

1-1-2017

The Reputation Playbook: Exploring How Reputation Can Be Leveraged to Improve Recruiting Effectiveness in NCAA Men's Basketball

Marshall J. Magnusen

Charn P. McAllister

Jun Woo Kim

Pamela L. Perrewé

Gerald R. Ferris

Follow this and additional works at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm>



Part of the [Business Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Magnusen, Marshall J.; McAllister, Charn P.; Kim, Jun Woo; Perrewé, Pamela L.; and Ferris, Gerald R. (2017) "The Reputation Playbook: Exploring How Reputation Can Be Leveraged to Improve Recruiting Effectiveness in NCAA Men's Basketball," *Journal of Applied Sport Management*. Vol. 9 : Iss. 2.

<https://doi.org/10.18666/JASM-2017-V9-I2-8016>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm/vol9/iss2/6>

This article is brought to you freely and openly by Volunteer, Open-access, Library-hosted Journals (VOL Journals), published in partnership with The University of Tennessee (UT) University Libraries. This article has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Applied Sport Management* by an authorized editor. For more information, please visit <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm>.

The Reputation Playbook

Exploring How Reputation Can Be Leveraged to Improve Recruiting Effectiveness in NCAA Men's Basketball

Marshall J. Magnusen

Charn P. McAllister

Jun Woo Kim

Pamela L. Perrewé

Gerald R. Ferris

Abstract

Reputation is a critical factor in the recruiting process. Organizational reputation also is a complex variable. Different dimensions of reputation may play very different roles in attracting recruits. In this study, a multidimensional (i.e., performance, character/integrity, support) reputation model is used to predict male basketball recruits' university choice. Data were collected on the ESPN Top 100 male high school athletes recruited to NCAA Division I basketball programs for each year from 2010–2014 ($n = 500$). Probit regression analyses using maximum likelihood estimation predicted to what extent each reputation-based dimension affected the likelihood of an athlete selecting a university.

Keywords: *Coaching; management; signaling; sport; student-athletes*

Marshall J. Magnusen is an associate professor of sport management at Baylor University.

Charn P. McAllister is an assistant professor in the D'Amore-McKim School of Business at Northeastern University.

Jun Woo Kim is an assistant professor in the School of Global Business at Arcadia University.

Pamela L. Perrewé is the Haywood and Betty Taylor eminent scholar of business administration, professor of sport management, and distinguished research professor at Florida State University.

Gerald R. Ferris is a Francis Eppes professor of management, professor of psychology, and professor of sport management at Florida State University.

Please send correspondence to Marshall J. Magnusen, Marshall_Magnusen@baylor.edu

Recruiting student-athletes is unquestionably important to the success of intercollegiate athletics programs because it provides the talent through which sport teams can achieve a competitive advantage over other teams (Klenosky, Templin, & Troutman, 2001; Magnusen, Kim, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2014). Given that the recruitment of talented human resources represents such an important activity, and one in which schools invest huge amounts of time and money, it is not surprising that considerable theoretical and research attention has centered on better understanding the processes of recruiting student-athletes to compete in collegiate sports. Presented in Table 1 is a representative, but not exhaustive, list of published studies that have examined recruiting in the realm of intercollegiate athletics.

Although a sizable research base exists on various aspects of the recruitment process, there is still much to learn. Several calls (e.g., Chapman, Uggersleve, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Magnusen et al., 2014) have been made for more research on actual recruits obtained, as well as further consideration of organization context features in order to better understand recruitment effectiveness. One of those areas (or features) is reputation, and it has been highlighted recently in terms of its potential to be an important and valuable resource that can be leveraged for the purposes of recruiting goal success (Treadway, Adams, Hanes, Perrewé, Magnusen, & Ferris, 2014; Zinko, Ferris, Blass, & Laird, 2007).

Recruitment effectiveness, here defined as the ability of recruiters (coaches) to successfully attract and sign desirable human talent (student-athletes), is likely to be influenced by the reputational features of recruiters' academic and athletic institutions. Therefore, the purpose of the present investigation is to test a research model of the factors that top NCAA Division I basketball recruits may have considered when selecting a university. We accomplish this purpose through the use of a database of predictors that combines school-specific attributes with recruit-specific information. We also use signaling theory (Spence, 1973) as a theoretical rationale to explain how schools, and their recruiters, may effectively transmit relevant informational cues that constitute reputational elements to recruits.

Theoretical Background

A theory of reputation has yet to be proposed. Thus, reputation research has relied upon various theoretical foundations, with signaling theory being the most frequently employed. Signaling theory refers to signals as specific behaviors that transmit information about individuals' abilities and intentions to the marketplace (Spence, 1973). The reputations of entities (e.g., individuals, organizations), for example, serve to reduce the uncertainty of stakeholders, and Posner (1997) suggested that reputation reduces uncertainty by using the signaling function.

Spence (1973) developed signaling theory in economics to focus on situations where incomplete or ambiguous information exists, and intentional efforts are made to persuade others via signals sent in the labor marketplace. Signaling promotes attentional focus by increasing the salience of stimuli, or reputational

Table 1*Representative Examples of College Sport Recruiting Research*

Authors	Type of Research	Study Explanation and Key Observations/Findings
Mathes & Gunney (1985)	Empirical	Sample consisted of 231 student-athletes from revenue and nonrevenue sports. Head coach and academics were rated “Above Average” in terms of importance by student participants.
Klenosky et al. (2001)	Qualitative	Researchers conducted a means-end investigation of student-athlete school choice. A total of 27 football bowl series (FBS) student-athletes were interviewed. The most important predictor of school choice reported by the study participants was the coaching staff because it provided the student-athlete with an opportunity to develop, participate in athletic competition, and feel comfortable with the school.
Letawsky et al. (2003)	Empirical	Sample consisted of 126 student-athletes representing almost all first-year athletes from an NCAA Division I institution. The top factors reported by study participants were degree-program options, head coach, academic support services, type of community, and sport traditions at the school.
Kankey & Quarterman (2007)	Empirical	Sample consisted of 196 student-athletes from 10 NCAA Division I institutions in the state of Ohio. The most highly rated factors were availability of major or academic program, head coach, career opportunities after graduation, and social atmosphere of the team.
Dummond et al. (2008)	Empirical	Developed an empirical model of factors top-rated Division I football recruits may consider when selecting a school. Important factors included geographic proximity, school’s recent football ranking, and whether a school is part of a Bowl Championship Series (BCS) conference.
Magnussen et al. (2014)	Conceptual	Consolidated the extant literature on student-athlete college choice factors to create a social influence model about the recruiting process in NCAA sports. The conceptual model examines how recruiters’ social effectiveness characteristics (i.e., political and social skill) and them in the identification, classification, and enactment of their influence strategies and tactics.
Treadway et al. (2014)	Empirical	Sample consisted of 175 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) university football coaches. The interaction of coach (recruiter) political skill and head coach performance reputation explained significant variance in football program’s capability to sign highly rated football recruits.

signals, in a particular environment, which distinguishes reputation in observers' eyes. This study identifies different types of reputation information that is present in the sport marketplace, and considers how it may be leveraged by recruiters in ways that enhance recruitment effectiveness for NCAA Division I men's basketball programs.

Conceptualizing Reputation

Reputation represents a multi-level construct, and it has been defined as "... a perceptual identity formed from the collective perceptions of others, which is reflective of the complex combination of salient entity characteristics and accomplishments, demonstrated behavior, and intended images presented over some period of time as observed directly and/or reported from secondary sources, which reduces ambiguity about expected future behavior" (Zinko et al., 2007, p. 165). Reputation scholars have suggested that although there might be a number of specific situationally determined reputation dimensions, the reputation construct fundamentally is comprised of two higher-order factors: Performance/results and character/integrity (Zinko et al., 2007).

The performance/results dimension of reputation seems to be driven by a consistent record of performance in the past, whereas the character/integrity dimension appears to more broadly reflect a number of different types of past behaviors (e.g., ethical behavior) that focus on provisions of thoughtfulness, personal development, and empowerment. Recruiting high school athletes also is very different than recruiting human talent in traditional business contexts. In the former context, you are dealing with individuals who are about to leave home and begin their collegiate journey, possibly playing their sport in front of thousands of sport consumers. In the latter context, you are often dealing with individuals who left home, completed their collegiate journey, and now want to join the workforce in their respective disciplines—few of which involve entertaining thousands of consumers. Thus, for the purposes of this study, a third reputation category was generated to account for possible "support" factors (e.g., geographical proximity). These factors may be comforting and/or appealing to high school recruits, and therefore relevant to recruiting in a NCAA sport context. The third category can be explained by signaling theory, and has a basis in both sport media reports and research evidence (e.g., Dumond, Lynch, & Platania, 2008; Jessop, 2014; Magnusen et al., 2014; Wood, 2017).

Methodology

Procedure and Participants

Archival data were obtained through the use of various online and in-print (see Table 2 for full listing) resources. The study sample includes the top 100 male high school athletes recruited to play collegiate-level basketball for each year from

Table 2

Overview of the Dimensions of Reputation

Category	Variable Name	Definition	Source
Performance-based reputation	1	Conference reputation	NCAA.com
	2	Conference national championship reputation	NCAA.com
	3	Team Top 10 reputation	AP final Top-25 Polls
	4	Final Four appearance	NCAA.com
	5	Elite 8 appearance	NCAA.com
	6	Conference tournament title	NCAA.com
	7	Recent conference tournament title	NCAA.com
	8	National championship	NCAA.com
	9	Head coach performance reputation	University websites
	10	New head coach	University websites
Character & integrity-based reputation	1	Academic reputation	U.S. News & World Report
	2	NCAA sanctions	NCAA Major Infractions Database
	3	University type	U.S. News & World Report
Support-based reputation	1	Geographic proximity	ESPN.com & Google maps
	2	Attendance Top 50	NCAA.com
	3	Facility age	University websites
	4	Operating expense ratio	EADA report

2010 to 2014 ($N = 500$). Each athlete selected from approximately three different universities, resulting in a total of 1,387 observations. Athletes averaged approximately a 4-star recruiting rank ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.42$), and lived 625 miles from the universities they visited ($M = 625.86$, $SD = 620.52$). Across the five-year span, a total of 107 different universities across 20 different NCAA conferences attempted to recruit at least one of the top 100 recruits.

Measures

Recruits. All athletes' recruit ranking, university visits, and the university selected were included in the analyses. The NCAA places restrictions on the number of universities an athlete can visit, and as such, athletes tend to visit only those universities in which they are very interested. When an official visit could not be confirmed, online and in-print news articles were used to identify and confirm unofficial visits as well as the schools of most interest (i.e., the finalists) to athletes. This information was gathered using ESPN.com, 247Sports.com, Google, Bing, and LexisNexis® Academic. Athletes only can sign with one university, and the final variable was the university selected by the athletes.

Recruits' decisions. The decision to select a university, which is our outcome variable, was treated as a dichotomous dependent variable. The reference category included those universities in which athletes chose not to attend. The universities selected by athletes were coded as a 1. Athletes could have only one school that they selected to attend.

Three dimensions of reputation. The *performance-based reputation dimension* was comprised of variables that signaled to potential recruits that the university was an elite-level athletic program. Teams' reputations are signaled to recruits through the performance of the team, the coach, and the conference in which the team plays (Dumond et al., 2008; Treadway et al., 2014). To capture adequately team-based performance, we included variables measuring teams' season and postseason performances, as well as the number of tournament titles won during the last five seasons. The five-season timeframe was selected because of the availability of complete information for a five-year span as well as current research on recruiting Millennial student-athletes. For instance, with respect to the latter point, contemporary student-athletes (i.e., "Millennials") tend to only remember and focus on information about a program that does not exceed five seasons back (Jessop, 2014). So, with limited exception, information about the reputation dimensions included in this study was narrowed to a five-year span.

The number of national championships won during the previous 15 seasons also was included in this study. We chose to observe a greater number of seasons for this predictor as only one team can win the championship per year, and thus there would be too few teams within this category to provide interpretable results. Next, coaching performances were measured using the head coaches' division I winning percentage. Conference reputation was evaluated by including a measure of the number of teams from the universities' conference competing in the Elite

8 over the past five seasons and a total number of national championships from the universities' conference in the past 15 years (for a review, see Dumond et al., 2008).

The *character and integrity-based reputation dimension* was measured using information on whether a team is currently experiencing or will experience NCAA sanctions, whether universities were listed in the top 100 schools by *U.S. News and World Report* the year the athlete was recruited, and whether the school is a private or state academic institution. NCAA sanctions could impact a school's eligibility to participate in postseason play (e.g., Syracuse University's athletics scandal) and result in reducing the number of scholarships that schools can offer to new recruits, which in turn can reduce a team's success for several seasons. Future sanctions also may ban the institution from appearing on television or in postseason games.

Many athletes are entering collegiate-level basketball programs with the hope of turning professional. When recruits select a school they attempt to maximize gains in their human capital to be competitive in a narrow labor market, such as the National Basketball Association (NBA), by selecting a school that offers greater benefits than others. In addition, obtaining a college degree would be necessary in a broad labor market, and so the academic reputation of a university may signal the potential for future non-athletic success. Next, private schools tend to have a different character and "feel" from state institutions. Private schools are also different from state schools in several areas, including how they are funded, size and degree offerings, class size, and demographics.

The *support-based reputation dimension* includes variables such as universities' geographic proximities to athletes' hometowns and the total number of top-50 attendance ratings achieved by a team for the season prior to a recruit signing with the school. Support, be it in the form of fan support, financial investments in athletics, or being close to family and friends, could signal positive reputational elements to recruits. Crowds can be electric and enticing to high school recruits (Martin, 2016; Wood, 2017), and so the total number of top-50 attendance ratings achieved by a team for the season prior to a recruit signing with the school was included in this dimension. Geographic proximity, stadium capacity, and facility age are variables that also have been used in previous recruiting studies (e.g., Dumond et al., 2008). Additionally, financial support signals to recruits that an institution is invested in their success and development. To capture this element of reputation, we included a measure of the operating expense ratio, which is defined as an athletic department's basketball program expenses divided by its revenue for the year prior to a recruit signing with the school.¹

¹ The data were collected from the Equity in Athletics Data Analysis Cutting Tool (EADACT) that is available via the U.S. Department of Education (see <http://ope.ed.gov/athletics/>).

Data Analyses

Probit regression analyses using maximum likelihood estimation were utilized to predict to what extent each of the reputation-based dimensions affected the likelihood of an athlete selecting a particular university. The specification of our probit regression model shown in Equation (1) assumes that all variables not included in the proposed model are constant from one potential selection to another.

$$Pr(Y = 1) = 1 - Pr [v < - (\beta_0 + \beta_1 \textit{Conference Reputation} + \beta_2 \textit{Conference National Championship} + \beta_3 \textit{Team Top 10} + \beta_4 \textit{Final Four} + \beta_5 \textit{Elite 8} + \beta_6 \textit{Conference Tournament Title} + \beta_7 \textit{Recent Conference Title} + \beta_8 \textit{National Championship} + \beta_9 \textit{Coach Winning} + \beta_{10} \textit{New Head Coach} + \beta_{11} \textit{Academic Reputation} + \beta_{12} \textit{NCAA Sanction} + \beta_{13} \textit{University Type} + \beta_{14} \textit{Geographic Proximity} + \beta_{15} \textit{Attendance Top 50} + \beta_{16} \textit{Facility Age} + \beta_{17} \textit{Operating Expense Ratio})] \quad (1)$$

with $Pr(Y = 1)$ denoting our dependent variable (i.e., probability of school selection).

Results

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3. The average number of possible school choices for a recruit ranged from 2.8 to 3. A completely random selection method would correctly predict, on average, the college choices for nearly 40% of the recruits (see Table 4). Included in Table 4 is the overall predicted probability for school selection, along with the coefficients from the probit model and the marginal effects of each variable.

Several interesting results were reported. For example, with the performance reputation category, the number of national championships from a conference over a 15-year span was positively correlated with the probability a recruit will select the team, but was not significant. Next, for every additional team playing in the Elite 8, a recruit is 2.3% less likely to select the institution. However, Top 10 appearances increase the predicted probability of school selection. Specifically, for every additional appearance in the top 10 in the prior five seasons, a recruit is 4.3% more likely to choose that school. The coefficient on the Final Four appearance is positive and marginally significant. An appearance in the Final Four tournament in the past five years increases the likelihood of selection by 6.0%. The results show that the schools' Final Four appearance and top 10 finishes are statistically significant factors in the recruit's school selection.

Table 3*Reputation and Recruiting Descriptive Statistics*

	<i>Recruiting Year</i>				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Sample size					
Total number of records	300	288	297	300	297
Total number of recruits	100	96	99	100	99
Average choices/recruit	3	3	3	3	2.8
Performance-based reputation					
Average number of Elite 8 teams from the conference	5.47	5.36	5.29	6.20	5.15
Average number of National Championships from the conference	2.64	2.56	2.48	2.48	2.07
Average number of Top 10 finishes	0.86	1.07	0.99	1.00	1.02
Average number of Final Four appearances	0.46	0.43	0.44	0.36	0.40
Average number of Elite 8 appearances	0.73	0.97	0.98	0.75	0.93
Average number of winning conference tournament titles	0.64	0.93	0.71	0.74	0.90
Average number of winning recent conference tournament title	0.16	0.20	1.00	0.16	0.16
Average number of winning National Championship	0.46	0.49	0.47	0.40	0.38
Head coach winning percentage	66	67	66	67	66
New head coach percentage	0.4	6.6	2.2	3.4	4.8
Character & integrity-based reputation					
Academic reputation (<i>U.S. News and World Report</i>) ³	61	62	65	60	57
Percentage of choices with NCAA sanctions	4.3	5.1	0.7	5.8	0
University type (percentage for the private university)	26	21	21	25	27
Support-based reputation					
Average geographic proximity ⁴	614	610	604	641	658
Percentage of schools that appeared on Top 50 attendance ⁵	71	71	70	80	74
Average facility age	31	33	32	32	32
Average operating expense ratio ⁶	0.65	0.66	0.15	0.67	0.68
Conference breakdown (<i>n</i>) for all records					
American Athletic Conference	0	0	0	0	17
ACC	51	48	64	27	42
Atlantic 10	6	3	0	8	6
Big Ten	19	38	34	40	55
Big 12	34	41	43	40	24
Big East	59	45	44	70	32
Conference USA	10	8	11	16	2
Mountain West Conference	2	0	6	7	16
Pac 12	40	29	37	27	35
SEC	52	58	33	52	54
West Coast Conference	0	1	0	3	9
Other ⁷	5	3	12	1	1
Total	278	274	284	291	293

³ Percentage of schools that appeared on the Top 100.⁴ Miles⁵ Whether or not a team listed on the attendance Top 50⁶ Operating expenses ratio = expense/revenue⁷ Includes America East Conference, Big West Conference, Colonial Athletic Association, Mid-American Conference, Horizon League, Missouri Valley Conference, Southern Conference, Sun Belt Conference, and Western Athletic Conference.

Table 4*Dependent Variable: Probability of a Recruit's School Selection*

Variable		Coefficient	<i>z</i>	dy/dx	<i>z</i>
Performance-based reputation	Conference reputation	-0.063*** (0.016)	-3.97	-0.023*** (0.006)	-3.96
	Conference national championship reputation	0.021 (0.025)	0.83	0.007 (0.009)	0.80
	Team Top 10 reputation	0.117** (0.053)	2.23	0.043** (0.020)	2.20
	Final Four appearance	0.164* (0.090)	1.83	0.060* (0.033)	1.83
	Elite 8 appearance	-0.020 (0.058)	-0.34	-0.007 (0.21)	-0.34
	Conference tournament title	-0.161** (0.062)	-2.58	-0.059** (0.023)	-2.58
	Recent conference tournament title	-0.064 (0.123)	-0.52	-0.024 (0.047)	-0.52
	National Championship	-0.169** (0.072)	-2.35	-0.061** (0.027)	-2.26
	Head coach winning percentage	0.238 (0.441)	0.54	0.076 (0.242)	0.32
	New head coach	-0.217 (0.187)	-1.16	-0.083 (0.076)	-1.13
Character & integrity-based reputation	Academic reputation	-0.201** (0.080)	-2.53	-0.074** (0.030)	-2.51
	NCAA sanctions	0.325* (0.191)	1.69	0.108* (0.066)	1.69
	University type	0.198** (0.095)	2.08	0.074** (0.036)	2.08
Support-based reputation	Geographic proximity	-0.001*** (0.001)	-5.28	-0.001*** (0.001)	-5.27
	Attendance Top 50	0.006 (0.105)	0.05	0.002 (0.038)	0.06
	Facility age	0.001 (0.002)	0.50	0.001 (0.001)	0.47
	Operating expense ratio	-0.076 (0.161)	-0.47	-0.029 (0.065)	-0.45
Log likelihood	-857.66				
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square Test	72.58				
Prob > Chi-Square	0.01				
Pseudo R ²	0.04				
Predicted probability for school selection	0.35				

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. *, **, *** denotes significance at 10, 5, 1% levels, respectively. The dy/dx indicates the marginal effects for each variable.

Next, for character and integrity-based reputation variables, the coefficient for academic reputation was negative and statistically significant. That is, if a school is one of the Top 100 ranked universities (0= top 100 school, 1= not top 100 school), a recruit is 7.4% more likely to select the school. University type, whether a school is a state or private university, also had a significant impact on school selection. Namely, recruits were 7.4% more likely to select private institutions than state institutions. We also found a significant positive correlation between the university

type and operating expense ratio ($r = 0.24, p < 0.01$). The average of a private school's operating expense ratio (OER) for the basketball program, a measure of what it costs to operate the basketball program compared to the revenue that the program brings in, was 14% higher than its state school.² The NCAA sanctions measured by the categorical variable whether the school experiences or will experience the NCAA sanctions while the new recruit plays for the team (0 = yes, 1 = no) had a positive and marginally significant effect. Recruits are 11% less likely to select schools that have experienced the NCAA sanctions.

The support-based reputation dimension, geographic proximity, had a significant positive impact on school selection. The further a school is from the athlete's hometown, the less likely he is to pick that school. The age of a facility and a team's Top 50 attendance ranking in prior seasons did not have a significant impact on the chance of a recruit selecting that school.

Discussion and Implications

Recruiting the best talent available is the spark of life for many intercollegiate athletic departments, but the myriad factors affecting recruits' decisions are diverse and often difficult to organize, conceptualize, and empirically test. Although previous research efforts (e.g., Dumond et al., 2008; Kankey & Quarterman, 2007; Letawsky, Schneider, Pedersen, & Palmer, 2003) have examined recruits' school selection criteria across a variety of sports, minimal attention has been directed specifically to the selection criteria of men's basketball recruits. Even less attention has been given to theorizing about determinants of NCAA recruitment outcomes and how those determinants (pieces of information) can be transmitted and leveraged by recruiters (college coaches) to achieve recruitment effectiveness.

Incorporated into the present study is a signaling theoretical perspective on recruitment that arranges recruitment criteria as organization reputation resources. The reputation of organizations is a complicated variable, and different dimensions of reputation may play very different roles in attracting recruits. Student-athletes in the present study were more likely to select universities with higher character/integrity. Our findings also highlight the apparent complexity of performance reputation, and how it may be important to recruits but only to the point that it will not greatly limit playing time. The support-based reputation dimension appears to be very important as well. Notably, being able to stay closer to home so that family and friends can watch a recruit play, was strongly associated with commitment results.

The world of intercollegiate athletics is replete with discussions of reputation and why it matters. It is clear from our results that various aspects of reputation do matter. The approach proposed in this study should help coaches more easily conceptualize recruitment criteria as reputational features and develop ways in

²The average OER for the state university was 65%, whereas its private university was 79%.

which to strategically leverage relevant pieces of reputation information to persuade desirable recruits to sign with their schools. A high school athlete, for example, may weigh basketball scholarship offers from Duke and Kansas. Each of these schools has a reputable men's basketball program, but Duke is a Top 100 academic institution with few NCAA sanctions, whereas Kansas is not rated in the Top 100. This distinction is a point of leverage for coaches. When faced with multiple scholarship prospects, recruits may weigh carefully the extent to which programs recruiting them will set them up for success within and outside of that academic institution.

Even though our results bring attention to several different types of reputation information that coaches should consider when recruiting, there are dozens, if not hundreds, of possible variables that may influence the school choice decisions of high school athletes. It is not feasible for researchers to identify and test every possible variable influencing the commitment decisions of Division I basketball recruits. So, bearing that in mind, we offer qualitative and quantitative ways in which coaches can personalize and expand upon the recruiting information provided in this study.

First, we recommend coaching staffs establish a system of basic qualitative inquiry so that they can better understand recruits, with particular reference to what led recruits to sign with their respective teams. Focus groups and/or one-on-one interviews with former and current players are two ways by which coaches can explore the reputation dimensions proposed in this study. The aim of such interviews and focus groups should be to both identify important factors and better understand the reason(s) those factors were so important in recruits' decisions.

For example, instead of focusing on the extent to which specific factors were important in students' school-choice decisions, Klenosky et al. (2001, p. 104) "focused on examining the means-end relationships that link the attributes to desired benefits and higher level personal values, thus providing a perspective for understanding how and why attributes are perceived as important." After interviewing 27 football bowl series (FBS) football players, the researchers reported the most important predictor of school choice was the coaching staff because it provided the student-athlete with an opportunity to develop, participate in athletic competition, and feel comfortable with the school. So, when recruiting FBS football players, leveraging reputational elements of a team's coaching staff would appear to make sense based on the qualitative information gathered by Klenosky et al. Similar efforts could be undertaken by collegiate coaching staffs so as to gain a more rich and descriptive understanding of recruiting and signing student-athletes of varying abilities, backgrounds, and interests.

Second, either separately or in combination with the aforementioned qualitative component, coaches should gather quantitative information about former, current, and prospective student-athletes. That information could be used to create a more accurate profile of the sort of student-athletes their programs tend to

attract. A simple way in which coaches can do this without the need for complicated statistics is a trend analysis. The concept of trend analysis can be applied to the comparison of pattern changes over time by measuring which factors of the noted reputational dimensions most or least influence recruits' school selection decisions.

Secondary data are used in the current study, the collection of which is a time and labor intensive process. In place of this approach, coaching staffs could create a simple survey questionnaire using variables grounded in the three reputational dimensions. Specifically, using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strong Agree*), coaching staffs could ask performance-based questions (e.g., "The head coach's win record influenced my commit decision"), character and integrity-based questions (e.g., "The school's academic reputation influenced my commit decision"), and support-based questions (e.g., "The distance from my hometown to the school influenced my commitment decision"). Once the data are gathered, descriptive statistics could then be used to display which variables appear to be more important to recruits. Over time, as more data are accumulated by coaching staffs, consistent results or trends will be found. Trend information will help coaches better understand the strengths and weaknesses of their programs and, equipped with that information, they should be able to better develop ways in which to position their programs in the sport marketplace so as to maximize the effectiveness of their recruiting efforts.

Reputation precedes organizations, both in sport and business, and it is a critical tool in the recruiting process. Indeed, it is expected that even those people not interested in collegiate basketball are aware that Duke and Kentucky are elite-level collegiate athletic programs. Similarly, it is probable that many people completely unaware of the jewelry market know that Rolex represents the height of luxury. Accordingly, athletic departments interested in recruiting top-level talent may do well to understand the various facets of their reputation, and strategize how best to leverage key reputational features. In the long run, failure to account for the potentially complex relationship a school's reputation could have on recruits' decision-making processes may result in the loss of the most gifted individuals to other, possibly rival, schools.

References

- Chapman, D. S., Uggerslev, K. L., Carroll, S. A., Prasantin, K. A., & Jones, D. A. (2005). Applicant attraction to organizations and job choice: A meta-analytic review of the correlates of recruiting outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90, 928–944.
- Dumond, J. M., Lynch, A. K., & Platania, J. (2008). An economic model of the college football recruiting process. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 9, 67–87.
- Jessop, A. (2014, September 20). FSU utilizes new football facilities to attract top recruits. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/aliciajessop/2014/09/20/fsu-utilizes-new-football-facilities-to-attract-top-recruits/>

- Kankey, K., & Quarterman, J. (2007). Factors influencing the university choice of NCAA Division I softball players. *The Smart Journal*, 3, 35–49.
- Klenosky, D. B., Templin, T. J., & Troutman, J. A. (2001). Athletic recruiting: a means end investigation of student-athlete's school choice decisions. *Journal of Sport Management*, 15, 95–106.
- Letawsky, N. R., Schneider, R. G., Pedersen, P. M., Palmer, C. J. (2003). Factors influencing the college selection process of student-athletes: Are their factors similar to non-athletes? *College Student Journal*, 37, 604–610.
- Magnusen, M. J., Kim, Y. K., Perrewé, P. L., & Ferris, G. R. (2014). A critical review and synthesis of student-athlete college choice factors: Recruiting effectiveness in NCAA sports. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 9, 1265–1286.
- Martin, E. (2016, April 4). The 25 best colleges to go to if you're obsessed with college basketball. Business Insider. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/best-schools-for-college-basketball-2016-4/#no-25-louisiana-state-university-1>
- Mathes, S., & Gurney, G. (1985). Factors in student-athletes' choices of colleges. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 26, 327–333.
- Posner, R. (1997). Social norms and the law: An economic approach. *American Economic Review*, 87, 365–369.
- Spence, A. M. (1973). Job market signaling. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87, 845–856.
- Treadway, D. C., Adams, G., Hanes, T. J., Perrewé, P. L., Magnusen, M. J., & Ferris, G. R. (2014). The roles of recruiter political skill and performance resource leveraging in NCAA football recruitment effectiveness. *Journal of Management*, 40, 1607–1626.
- Wood, R. (2017, February 5). Recruit reaction: Crowd impresses as Florida tops Kentucky. Rivals. Retrieved from <https://florida.rivals.com/news/recruit-reaction-florida-stops-kentucky>
- Zinko, R., Ferris, G. R., Blass, F. R., & Laird, M. D. (2007). Toward a theory of reputation in organizations. In J. J. Martocchio (Ed.), *Research in personnel and human resources management* (vol. 26, pp. 169–209). Oxford, UK: JAI Press/Elsevier Science Ltd.