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Recruiting College Athletes: Ohio Northern University Case Study

Caleb Scott

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Recruiting College Athletes: Ohio Northern University Case Study

Caleb Scott

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Project Advisor

Dr. Ray Schneider: _____

Second Reader

Dr. Amanda Koba: _____

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Abstract

Recruiting in college athletics is a critical duty for coaches in every sport. Recruiting athletes requires time, money, and personnel and is difficult for collegiate athletics at every level. When it comes to recruiting, Magnusen, Kim, Perrewe and Ferris (2014) separate recruiting factors into three categories: external, academic and athletic program factors. Those categories house numerous other subcategories that attempt to explain how intricate of a process recruiting is and how important the process is when it comes to the success of an athletics program. This case study of Ohio Northern University (ONU), a small Division III school in northwest Ohio, develops a better understanding of the challenges ONU and other Division III schools may face on a daily basis when attempting to recruit athletes. In this case study, fifteen head coaches and full-time assistant coaches at ONU completed an in-depth questionnaire that focused on recruiting at the university. The questionnaire concentrated on common recruiting themes such as funding, facilities, staff, and scholarships. The results showed that the location of the school was problematic for coaches at ONU in the recruiting process. It was also noted that recruiting efforts in-season were much more difficult due to a lack of time and staffing, which can be linked to underfunding. While research (Schneider and Messenger, 2012) supports the notion that facilities are low on the list of factors for a recruit in choosing a school, ONU coaches indicated that facilities are an important recruiting tool they utilize. All of the common themes (i.e. time, personnel, facilities, etc.) of the recruiting questionnaire responses can be linked to underfunding and can be addressed if the National Collegiate Athletic Association focused more of its time and energy on Division III athletics.

Introduction

Recruiting, and the recruiting tactics collegiate athletics programs employ in their given sport, are some of the most important tools that allow colleges and universities to compete at a high level and succeed in their respective sports. Recruiting potential student-athletes and the strategies universities use to attract a potential student-athlete are changing every day in collegiate athletics. New rules are being formulated year-in and year-out in order to ensure the playing field is level for every school trying to vie for an athlete.

The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) defines recruiting as any solicitation of prospective student-athletes or their parents by an institutional staff member or by a representative of the institution's athletics interests for the purpose of securing a prospective student-athlete's enrollment and ultimate participation in the institution's intercollegiate athletics program ("Recruiting Calendars," p. 1, 2018).

The words recruit, recruiting and recruitment are used in various ways and in different places on a daily basis. Although those words are generalized to a larger audience and can be used interchangeably for multiple fields, the general meaning is the same. In collegiate athletics, recruiting is just another competitive battle that schools take part in. Landing a potential student-athlete is not an easy task and a lot of different factors play a role in convincing that athlete to compete for your university.

Kankey and Quarterman (2007) showed this when they studied Division I softball players at 10 NCAA member schools in Ohio. Kankey and Quarterman found that those softball players that participated in their study identified six major factors in the recruiting

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process that helped them choose their school. Those six factors were “availability of major of academic program, head coach, career opportunities after graduation, social atmosphere of the team, amount of financial scholarship offered, and academic program reputation” (Kankey, Quarterman, 2007).

Letawsky, Schneider, Pedersen and Palmer also suggest that although student-athletes have other factors that influence their college decision, many of the non-athletic factors play a significant role as well (2003). These factors included “degree-program options, academic support services on campus, type of community in which the campus is located” (p. 638, 2003).

So, what is so important about knowing that there are a lot of factors that influence the recruitment process and why does it matter that recruiting is so important to the success of college athletics? The NCAA notes that “Division I schools, on average, enroll the most students, manage the largest athletics budgets, offer a wide array of academic programs and provide the most athletics scholarships,” while “the Division III experience provides an integrated environment that focuses on academic success while offering competitive athletics and meaningful non-athletics opportunities” (“NCAA Recruiting Facts,” p. 1, 2018).

According to the research sector of NCAA.com, the NCAA is made up of 1,102 member schools, with the majority (443) coming from Division III and making up 40% of NCAA member schools (“NCAA Recruiting Facts,” 2018). The numbers also show that 351 schools are Division I affiliated schools and 308 are Division II affiliated schools. For Division III schools in the United States, the median undergraduate enrollment rate is 1,748 -s, compared to a median of 9,629 undergraduate students at Division I schools. Those numbers break down even farther to show that one in six students at the Division III level are student-athletes

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at their respective school, while one in twenty-five students at the Division I level are considered student-athletes (“Our Three Divisions,” 2018).

The NCAA oversees three major divisions in collegiate athletics, being the Division I, Division II and Division III levels. Although big time Division I athletics programs such as Ohio State University, the University of Texas, Alabama University and Florida State University, among others, implore the same tactics and strategies that most Division III schools use in the recruiting process, there is an obvious difference and advantage they hold over their Division III counterparts. Those differences and advantages are things that have not been heavily researched and brought to the forefront of our attention. The NCAA states on their webpage, that

NCAA member schools have adopted rules to create an equitable recruiting environment that promotes student-athlete well-being. The rules define who may be involved in the recruiting process, when recruiting may occur and the conditions under which recruiting may be conducted. Recruiting rules seek, as much as possible, to control intrusions into the lives of student-athletes (“Recruiting Calendars,” p.1, 2018).

The NCAA does its best to keep recruiting on a level playing field and allow schools to recruit fairly to enforce rules. The NCAA’s Committee on Infractions enforces recruiting infractions, as well as numerous other infractions that school may commit. According to Dixon, Turner, Pastore and Mahony (2003) “The majority of NCAA violations involve recruiting, which reflects the coaches’ desires to garner these valuable resources” (p. 62). Valuable resources were defined earlier in Dixon et al.’s research as a highly talented athlete, in this case (2003). Furthermore, Weston states in his research article, *NCAA Sanctions:*

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Assigning Blame Where It Belongs “some rule violations are minor and relatively inconsequential. Other violations are egregious, such as payments or a range of impermissible extra benefits provided to players or their families, academic fraud, and recruiting abuses by coaches or agents” (p. 554, 2011). The previously mentioned research show that there are many forms that violations can come in in collegiate athletics.

An astounding amount of money is poured into recruiting efforts at the big-time Division I level of college athletics. In her article *Have Money, Will Travel: the Quest for Top Athletes* Libby Sander states “Nearly half of the nation's largest athletics programs have doubled or tripled their recruitment spending over the past decade, as their pursuit of elite athletes intensifies and becomes more national in scope” (p. 1, 2008). Sander also goes on to note that nearly fifty percent of NCAA Division I athletics departments have doubled their recruiting budgets from 1997-2007 (2008). Although Sander wrote this article in 2008, the relevance of it in today’s college athletics atmosphere is even more important. Sander even comments that when recruiting at the big-time Division I level, “many more coaches now look far beyond homegrown talent, sometimes even crossing continents to court top prospects” (p. 1, 2008). This leaves the question; how can Division III schools keep up with this ever-growing ideology of recruiting athletes?

The following case study looks at Ohio Northern University, a small Division III school in rural northwest Ohio and a member of the Ohio Athletic Conference, widely regarded as one of the most competitive Division III athletics conferences across the United States. The aforementioned big time Division I schools, as well as all of the other schools that fall into that category, for the most part, have to abide by the same rules and regulations that Ohio Northern University and its coaching have to abide by when recruiting.

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One of the primary differences Division III coaches can use to their advantage is that after the potential recruit's sophomore year of high school, Bylaw 13.1 of the NCAA's rules and regulations state that Division III coaches have "no number limit on off-campus contacts" (p. 1, 2018), whereas Division I schools, depending on the sport, must not have off campus contact with the recruit during specific time periods throughout the year. Although this is an advantage in Division III institutions favor, there are still some underlying factors that are not necessarily in the "rule book" that allow Division I schools to have major advantages when it comes to recruiting.

The following study will look to uncover those advantages and provide a primary example of how big time Division I institutions have an upper hand in the recruiting process using Ohio Northern University as a case study. This study is intended to show that although the NCAA has guidelines to ensure the equal treatment of recruits and recruiting itself, that those guidelines are not stringent enough and do not factor in numerous other aspects, allowing big time Division I institutions to have an advantage in recruiting.

Literature Review

Recruiting is a very important part of any coaching job at the collegiate level. Whether it is at a small Division III school such as Ohio Northern University, or one of the largest schools in the nation, such as Ohio State University. However, this case study intends to break down the ways Division I schools recruit and compare those strategies to Ohio Northern University (ONU) to see how ONU may incorporate new strategies to help bring in student-athletes. Recruiting student-athletes for collegiate athletics can be an intricate and very involved process. As was mentioned previously, Kankey and Quarterman (2007, p. 35) detailed six factors associated with Division I softball players picking a school to compete at

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and stated “the availability of major of academic program, head coach, career opportunities after graduation, social atmosphere of the team, amount of financial scholarship offered, and academic program reputation.” Although we can see that the factors Kankey and Quarterman are aspects associated with the choice of the student-athlete, it is also very apparent that coaches and recruiting coordinators at the collegiate level must adhere to all of these factors, and many more, to give themselves the best likelihood of landing a potential recruit.

Magnusen, Kim, Perrewe and Ferris (2014) emphasize three categories that are considered recruiting tools utilized in the recruiting process. The three categories that Magnusen et al. developed were *external factors*, *athletic program factors*, and *academic factors* (2014). The discussion begins with external factors.

Scholarships

External factors may come in various forms, as Magnusen et al. suggest economic conditions (i.e. scholarships), school location, and weather and climate are all external factors coaches and student-athletes must consider (2014). On an annual basis, Division I and II schools award over 2.7 billion dollars in scholarship money to over 150,000 students (“Facts about NCAA Sports”, 2016). As a coach, being able to sell their program to an athlete with a full-ride scholarship makes the job that much easier. A scholarship can offer a potential student-athlete a way to pay for school, get an education and develop a potentially better future.

Scholarships provide a great opportunity for high school athletes looking to excel at the next level, but they also play a huge role and give an enormous advantage to Division I coaches in the recruiting process. The NCAA research database shows that 56 percent of student-athletes at the Division I level receive some sort of athletics aid (NCAA.org, 2016).

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Division I FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) football programs are allotted 85 full tuition scholarships annually for their football players. A full tuition scholarship covers all costs of board and tuition to the respective university that the potential student-athlete may attend. Likewise, at the Division I level, women's basketball teams are allowed 13 full-ride scholarships per year, while Division I men's basketball programs are allowed 15 full-ride scholarships per year (collegescholarships.org, 2017).

The aforementioned information is not to neglect the fact that Division III student-athletes never receive some (Pauline, 2010) type of aid. A great majority of Division III athletes are able to garner an academic award, which can allow them to compete athletically at the Division III level. However, the advantage Division I coaches have is the ability to offer athletic scholarships as well as the availability for students to obtain academic scholarships.

Location

Location is a key external factor that can play a significant role in recruiting. Pauline (2010) organized a study that looked at the factors that influenced the college selection of lacrosse players at NCAA Divisions I, II and III schools. The study showed that "the findings did not reveal significant gender differences, but scholarship, athletic team, team atmosphere, location, and academic major were important" (Pauline, p. 66, 2010).

This idea is enforced in (J. Michael Dumond, 2008)'s research on Division I FBS (Football Bowl Series), seeking out reasons why football players chose certain schools. One of the most notable and important findings in the study was that geographical location and distance from the athlete's home played a major role in the athletes' decision (Dumon et al., 2008).

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Unfortunately, in Dumon et al's research, the study does not conclude if location is related to the idea that the athlete wants to be close to home or is wanting to get away from home. With that said, a big city like New York or Los Angeles has much more to offer from multiple different standpoints. Big time Division I schools are typically located in big cities across the country, making location something that may or may not play an important role in landing top recruits.

Coaches

The second category that Magnusen, Kim, Perrewe and Ferris (2014) emphasize in their study is athletic programs factors. One of the first things the study mentions is the coach and recruiter characteristics. At the forefront of the recruiting process is the coaching staff of each respective team that is competing athletically. Having a fully manned coaching staff plays an enormous role in recruiting, as Magnusen, Kim, and Perrewe note that "recruiting student-athletes is a time and labor intensive process that represents one of the most fundamental ways in which National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) schools can achieve athletic success and create a competitive edge for themselves" (p. 1291, 2014). An obvious part of the job description for a coach is recruiting. However, the way Division I athletics teams are able to utilize coaches to recruit is a key tool in landing recruits.

A coach's attitude and coaching "style" can play a role in whether or not a potential recruit will commit to their program. Magnusen et al. (2014) focused on the political skill of coaches and how much recruiter characteristics play a role in the recruiting process. The results of this study showed that "recruiter positive affectivity had a significant positive association with recruiter political skill, and political skill had a positive association with the overall quality of recruiting class, and recruiters' perceptions of recruitment effectiveness

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during the most recent NCAA recruiting cycle” (Magnusen et al., p. 1291, 2014). Magnusen et al. suggest in the study that political skill is a form of social effectiveness that is an inter-related set of social competencies that are at the very core of social influence (2014).

At the highest level of collegiate football, coaches and their style of coaching are very well known. With media coverage and social media coverage of collegiate athletics at the highest level, coaches are constantly in the spotlight during games, in practices and during press conferences. Although ones coaching style is not necessarily an advantage at any level of play, the way the coaching style is promoted can play a big role for teams. Constant media coverage of high-profile Division I coaches allows potential student-athletes to see the coaches in action in various situations and allow those coaches an advantage Division III coaches typically are not granted.

Taking into consideration the budget difference between a Division I athletics program compared to its counterpart at the Division III level, the former has the ability to assign specific people to recruiting efforts. For example, Ohio State football, one of the most profitable Division I football programs in the country, has a support staff with two full-time employees that are focused on the needs of players and potential recruits (ohiostatebuckeyes.com, 2018). During the season, when the stakes are at an all-time high, head coaches spend most of their time focusing on leading their team to victories rather than recruiting efforts. In-season recruiting is much more viable for Division I institutions when they have full-time employees who can focus on recruiting efforts. Mark Pantoni, a full-time assistant for the Ohio State University football team is a prime example. Pantoni is the Director of Player Personnel for the football program and in his capacity, he “supervises all aspects of the program’s administrative duties for recruiting, including on-campus official and

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unofficial visits, budgeting, travel and database management” (ohiostatebuckeyes.com, p. 1, 2018). Likewise, the Buckeyes feature the same position for their men and women’s basketball programs, both notable programs on the national scale. Recruiting in any collegiate athletic setting is a full-time job. Being able to have full-time employees who focus their attention and energy solely on recruiting and the well being of their athletes can contribute to success in the recruiting phase.

Facilities

Facilities are a new and growing trend that coaches and athletics programs are utilizing to recruit. In fact, Gene Budig states “New, multimillion-dollar facilities now seem to be the rule, rather than the exception” (p. 283, 2007). If this is the case, and collegiate programs are pushing each other to continue to build new and improved facilities to be better than the next competitor, facilities can become a very important topic in the recruiting process. Schneider and Messenger report

the top three reasons student-athletes chose to attend their respective institution were the perceived opportunity to play immediately, receiving athletic-related financial aid, and the perceived future professional playing opportunities. Athletic facilities, as the reason to attend their college was well down the list” (p. 1, 2012).

Research, such as Schneider and Messenger’s (2012) study, show that facilities may not be a very important factor in an athletes’ college choice. However, as Budig (2007) mentioned in his research, millions of dollars are being poured into athletics facilities. One can only believe that athletics facilities play an important role in the recruiting process. Magnusen, Kim, Perrewe, and Ferris believe this to be the case as their research promotes the idea that

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Although other factors may overshadow the influence of athletic facilities, such structures are still likely to have a noticeable impact on recruitment outcomes, and thus represent salient pieces of information that warrant consideration for presentation by recruiters when they interact with recruits and influential agents (2014)

Exposure in the Media

Another selling point Division I coaches can utilize to attract the best players is being able to provide an athlete with a spotlight or a stage to showcase their talents. Although the majority of student-athletes never go on to sign a professional sports contract, those student-athletes still have the ability to showcase their talents and compete for a professional contract. In fact, at the Division I level, only 1.1 percent of men's basketball players make it to professional basketball, while 0.9 percent of women's basketball players make it as a professional basketball player, and only 1.6 percent of football players at major Division I programs make it to the National Football League (NCAA.org, 2016). However, of those small percentages of athletes that make it to the professional leagues, the majority of them had media exposure. Social media is another media outlet that has forever changed the layout of collegiate athletics and has brought a completely new facet to the way coaches recruit (Epstein, 2011). Although all divisions of collegiate athletics and all coaches must follow the same guidelines, recruits are able to market themselves to a broader audience and earn more recognition from different schools and coaches. The use of social media has created a challenge in recruiting efforts at the collegiate level (Epstein, 2011). So much so, that the NCAA has developed guidelines over the course of the last few years to ensure that social media is utilized properly and held accountable in the recruiting process as is supported in Viky Blohm's research *The Future of Social Media Policy in the NCAA* (2012).

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Success Rate

Success in athletics tends to have many positive impacts outside of the sport itself. In a research study conducted by Douglas T. (J. Douglas Toma, 1998) and Michael Cross in 1998, there was a positive connection between the success rates of Division I and NCAA affiliated institutions and the number of undergraduate admission applications the given institution received in a specific year (Toma, Cross 1998). In order to isolate athletic success among universities, the research focused on the number change in undergraduate admissions among schools that experienced a national championship in men's basketball or football to those schools that did not experience a national title in either of the aforementioned sports in the previous year. The result showed a staggering effect on the number of undergraduate applications for schools after winning a national title. The resulting information from the study is a useful tool in recruiting and shows that high levels of success can be beneficial for a university. As is noted in Toma and Cross's research, 13 of the 15 large universities that experienced a national title in football showed some sort of positive increase in undergraduate applications in the following academic year. This trend can easily translate to the recruitment process of collegiate athletics. At large universities like the ones mentioned in this study, media coverage for football and men's basketball is very widespread and plays a role for potential student athletes. Winning a national title in a specific sport is something that, combined with the national attention it receives, is very vital to the recruitment process at big time universities. A prime example of how National Titles can translate to more successful recruiting efforts is the University of Mount Union in Alliance, Ohio. In the same division and conference as Ohio Northern University, Mount Union has consistently been a contender on a

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national scale throughout the last three decades in football. According to the Purple Raiders athletics website, the Mount Union football program has won 13 national titles since 1993.

Ohio Northern University

Many of the previously mentioned sections of recruiting styles and tactics can be seen at Ohio Northern University in their athletics programs. For instance, facilities at Ohio Northern University are, for the most part, way behind the new “standard” in today’s collegiate athletics era. The ONU Sports Center, one of the main athletic facilities at Ohio Northern is a very old and outdated facility. At the same time, that facility is used by eight varsity athletics teams full-time and multiple other teams part time. According to Ohio Northern’s athletics website and in regards to the ONU Sports Center, “The ONU Sports Center was opened for use at the beginning of the 1974-75 academic year and was expanded to its current size of 18,000-square feet in 1991” (“The Ohio Northern University Sports Center,” p. 1, 2018). As one of the main facilities used at ONU, the ONU Sports Center has not been renovated since 1991 and is far behind what numerous other schools have in terms of facilities. The NCAA’s mission and core values promote the idea that the NCAA has a commitment to an “inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes” (“NCAA Core Values,” p. 1, 2018). Promoting the idea of equitable participation for student-athletes is very important for the NCAA. However, many schools cannot afford to give their student-athletes the same opportunities as other schools, thus deterring a student-athlete from the same equitable experience as numerous other student athletes competing athletically.

When it comes to coaches and their responsibilities, Ohio Northern University is much different than the average big time Division I school. A prime example of this is the Ohio Northern men’s basketball team coaching staff. According the University’s athletics website

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(2018), the Ohio Northern men's basketball program has only two full time coaches, one being the head coach and the other a full-time assistant coach. The Ohio State men's basketball team has nine full-time coaches listed on its athletics page (2018), not including the student assistant coaches listed. Ohio Northern University lacks the proper personnel that is needed to effectively recruit and develop athletes like Division I schools are able to.

Finally, exposure in the media is something that Ohio Northern coaches are not able to promise to their potential student-athletes. Media is a great way for student athletes to show off their skills and abilities. Ohio Northern more than likely has local media that covers the university's athletics programs. However, at big time Division I schools nationally televised events and constant media coverage gives Division I coaches another advantage that Ohio Northern cannot use.

Methods/Participants

In an effort to better understand the recruiting tactics used at Ohio Northern University (ONU), a qualitative study was administered to coaches at ONU. The subjects of this study were varsity coaches at Ohio Northern University. A 15-question questionnaire was designed based upon the scholarly literature about recruiting efforts at the Division I level to elicit information about how both head coaches and assistant coaches at Ohio Northern University recruit on a daily basis and how well they feel their recruitment process is. The questionnaire identified coaches as "Head Coaches, Full-time Assistant Coaches, Part-Time Assistant Coaches, Volunteer Assistant Coaches, or other." The questionnaire also allowed the coaches to identify which sport and gender of sport they coach.

To ensure confidentiality in the process, results do not link specific coaches to specific sports, but rather generalize results into categories such as "head coaches, assistant coaches,

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female full-time assistant coaches” and so forth. Coaches were identified and sought out through Ohio Northern University’s publicly accessible athletics page, where contact information for each coach is available. The recruitment email that was sent out to the coaches at Ohio Northern University can be found at the end of the study (see Appendix A).

Shortly after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at Bowling Green State University to continue with my research, a consent document as well as the questionnaire mentioned previously, were sent to each responding coach showing interest in the study. The questionnaire that the coaches took part in can also be found at the end of this study (see Appendix B).

The questionnaire that the subjects took part in focused on facilities, difficulty of recruiting, methods of recruiting (social media, in person, email, phone, etc.), media exposure, athletic success and academic success at the University. The questionnaire took roughly 10 minutes to complete. After allowing the coaches one week to complete the questionnaire, 15 coaches at Ohio Northern University responded, took part in the study and returned their questionnaire.

Results

Of the fifteen responding coaches, eight of those coaches identified as head coaches of a sport at the university, while the other seven participants all identified as a full-time assistant coach. In all, fourteen of the universities’ twenty-one varsity sports were represented in the study. Of those fourteen sports represented in the study, eight men’s sports and six women’s sports at Ohio Northern University responded. Data gathered from the questionnaire was inputted into the SPSS software to find descriptive statistics for each question in the

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questionnaire. The following tables detail the number of coaches and gender of sports that the were represented in the study.

Coaches

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Head Coach	8	53.3	53.3	53.3
	Full-Time Assistant Coach	7	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

		Sport			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	7	46.7	46.7	46.7
	Female	4	26.7	26.7	73.3
	Both	4	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

When asked, “On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being ‘not difficult at all’ and 10 being ‘extremely difficult,’ please rate how difficult seeking out potential recruits are,” the responses were relatively mixed. The average answer for the fifteen respondents was 5.07, showing a relatively common ground on whether or not seeking out recruits for Ohio Northern University is difficult. However, when asked about how difficult recruiting potential athletes was during the coach’s specific season, that number jumped to 7.53.

Although Ohio Northern University has coaches that focus on recruiting, the demand is much higher and in-season recruiting can be a much bigger challenge for Ohio Northern University. One external factor that stuck out in this study was location. Ohio Northern University is located in Ada, Ohio, a village widely known for the Wilson Football Factory that makes the official National Football League footballs. According to the 2016 United

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States Census Bureau, Ada is a village of roughly 5,600 people (“Quick Facts Ada”, 2018). It is located in northwest Ohio and represents only a small percentage of the Ohio population. Ten of the fifteen responding coaches in this study stated that “the geographical location of Ohio Northern makes it more difficult to recruit athletes.” In fact, one coach went on to state that they had actually one of the most highly touted recruits for their sport in recent history to Ohio State University simply due to the location of Ohio Northern University. Location as an external factor plays a big role in recruiting.

Another external recruiting factor that seemed to have mixed results, was the significance of a lack of athletic scholarships at the Division III level. When asked to rate how significant not being able to give out athletic scholarships are with “1 being not significant at all, and 5 being very significant,” the average response from the coaches was 3.3. This could be attributed to the fact that the coaches in this study responded with a range of one to thirty years of experience in recruiting college athletes. Those who have been recruiting for a much longer period of time over their careers may have developed techniques and a better understanding of how to cope with not being able to offer athletic scholarships to athletes.

Finally, contrary to some research mentioned previously in this study, the coaches at Ohio Northern University overwhelmingly said they use their facilities as a recruiting tool. When asked “when bringing a potential recruit on campus for a visit, are you likely to show the recruit your sport’s facility/facilities as a recruiting tool,” thirteen of the fifteen respondents (87 percent) answered yes. Schneider and Messenger mentioned in one study that facilities did not seem to be one of the higher factors on a recruits list of factors for choosing a specific school (2012). However, Gene Budig states “New, multimillion-dollar facilities now seem to be the rule, rather than the exception” (2007). The results for this study at Ohio

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Northern University are consistent with Budig and his studies that show that facilities are playing an important role in recruiting efforts. Schools like Ohio Northern University may not be able to support multi-million dollar facilities like a lot of big time Division I schools do in today's culture, but it is apparent that facilities are important to the coaches at Ohio Northern University to aid in the recruiting process.

Two main themes were apparent in the analysis of the coaches at Ohio Northern University. The first main theme that came from the results was facilities and how that seems to be an important recruiting tool for the ONU coaches, yet is something they lack in a major way. All fifteen of the coaches noted that their facilities for their specific sport at Ohio Northern were a very important tool they utilize in their recruiting process. Thirteen of the fifteen coaches also noted that they would be likely to show recruits their facilities on a recruiting visit. Although previous research may show that facilities are not very high on a recruits list of why they choose a specific school, the Ohio Northern coaches indicated that their facilities play an important role in landing a recruit. Two coaches at Ohio Northern, from two different sports, indicated that they would not show a recruit their facilities. Those two coaches also noted that facilities are an important part to their recruiting process. This leads to the notion that the facilities at Ohio Northern for some sports are not good enough to be used as a recruiting tool.

A lack of facilities that are good enough to use in the recruiting process leads to the next theme that develops from the results. That theme is a lack of funding, which can be tied to numerous aspects of the recruiting process for Ohio Northern. The facilities arms race in collegiate athletics is fueled by money, investments and donations from supporters and alumni of specific schools. Funding for big time Division I schools typically comes by way of a large

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donation from a supporter or alumni of the school. At many Division III schools, including Ohio Northern University, donations of such magnitude are scarce and don't come by often or in as big of monetary value as those at the Division I level. Funding not only goes towards athletic facilities. The lack of funding at Ohio Northern affects the personnel that each team can employ, as well as opportunities for athletes, uniforms, athletic gear, and so on. The idea of underfunding at Ohio Northern can play a very vital role in how Ohio Northern coaches are able to recruit and what type of athletic experience a student-athlete can get at Ohio Northern.

Conclusion

This case study at Ohio Northern University and its results are consistent for the most part with previous research. The overall goal of this study was to uncover some of the advantages that Division I schools have in the recruiting process. One of the key advantages we see at the Division I level compared to Ohio Northern University is the difference in funding. The NCAA pours more money into Division I schools, while Division III schools fall at the wayside and do not receive enough funding to help the schools in the recruiting process. Schools like Ohio Northern University cannot compete with the University of Texas or the University of Oklahoma when it comes to facilities and spending millions of dollars year-in and year-out to keep up in the facilities arms race. It simply is not in the budget for these small Division III schools to be able to continuously pour money into travel expenses, facility management and improvement like big-time schools can. These small schools are not able to pay coaches millions of dollars a year to do their job, while paying other full-time assistant coaches a hefty price tag to focus solely on recruiting efforts.

The NCAA publicly acknowledges that a part of their mission is to give every student-athlete at every NCAA affiliated school the best and most equitable experience possible. Even

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with guidelines in place to ensure that recruiting is fair across of levels of collegiate athletics, many aspects are not taken into consideration that Division III schools have to deal with that big-time Division I athletics programs do not deal with on a daily basis. Division III schools like Ohio Northern need more help to be able to recruit effectively and be able to give student-athletes the best possible experience when competing. The difference between Division I schools and Division III schools when it comes to recruiting is bigger than most people realize. Division III schools like Ohio Northern University have so many factors that are overlooked and are not taken into consideration when trying to make recruiting efforts equal for every division in the NCAA.

Implications

The NCAA can help in the effort to protect Division III schools and the integrity of recruiting efforts. The NCAA already has guidelines in place to try to ensure that recruiting is a fair process for everyone involved. I think that the NCAA could take a deeper look into what guidelines they have in place, specifically at the Division III level, and what they can do to make the recruiting process a little more viable for Division III institutions such as Ohio Northern University. We see that on an annual basis, Division I and II schools award over 2.7 billion dollars in scholarship money to over 150,000 students (“Facts about NCAA Sports”, 2016). It is also important to note once again that the NCAA is made up of 1,102 member schools, with the majority (443) coming from Division III and making up 40% of NCAA member schools (“NCAA Recruiting Facts,” 2018). If Division III schools make up the majority of the NCAA and its affiliates, maybe the NCAA should take a closer look at helping these schools and trying to ensure that they have the capability to keep up with big time Division I schools and get the same treatment those Division I schools get.

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Appendix A

Ohio Northern Recruitment Email

“Hello Ohio Northern coaches:

I am contacting you to ask you to participate in a qualitative study on recruiting at the Division III level. The study is for my final project for graduate school. I am hoping each of you will consider taking a few minutes of your time to fill out a questionnaire to help my research. I am currently in the process of seeking approval from Bowling Green State University’s Institutional Review Board and can begin the questionnaire once I get approved. Participation in the study is not mandatory. If you feel uncomfortable being in the study, please disregard this email, and thank you for your consideration. If you are interested, please read the attached consent form to gain a full understanding of how your participation helps with the overall goal of the study. If you have any questions or concerns, you may email me at cbscott@bgsu.edu or my advisor, Dr. Ray Schneider at rayschn@bgsu.edu.

Thank you,

Caleb Scott”

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Appendix B

Ohio Northern University Recruiting Questionnaire

“1)

Of the following, please mark which coaching position best fits your status at Ohio Northern University.

- Head Coach
- Full-time Assistant Coach
- Part-time Assistant Coach
- Volunteer Assistant Coach
- _____ Other (Please Specify)

2)

Please identify which sport(s) you are involved with, and which gender of sport:

Sport: _____

Male

Female

3)

How many prior years of experience do you have recruiting college athletes?

4)

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being “not difficult at all” and 10 being “extremely difficult,” please rate how difficult seeking out potential recruits are:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5)

With 1 being not difficult at all and 10 being extremely difficult, how difficult is it to recruit potential athletes during your respective sport’s season?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6)

When bringing a potential recruit on campus for a visit, are you likely to show the recruit your sport’s facility/facilities as a recruiting tool?

Yes No

7)

On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not important and 5 being very important, are the facilities at Ohio Northern for your specific sport an important part of your recruiting tools?

1 2 3 4 5

8)

In your opinion, does the geographical location of Ohio Northern make it more difficult to recruit athletes?

Yes No

9)

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In your opinion, does the athletics department provide enough help and resources to aid in recruiting?

Yes ___ No ___

10)

If you answered **no** to question No. 9, please identify below all resources that are lacking for recruiting efforts?

Budgets _____

Recruiting material (Media guides, photos, history and records, etc.) _____

Other (Please identify) _____

11)

Regarding the Division III policy of no athletic scholarships, are the absence of athletic scholarships a significant factor for student-athletes considering Ohio Northern? Please rate on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not significant and 5 being very significant.

1 2 3 4 5

12)

Please rate each of the following on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not important and 5 being very important on the importance each plays in the recruiting process?

- Team athletic success _____
- Team academic success _____
- Athletics publicity _____
- Individual athlete success _____

13)

Do you find that a coach's personality and attitude plays a major role in recruiting potential student athletes?

Yes ___

No ___

14)

If there are any notable differences/advantages between recruiting at the Division I level and the Division III level, please note below:

”

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