**NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY**

**ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET**

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**Faculty Comments:**

**Dr. Raymond Cieplik Grade Earned: Date**

Assignment # 8

Vashon Williams

SM 7112-8

Dr. Raymond Cieplik

Date: February 4, 2018

**Introduction**

In 2003 there were 15.3 million students attending college, nearly ten years later in 2012 there were a reported 17.7 million students. The growth alone suggest that education is becoming a more viable option to high-school students. Of the 17.7 million students many of them are student-athletes. Intercollegiate athletics has had a constant increase of student-athletes. Recently the increase has quickly accelerated with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reporting over 19,000 teams competing in the 2013-2014 school year (Johnson, 2014). The NCAA is an organization made up of over 1,123 colleges and universities, 98 voting athletic conferences, and 39 associated organizations (ncaa.org). This organization is dedicated to the well-being and lifelong accomplishments of college student-athletes. With over 400,000 college student-athletes participating in Division I, II, and III sports (Lombardi, Conley-Downs, Downs, Conley, 2012) the NCAA has had significant growth in men and women athletes and sports. The NCAA is made up of college presidents, athletic directors, compliance officers, and many other staff members. The NCAA is the governing body which maintains a system of checks and balances for schools to abide by. The NCAA is divided into three divisions; Division I, II, & III. Each division shares a common goal, which is to prioritize academics while making sure that the student-athletes can succeed on the field, in the classroom, and throughout life. The NCAA has put pressure on its institutions to ensure that their student-athletes remain academically eligible. This paper will examine the daily athletic operation of a small private school, and their quest to follow eligibility guidelines and policies. The challenges and successes of the school and its Sports Information/Compliance Officer will be assessed.

**Overview**

Washington Adventist University (WAU) is a small private liberal arts school in Takoma Park, Maryland established in 1904 (wau.edu). The beautiful little campus is on the border line between Maryland and Washington D.C. Their location is one of their greatest recruiting tools, pulling students that want to be near the Nation’s Capital. From 2012-2015 I was assistant professor of health and wellness at WAU, I also was the intramurals director for the campus. My staff of seven were made up of all student-athletes. My direct supervisor/chair of the department was a man named Bruce Peifer (Peifer). Although Peifer was the current chair he had previously held the positions of Compliance Officer/Sports Information Director (SID), and most importantly Athletic Director (AD) for a 10-year period. Peifer was my mentor and very knowledgeable about the history of the athletic program and the NCAA. Although at the time of my employment he was no longer AD, he still constantly talked about the athletic program with great affinity. Our offices were close to the new athletic administrators and we were a tight nit group, so we frequently got updates on the program.

The new AD was a young man named Patrick Crarey (a former high school student of mine). Patrick is also the boys’ basketball coach. The compliance director/SID was a young man named Jered Lyons (Jered). Jered was also the girls’ basketball coach.

When I arrived at WAU in 2012, the athletic department was a member of NCAA Division II. They rarely had a winning season in any of the eight sports that they offered. Their most successful team was their baseball team which won USCAA championship in 2009. WAU was a member of USCAA and the NCAA. Unfortunately, after the 2012-2013 school year WAU felt the pressure from the NCAA because of a multitude of minor violations to withdraw from the NCAA. After withdrawing from the NCAA WAU remained in the USCAA and filed papers to join the NAIA. I wanted to get a better understanding of an athletic department in transition, I decided to interview two people. Peifer the former compliance officer and AD who still works at the school as VP of Student Life and the current SID/Compliance officer Jared. WAU had as a NCAA II member an outstanding Academic Progress Rate (APR). Despite the institutions losing record amongst most of its teams the student-athletes eligibility was rarely an issue.

**Interview**

* 1. **Does your institution have an advisement program that addresses the student-athletes’ academic and career development needs? If not, do you plan to have one in the future? If so, discuss the important pieces of information that are involved in the program?**

*Jered Lyons (JL)*: Yes, we do have an advisement program although we will be changing our program soon. In our school we have a designated admissions recruitment officer (Krista Byrd) that assists in communicating with the incoming athletes. This officer has traveled to the student-athletes high school and recruited the athlete ensuring that the athlete has followed the eligibility steps that were set forth. Once the student-athlete arrives at the school during their first year the athletes schedule is set by the admissions officer that has already collaborated with the student-athlete’s major advisor. After the first year the student-athlete is seen by their department advisor and the SID director follows up with the department and checks grades for eligibility requirements. Although this process has worked for many years, we feel that we would have a better foothold on our student-athlete’s success if we were able to hire a full time athletic academic advisor/administrative assistant. This person would be responsible for the student-athletes scheduling, tutoring, and academic counseling for all four years. The athletic advisor would still work with each student’s department.

* 1. **What is the process of your eligibility program?**

*JL –* At WAU in the beginning of every season the athletic administration holds a meeting with all teams participating within that season. In this general compliance meeting all eligibility requirements, guidelines, and policies are discussed with the student-athlete. Also, the coaches must give a quarterly report to me of the progress of each player academically. Our department requires its student-athletes to abide by many standards set by the NCAA (prior), NAIA (current), and school.

* 1. **Describe the methods used to notify student-athletes of the eligibility requirement, personal development assistance, and other athlete services available within the department.**

*JL -* Aside from the previously mentioned season opening meeting the student-athletes have scheduled grade checks that are required. I give a grade check sheet to the coaches, who in turn give to the athletes to get signed by their professors. The professors sign and write comments to the coach. The coach then gives the sheets to me and we decide if the student-athlete needs individual tutoring or other assistance. Also, the methods of our eligibility program can be found in our handbook: <http://www.wauathletics.com/d/SA_Handbook_1718.pdf> We encourage our student-athletes to know the information within their handbook.

* 1. **Does your institution have a compliance website? If not, do you plan to have one in the future? If so, discuss what important pieces of information go into your compliance web site and why they are there. List their compliance website.**

*Jered Lyons (JL)*: Yes, we do have a compliance website. Our compliance website is: <http://www.wauathletics.com/Compliance_Corner>.

*Bruce Peifer (BP):* When I started as compliance director we did not have a website nor the resources to get one unfortunately. I worked with compliance starting the 2006 season, regrettably we did not get a compliance website until a few years after I left in 2015 when the department hired JL. Not having a website was one of the things that I look back at and regret. We were severely short-staffed, and I wish I had the budget to do one but I just could not raise enough money and the school would not increase my budget.

* 1. **Who certifies incoming student-athletes for your program?**

*(JL):* Our representative is Professor Henly. She is new to the position, but her desire for the students to do well at the institution is one of the main reasons she was chosen for this duty.

*(BP):* This position has changed hands in the past few years as well. When I was dealing with compliance VP Johnson certified the incoming student-athletes. The way this position was constructed is that the athletic counsel chooses a Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR). The FAR is the one that certifies incoming student athletes as one of many job duties.

* 1. **Discuss the compliance surrounding the recruiting process.**

It was fascinating to hear that they took compliance so serious for such a small institution. Each coach took an online test and had to pass with at least an 80%. This test went over all compliance rules and eligibility information for student-athletes. If the test was passed the coaches could go out and recruit.

*(BP):* The system that I created was to make sure before every season that myself and the other administrators could physically give relevant information through lecture and written communication. Each student had to sign to confirm the receipt of the information. I found that it was a good idea to personally go over information right before the season started because it gave the student-athletes and coaches a chance to ask questions. Many times, they need clarification on things. I also like to hand deliver the written information because it ensures that they get the information and by signing that they received it puts the onus on them as well to follow the rules.

* 1. **What procedures are in place regarding transfer student-athletes?**

*(JL):* The potential student athlete must first make sure that they are transfer eligible by double checking with the NCAA eligibility center to see what the guidelines are. I make sure not to speak to anyone until I have a permission letter from the other school. Without that I cannot help any potential student-athlete. Once I receive the letter then I make sure that all paper work is in. Then after verification of the certification the student-athletes name goes on a list which is sent to the NAIA for verification certification.

* 1. **Who handles the following on your campus?** 
     + **Eligibility: Who works on final certification of student-athletes?**

*(BP):* From the very beginning we needed a system to make sure we followed NCAA guidelines. The FAR gets a list of spreadsheets from the compliance office. These spreadsheets have information about the eligibility of the student-athlete. So, the FAR works on final certification of student-athlete.

* + - **Grade checks: Is there a team that looks at grades of student-athletes to determine eligibility issues?**

*(JL):* Yes, as mentioned before the coaches give the student athletes a grade sheet that they must give to all their professors. This grade sheet encourages the professors to write what the student-athletes grade is in the class. The sheet is given to the coach which is then given to the compliance officer. During midterms, the compliance officer receives a copy of all student-athlete grades. The compliance office reviews all grades and keeps track of the progress of on-going situation. The team makes sure that the information is updated in the player’s folder in the compliance office.

* 1. **What is something that you did that you really didn’t agree with but felt pressure to do?**

*(BP):* Early on in my career I wanted to do things directly by the book. I made sure to cross every t and dot every i. My first few years I did just that and had outstanding reports sent to the NCAA. However, one day my AD told me that those reports that I turn in need to have some mistakes even if there weren’t any. His theory was that if things look to perfect we would get investigated. So, he had me purposely make mistakes so that we could report of improvements that were necessary in the future. I disagreed with this method but did as I was told. I believe that if I had continued down this road our eligibility status would be affected.

* 1. **How was fundraising and athletic boosters handled?**

*(JL):* Again, fundraising and athletic boosters is handled totally different since we are such a small school and we do not have large facilities, and we are not a NCAA membership institution. However, we do have fundraising initiatives. The athletic booster is just now starting to grow because we have put some initial interest into renovating the facilities. Also, we have finally had some buzz around campus because of the tremendous season our boys basketball team had. It is easier to solicit funds now more than ever.

* 1. **Did you set a culture of something during your time?**

*(BP):*  I know that the culture that I set was an open-door policy. I had an open-door policy for my coaches, student-athletes, and athletic administration. I prided myself in good communitive skills. I just recently looked in my drawl and saw so many transfer letters that had been sent to us about a student. I prided myself in that all the letters were preceded to a phone call.

* 1. **What is something that you don’t like to do in your job?**

*(BP):*  One thing that I absolutely hated answering directly to the NCAA. It made me nervous because I didn’t know what to expect. Even when I had nothing to worry about I still felt uneasy. Also, all the paperwork is annoying. Turning in reports to the NCAA, especially APP reports can be nerve racking.

* 1. **What happens when you have achieved success in your department?**

*(BP):* Success breeds life into your department. Attendance at games becomes greater, donors increase, and student pride and the school brand are at an all-time high. However, there is a downside. When you win you become under the microscope. My baseball team won the championship and later all got tested for drugs. The more you recruit the more careful you need to be to make sure that the students are remaining eligible for the following year. It’s easy to get the athletes in but keeping them there sometimes is difficult. Success is retaining good athletes.

**Literature review**

Ever since colleges started giving scholarships to student-athletes for playing sports the debate about how those athletes become eligible has existed. The NCAA has implemented policies and guidelines for prospective and current student athletes to become and maintain eligibility. Institutions have regulated student-athlete’s eligibility status so that they could do their due diligence in upholding academic standards.

In 1983 the NCAA created Proposal 48, a set of eligibility standards for all membering institutions to abide by. On August 1, 1986 Proposal 48 (Prop 48) was officially enacted (Johnson, Wessel, & Pierce, 2010). This legislation directed graduating high school seniors must score a collective 700 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or a 15 on the American College Testing (ACT) test, and have a minimum high school GPA of 2.0 to be eligible for college athletic play (Baumann & Henschen, 1986). After Prop 48 was introduced and enacted, research on academic eligibility became prevalent. With the constant change in college athletics, eligibility standards have always been a point of emphasis. Since Prop 48 the NCAA has gone through many changes, in 1996 the NCAA created another proposal labeled proposal 16. Prop16 increased the minimum GPA and SAT/ACT scores.

**Athletic advisors**

To maintain a system in which the athletic department retains its student-athletes and has a good eligibility rate, an athletic academic advisor is necessary. Through an athletic academic advisor, the improvement of the APR rate more feasible. According to Gruber (2003) student-athlete advisors will find challenges with meeting the needs of college-level student-athletes. Some of the challenges include the campus climate toward athletics and athletes, the role that the NCAA and campus community plays in guiding the student-athletes academic experience, and the addressing the identified needs of the student-athlete. Student-athlete advisors strive to improve the academic standing of the athlete and the program. The NCAA has giving significant funding to ensure that programming and staffing resources to its member institutions are developed to assist with the academic success and graduation of student-athletes (Gruber, 2003). The academic advisor plays a crucial role in ensuring that the student-athlete is academically prepared. Academic advisors must address the following to properly assist their student-athletes:

* Understand the on-campus academic and athletic climate
* Determine faculty and student attitudes towards athletes
* Understand developmental and vision issues for student-athletes
* Be aware of sport specific and special needs for the student-athlete

(Gruber, 2003)

Student-athlete advising is an important element to the success of the student-athlete. Academic advising encompasses more than just knowledge of the curriculum at a university. The NCAA has resources that guide the academic advisor. Policies and procedure manuals are just a few resources that the NCAA offer to institutions to brief their student-athletes on career goals and academic success. The student-athlete is also prepped by the advisor of effective leadership styles, career skills, and leadership styles. Athletic advisors are also equipped to advise at-risk students in the athlete population.

**Conclusion**

Over the past few decades there has been a steady increase of student athletes in college athletics. University athletic departments have placed their resources in hiring advisors. Retention of student-athletes have been linked poor academic support for students. Good advising is vital to the long-term success of an athletic program. In interviewing an institution, it was clear that time is spent in ensuring that policies and guidelines set by the NCAA are followed to comply with eligibility standards.

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