to not just their teams, but to the entire organization. By embracing the value of compassion, the organization strengthens the values of commitment and citizenship development. The impact is best witnessed in Sanaa and Monica’s opinion of the worst punishment being the look of “disappointment” in Coach Sumter’s face when not succeeding academically because she is their “Mom.”

Walking the Walk

“You can talk about academics all you want, but you have to walk the walk.” Plainly said by Coach Mabel, this belief represents a critical and effective strategy from both administration and coaches. Policies and reinforcements work because of a concerted effort at implementation and enforcement. Student-athletes believe that the academic center is an operation to be respected and a place in which serious work is to be done. Their belief arises from a combination of acquiring policy knowledge from Dr. Rollins who applies a serious tone during orientations and from the swift admonishment for not adhering to any of the high behavioral expectations. Coach Ross and Ms. Bennett express their belief that ultimate consequences of reducing or eliminating scholarships for academic infractions are necessary and send a message to the entire organization. They are proved right by Allison’s declaration that
she forces herself to go to class when not motivated, because of Coach Ross’s reduction in
scholarship for one of his players not going to class.

The Friday memo demonstrates that follow through influences the entire organization.
Evaluating their policies and tracking academic progress weekly and then providing
individualized data to coaches conveys the messages that academic services is taking its job
seriously and the expectation that coaches will react and take action when needed. Coaches
respond: student-athletes typically receive consequences ranging from running extra to game
suspension.

Walking the walk symbolizes the physical expressions of the positive academic culture.
It takes place as punishment and reward. It means administrators are present at all athletic
competitions. It is signified by administrators greeting athletes by name, giving hugs and
expressing sincere interest in their well-being. Walking the walk is the audible and highly visible
expression of the four core values. By visibly modeling the values, the culture is strengthened.

A Congruent Culture

The five steps of the newly ascribed model for SAU’s exemplar academic culture and
socialization represent a progression of key components that build and interact. The outcome
realized is a congruent culture geared toward academic success. A congruent culture
demonstrates an alignment between all parts of the organization directed toward the same values,
beliefs, and attitudes (Cameron and Quinn, 2006). Administrators, coaches and student-athletes
share the same four core values. They believe that SAU athletes should behave in a mature
manner befitting the institution and student-athletes should strive academically as well as
graduate from the institution. Student-athletes feel a sense of responsibility to their organization
to be good people off the field. Coaches and administrators feel a sense of responsibility to be
exceptional in their efforts to help student-athletes succeed in their personal lives. With nine
different programs and four administrators with varying responsibilities, potential for divergent
subcultures readily exists. Beginning with strong visionary leadership and incorporating core
values, thoughtful design, caring people, and following through with action results in a clear and
tangible positive academic congruent culture. Best described by Monica, “Everybody is on the
same page: hard work, discipline and dedication, from the President down.”

How does this culture benefit the organization and the stakeholders? When participants
were asked directly to theorize about the excellent graduation rates, the success is typically
attributed to the “people” and their attitudes and efforts. Coach Holt captures much of the
general sentiment in “we really care about our athletes graduating” so actions are taken to “make
sure that they do.” Members of the organization directly observe the culture effectively at work.
The culture has created a singular vision that motivates the organization and creates a closer
bond between individuals who have embraced the vision. Pride in the success enhances morale.
Turnover in staff and coaches remains low while a high level of satisfaction in the organization is
very apparent. Coaches cite their academic achievements as a major recruiting advantage. The
academic culture then reinforces itself by being able to recruit and retain more academically
inclined student-athletes. The benefits of the academic culture reach far beyond graduation rates.

Applicable Lessons

Twenty-two HBCUs compete in NCAA Division I athletics. Each is unique in a number
of variables that will influence their own cultures and efforts at academics. However, common
ground exists in athletics as the far majority of institutions compete in two conferences.
Institutionally, President Samuels highlighted that HBCUs traditionally serve students from an
underserved population who might be a first-generation college student and from lower socio-
economic backgrounds. Combined with the acknowledged lack of financial resources, HBCUs face common obstacles in their educational mission. SAU’s exceptional success while facing common obstacles allows for the consideration of applicable lessons to other HBCU athletic departments in creating and managing an academic culture.

There is no denying that SAU has its share of charismatic leaders at both the administrative and coaching levels, contributing to the idea of “great people” essentially creating the academic success. Certainly charisma and unique personalities do contribute, but there are other practical culture and socialization methods signified in SAU’s model recognized in the organizational culture literature as desirable and effective. Schein (2004) highlights seven specific means for organizational leaders to integrate their organization into a desired culture. They are straight out of the SAU playbook with the key to each being systematic and requiring careful thought. Schein’s suggested “mechanisms” for “embedding” and reinforcing culture include: consciously being aware of what leaders pay attention to in the organization, deliberately allocating resources to priority areas, systematically rewarding, conscious role modeling, hiring and promoting for cultural fit, thoughtful design of organizational structure and systems, consideration for traditions and design of physical space (p. 246). Schein is a pioneer and leading scholar in organizational culture research and theory. Fifty years of research by Schein produced the preceding recommendations for organizations seeking to effectively socialize the organization to a desired culture. Each of the suggestions has been highlighted throughout the last three chapters and in the description of SAU’s exemplar model. SAU’s model is generalizable because in many ways it has been recognized previously in organizational culture literature for its excellence. Charismatic leadership is not a requirement in creating a
desired culture in connection with organizational performance. Systematic consideration for all values, cultural content and socialization processes is the lesson.

Implications for Future Research

Impetus for future research regarding the issue of HBCU athlete graduation rates rests on three considerations. First, there is a dearth of study examining the concern. This neglect is surprising, given the national media attention and interest that the matter has attracted from the NCAA. Secondly, the existence of an institution that appears to have found a solution combined with the data regarding the reality of a positive academic organizational culture suggests an expansion of the line of inquiry to fully comprehend possible associations between culture and academic success. Third, the presence of additional environmental variables recognized in the literature for impacting the socialization experience of undergraduate students suggests a need to further examine the phenomenon from additional perspectives.

Only one additional study (Taylor, 2005) addresses the issue of HBCU athletes and their academic struggles. Perhaps research has been limited because of the NCAA’s demonstrative explanation of lack of financial resources (Carey, 2006; Sander, 2009). Financial data from Chapter I dispelled the claim in part by demonstrating no correlation between HBCU instructional spending and graduation rates. With other variables clearly at work and the issue continuing to raise concerns, comprehensive examination of the influences on positive and negative academic performance in HBCU athletic departments is required.

SAU’s ability to realize success while most HBCUs struggle was a primary motivation to embark on this case study. Having found a congruent academic culture, it is necessary to expand the sample and understand the student-athlete experience on other HBCU campuses. Comparative research is needed to truly understand SAU’s accomplishment and others’ labors.
Are there real differences in cultural content and socialization processes amongst the HBCU athletic departments and do the differences correlate with graduation rates?

Limiting this study to inclusion of socializing agents internal to the organization provided insight into the primary cultural influences within the organization. Excluded from inquiry were the undeniable impact of external environmental variables on the culture and the academic success of the athletes. On campus as socializing agents is the faculty. Wiedman (1989) includes relationships with faculty as a key socialization process for undergraduate students. Wiedman’s inclusion of faculty influence has been corroborated in numerous studies (Kuh & Hu, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Some SAU athletes engaged in challenging academic disciplines, honors or developmental programs describe faculty advisors as a more significant academic influence than athletic academic services. Faculty bias towards athletes has been an issue on campuses as well (Baucom & Lantz, 2003). Positive or negative views from faculty will impact the academic experience of the athletes. The impact on the student-athletes’ values, beliefs and attitudes needs to be understood.

Two other external environmental variables not considered for this study, but regarded by many of the participants were conference affiliation and the NCAA’s academic reform movement in the form of the Academic Progress Rate (APR). Conferences have different levels of revenue streams (Sander, 2009) with HBCU conferences traditionally being on the lower end. More importantly from the organizational culture perspective, conferences set varying expectations regarding compliance and academic achievement according to SAU administrators and coaches. The implication is that institutional achievement is directed at where the academic bar is set by the conference, whether high or low.
A public warning or penalty such as losing scholarships was handed out to 19 of 22 HBCUs in the most recent posting of APR (Sander, 2009). Administrators and coaches both describe being impacted by APR and the potential to lose scholarships. Receiving negative publicity for penalties is certainly foremost in their thoughts. Ms. Morris indicates that Ms. Bennett will specifically communicate with all coaches in APR difficulty after being informed of their below standard scores. Coach Ross illustrates the pressure to work with a student-athlete who is academically failing, because an athlete leaving school for academic reasons will negatively impact APR. External athletic affiliations set and monitor the academic standards necessary to compete. The impact on the organizational culture is unavoidable. The weight of the influence and the structure of the interaction with internal variables are issues worth examining, again given the gravity of the overall concern.

Bowen and Levin (2003) in their germinal work on the dichotomy between intercollegiate athletics and the educational mission of higher education suggest the ultimate solution is integrating the athletic culture into the academic one. SAU has accomplished this and has been able to adopt athletic and academic priorities, succeeding at both. Their cultural success, the extent of the problem, and the expansive intricacies and promise of organizational culture justify continued thoughtful inquiry.
Appendices

Appendix A-Informed Consent Form

A Study of Organizational Culture in HBCU Intercollegiate Athletics

I, ____________________________, agree to participate in a study involving student-athletes and individuals employed as full-time staff in the intercollegiate athletics department of this university.

The purpose of this study is to identify the organizational culture of a HBCU intercollegiate athletic department. I understand that athletic department employees, who are classified as administrators, professional support staff, or coaches, were selected to participate. In addition, I understand that current student-athletes within the department were randomly selected to represent certain key variables. I realize that the research will be focused on exploring the participants' perceptions of the current organizational culture of the athletic department. I also understand that the researcher is conducting this study as part of a doctoral dissertation at the College of William and Angela.

As a participant, I understand that my involvement in this study is purposeful in that athletic department staff members and athletes were selected with the intention of exploring a wide variety of experiences and perceptions. I understand I will be asked questions regarding my experiences at this university, and how I perceive the organizational culture and academic performance of the athletic department and how that culture has impacted my experiences within the organization. I understand that the honesty and accuracy of my responses are crucial for this study. I also understand that I am not required to answer every question that is asked and that I may stop the interview at any time. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form.

I understand that I am being asked to participate in an interview that will explore my view of the organizational culture and academic performance of the athletic department. The estimated time for completion of the interview is 45-60 minutes. I understand that my responses will be audio-recorded. My responses will remain anonymous to all but the researcher, who will transcribe the verbal responses and assign numerical codes or pseudonyms to the data. At the conclusion of the study, the key that links numerical codes and pseudonyms to interview responses will be destroyed. All efforts will be made to protect the identity of the institution in the study's report of results. A summary of the results of this study will be made available to participants upon request.

There are no known risks or associated discomforts with this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time by notifying the researcher by e-mail or telephone. My decision to participate or not participate will not affect my relationships with faculty, administration, or with South Atlantic University and its athletics program. If I have any questions that arise in connection with my participation in this study, I should contact Dr. Dorothy Finnegan, dissertation advisor, at 757-221-2346 or definn@wm.edu. I understand that I may report any problems or dissatisfaction to Dr. Thomas Ward, chair of the School of Education Internal Review Committee at 757-221-2358 or tjward@wm.edu or Dr. Michael Deschenes, chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at the College of William and Angela at 757-221-2778 or mrdesc@wm.edu.

My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

__________________________________________________________
Date Participant

__________________________________________________________
Date Investigator
Appendix B: Introductory Letter to Participants

Dear __________:

My name is Ralph Charlton and I am an Assistant Professor of Sport Management at Hampton University as well as a doctoral candidate in Higher Education Administration at the College of William & Mary. To further the area of research on HBCU athletics and academic performance, I am conducting research for my dissertation that explores the organizational culture of HBCU athletic departments and relationships to academic performance of its student-athletes. The purpose and methods for the study have been reviewed and endorsed by Ms. Bennett, Athletic Director of the SAU athletic program.

I am hoping that you agree to participate in a 45 to 60 minute interview to address how organizational culture operates at SAU related to academic success. Your contributions will be very beneficial in discovering how HBCUs can continue to improve in the important mission of graduating athletes. Participation in the study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Your identity will remain anonymous throughout participation and in reported results.

I will contact you shortly by e-mail with hopes of scheduling the interview. The study has been approved by the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at William & Mary (phone 757-221-2358). Please contact me 757-728-6956 or e-mail me at ralph.charlton@hamptonu.edu with questions or concerns. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Dorothy Finnegan at definn@wm.edu or 757-221-2346. Thanks so much for your help.

Sincerely,

Ralph Charlton
Assistant Professor- Sport Management
Appendix C- Interview Protocol

I have taught at an HBCU for six years and have become interested in the ways that NCAA Division I HBCUs operate in regards to missions of both athletic competition and academic success. I hope to spend the next hour gaining an understanding of how you view what it is like to work here at SAU athletics (or what it is like to be a student-athlete here). Your open and honest reflections on your experiences at SAU are important, so I assure you of the confidentiality of your responses. You will choose a pseudonym to identify your responses on the interview transcripts. Only I will have knowledge of your identity as covered by your pseudonym and will destroy this information upon completion of the study.

In order to ensure that I gain an accurate representation of your experiences and views, I am hoping that you will permit me to record our interview. All recordings will be erased after the study is done. I will provide you with a written copy of the interview by e-mail and hope to get your feedback regarding the accuracy of the interview transcript.

Interview Protocol

1. Choice of pseudonym:
2. Date and time:
3. E-mail address:
4. Background information:
   
   **Staff**
   
   - What is your position here and how long have you worked in that position?
   - What are the primary duties for your position?
   - Have you held other roles at SAU? Which ones?
   - How did you come to work at SAU?
   - Have you worked for other College athletic departments and in what capacity?
   
   **Students**
   
   - How long have you been at SAU?
   - What sport or sports do you play?
- Have you attended other institutions?
- Why did you choose SAU?

**Socializing Groups and Organizational Culture**

- How would you describe the mission of the athletic department?
  - How is it expressed and when and where?
  - Do you think that people within athletics are influenced by the mission? If so-how?
  - What is the role of academics in the SAU athletic department?
  - Are academics supported? How and by whom?
  - Are academics viewed differently by – Administrators? Coaches? Student-athlete?

- What are the dominant characteristics of the department?
  - What is the atmosphere like?
  - How do people treat each other?
  - What are people focused on?
  - What and who motivates individuals within the department?
  - Is it different depending on what part of the department you work in/ or by sport? If so, how?

**Socialization Content**

- **Policies and Programs**
  - What programs are implemented by the department to support academics and how effective are they in creating academic success for student-athletes?
  - What are the policies or rules at SAU regarding student-athletes and academics? How do you feel about their effectiveness?
    - What is their source?
    - How long have they been in existence?
  - How do you learn about policies and programs in SAU athletics?

- **Language**
  - Are there key words (slogans, common phrases) used by administrators, coaches, and students here pertaining to academics?
  - What do the words mean?
  - How often are they used and specifically by whom?

- **Rituals and Tradition**
  - What are the rituals and traditions that are important to academics at SAU?
  - Who participates and who leads them?
  - Does everyone participate? If not, what happens to them?
  - What do they mean to the participant?

**Socialization Process**

- **Relationships**
  - How would you describe your relationship to your peers in the department? (amount of time, degree of exclusivity, impact on behaviors)
• How would you describe your relationship to coaches? Administrators? Student-Athletes? (Depending on the individual’s socializing group).
• How do your peers think and feel about their academics?
• How do coaches, student-athletes, administrators feel about the academic roles and requirements placed on student-athletes?

- Communication
• Who do you communicate with the most about academics in the department?
• What is the message you receive from that person or those persons about your academic needs and requirements?
• In what form is the message communicated? (e.g., written, verbal)

- Reinforcement
• Please describe any departmental rewards for academic success of student-athletes? Who gives and gets the rewards?
• Please describe any departmental punishments for a lack of academic success? Who gives and is punished?

Outcomes
• What are the most influential ways that student-athletes learn about department expectations regarding academics?
• How do the ways student-athletes feel and think about academics reflect the overall department view on academics?
• For students: will you graduate from this university? Why?

Summary
• What else do I need to know about what it is like to work here or be an athlete here and trying to be successful academically?
Appendix D: Observation Protocol

1. Identify setting, participants, event and purpose, date

Observer Comments:

2. Language-
   • What language (verbal, non-verbal) is being used in relation to the academic mission?
   • How often is the language used?
   • Who is specifically utilizing and driving the use of academic language?
   • To whom is the language being directed?
   • What values, beliefs, attitudes are represented in the language?

3. Rituals/ Traditions-
   • Describe the ritual or tradition
   • What meanings do the rituals/ traditions portray about attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding academics?
   • How long have these rituals and traditions been in existence? (may need to gather information by asking rather than observing)
   • Who represents the leadership in the rituals and traditions?
   • For what purpose are these rituals or traditions held?
   • What values, beliefs, attitudes are present within the event?

4. Relationships
   • What socializing groups are present?
   • Is there a power structure present in the relationships?
   • How is the power manifested?
   • What difference does it seem to make?

5. Communication
   • What are forms of communication that are being used?
   • Are they being used by all participants or only some? How and why?
   • Are values, beliefs, and attitudes a part of communication or not?

6. Reinforcement
   • Is negative or positive reinforcement present for academic or graduation success for individuals or groups?
   • Describe the reinforcements: the behaviors and their implicit values, attitudes, and beliefs
   Who is authority in providing reward or consequence?
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New study reveals marked improvements for the graduation rates for African-American student-athletes.


http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/NCAA/Media+and+Events/Press+Room/News+Release
Academic Reform Trend Data Shows Graduation Success Rate Improvement.


Vita

Ralph Rice Charlton

Education

Doctor of Education  
The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA  
2009

Master of Education, School Counseling  
The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA  
2002

Master of Science, Leisure Services Management  
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA  
1987

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology  
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA  
1985