

Comments from the Editor

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The 4th annual Scholarly Colloquium was held in San Antonio, Texas in conjunction with the 2011 NCAA National Convention. The invited papers for that meeting are included in this issue of the *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, along with three regular submissions and two book reviews.

This is the first Colloquium conducted under new NCAA President Mark Emmert. He was most receptive to our work which was begun under the late Myles Brand and pledged his support for both the Colloquium and Journal in the years immediate ahead. The idea that good data should drive policy, that bona fide scholars should pay more attention to intercollegiate athletics, and that research can provide reform efforts with both direction and energy seemed to strike as strong a chord with President Emmert as with members of the Board. (Note: Names of current Board members and their institutional affiliations can be found on the back cover of this issue of *JIS*.)

The conference theme this year was Social Justice in Intercollegiate Sport: A Critical Examination of Racialized, Gendered, and Disabled Bodies. Every undergraduate student who studies social institutions knows that they can serve both as a mirror for cultural practices and an engine for social change. The mirror function tends to excuse sport for its shortcomings and withhold praise for any of its benefits. It merely reflects the dominant culture in which it operates and is a more or less passive victim or beneficiary of that culture.

But sport can also be an engine for social change, for reformation, for improving society. This is the side of intercollegiate athletics that is more in tune with its mission in institutions of higher education—organizations that are charged with making life better, not simply endorsing the status quo. And this is the side of athletics that excites those coaches, athletic directors, NCAA officials, and reformers who believe that sport should not just reflect but also lead. Indeed, the speakers and reactors at this Colloquium emphasize this latter role for intercollegiate sport—that is, its function as a vehicle for social change, a resource for hope.

The Colloquium is one of the only national conferences on sport that has combined three parallel concerns related to social justice, or as one of our keynote speakers termed them, the three legs of the social justice stool—racism, sexism, and ableism. This is significant for at least two reasons. First, the quest for social justice has proceeded unevenly across these three domains. Two legs of the stool (racism and sexism) have received more legal, institutional, and public attention than the third member (ableism). Arguably, legislation that addresses racism and sexism has had a more palpable social impact in sport and elsewhere than disability policy has.

Second, with the passage of laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Reform Act of 1972, and the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 coupled with considerable public discourse and occasional high-profile policy changes, the tendency is to think that enough has been done or, at minimum, that a satisfactory trajectory has been established. None of the four keynote speakers agrees with this point of view. Rather, they argue that continued vigilance, effort, legislation, activism, paradigm shifts, and any number of other affirmative steps must be taken if progress on sport and social justice is to be fully realized.

Alan Sack focused on athletes' rights by examining the NCAA Mission Statement. He wondered out loud if the mission statement was aimed more at identifying important educational goals or providing "ideological camouflage for an exploitative business cartel." He noted that making athletes an integral part of the student body requires much more than keeping them eligible for competition. Sack analyzed graduation rates, transparency, special admits, clustering, the academic progress rate (APR), the graduation success rate (GSR), and the important demarcation between professional and collegiate sport relative to their implications for athletes' rights and social justice. He concluded that the NCAA needs to do a better job of assessing the degree to which they are meeting their stated mission. Greater transparency is required, he said, to add credibility to NCAA claims about advancing the education of all of its athletes and promoting social justice. If this cannot be done, Sack suggested that the NCAA mission statement be rewritten to more accurately reflect realistic intercollegiate athletic objectives.

Harry Edwards referenced de Toqueville to warn us of what he (Edwards) called "the uncomfortable and inconvenient human relations realities at the interface of sport, race, and community." He argued that racial crises today are "no less stark and disturbing" than those of the 1960s. Edwards traces the recent history of Black involvement in sport from integration to disintegration and finally to dysfunction. He noted that early efforts at integration were "one-way" and "selective" and that this led to what he called the "plantation structure" of organized sport. He suggested that this unfortunate turn of events was due to the method, not the fact, of integration. Edwards expressed concerns about various dysfunctional aspects of Black culture including the hijacking of Black mores by the so-called "prison culture." Citing current examples of declining Black participation in sport, he argued that this is likely to continue unless and until racial stereotypes, technological advances, and other issues are faced head on and until a new paradigm for sport and education is developed.

Susan Cahn discussed the high profile case of Caster Semenya for purposes of making important claims about biased gender identification and continuing problems related to the compatibility of femininity and sport. She takes the reader on a journey through parts of her own life and the kinds of discrimination she endured. She examines symbols, body parts, gestures, clothing and other means by which males and females are often irrationally and thus too inaccurately identified. She cites examples of modern female athletes who struggle to retain their identity as "normal." While acknowledging the importance of gender distinctions for personal well-being and sporting opportunity, she criticizes our current tendency to force everyone into one of two gender boxes. She offers no panaceas for gender identification and the reconciliation of femininity and athleticism. However, she argues that no athletes, whatever their stripe, should be "robbed of their joy."

Ted Fay reminded us of the third leg of the social justice stool—namely, ableism. He claimed that disabled athletes are “largely invisible and often marginalized.” He argued that the Americans with Disabilities Act and other previous legislation did not have the social impact of parallel legislation aimed at reducing racism and sexism. He made five major claims in his address—that sport participation for the disabled should be considered a right and not a privilege, that disabled athletes face severely limited opportunity at all levels of organized sport, that a “pathology model” is used by the medical community to limit opportunity, that disabled athletes are victims of socially constructed categories, and that disabled individuals too often reinforce and accept the discriminatory practices that affect them.

Our four keynote speakers were accompanied by reactors with comparable levels of expertise and stature. While space here does not permit a review of each one, these commentaries provided important additional insights, points of agreement, and counterpoints. The Colloquium Board is delighted that speakers and reactors of such high quality were willing to attend the Colloquium and challenge all of us with important information on our progress—and, as is too often the case, lack of the same—on important issues of social justice in sport.

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These colloquium essays and reactions, as significant and interesting as they are, should not deflect attention from three excellent papers that were submitted to the journal and negotiated the normal blind review process. The first two address a common topic and are authored by the same research team.

Nichols, Corrigan and Hardin (“Integration of Athletics and Academics: Survey of Practices at FBS Schools”) report on research conducted by the Curley Center for Sport Journalism at Penn State University. They culled 20 best practices from previous work completed by the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) and published in a 2007 white paper entitled: *Framing the Future: Reforming Intercollegiate Athletics*. These best practices were grouped into four categories: Academic Integrity and Quality; Student-Athlete Welfare, Campus Governance; and Fiscal Responsibility. Results of the survey reveal varying degrees of best-practice deployment across the four categories. However, overall patterns allowed authors to conclude that FBS schools have a number of “under-utilized tools” at their disposal. However, in making this claim, authors also acknowledge that best practices “vary widely” and that any “one-size-fits-all” approach would not work.

In the companion article by Corrigan, Hardin, and Nichols (“Case Studies in Athletic-Academic Integration: A Closer Look at Schools that Implement COIA’s Best Practices”), the authors examined local conditions at the six highest scoring institutions on the best practices survey. These included the University of Houston, University of Illinois, University of Maryland, Oklahoma State University, University of South Carolina, and Southern Methodist University. The purpose was to highlight universities that most nearly followed COIA best practices and to examine local conditions that might explain the adoption of these practices. Investigators found that a variety of historical and other factors played a role in the implementation of COIA-endorsed policies and practices at these institutions.

Aughey, Danylchuk, and Lebel (“The Impact of the Economic Recession on Canadian Interuniversity Sport [CIS] Programs”), in a telephone survey of eight Canadian institutions, examined the impact of the economic downturn on those

programs and the strategies employed to address these effects. A related purpose was to find economic techniques that might be put to good use either at other Canadian institutions or schools in the United States. The authors detailed the context of CIS programs and highlighted the fact that they are often embedded in academic departments, rely on student fees and other institutional funds for the majority of their support, and do not operate in the same big-business atmosphere that characterizes intercollegiate athletics at some US institutions. They detail strategies used on both the revenue and expenditure sides of the ledger. They underlined the fact that a number of the Canadian athletic directors surveyed regarded the self-study and resultant strategic planning prompted by the economic downturn as a positive experience and one that led to a stronger program.

Finally, this issue of the Journal includes reviews of two books published recently—Ron Smith's *Pay for Play: A History of Big-Time College Athletic Reform*, and Michael Oriard's *Bowled Over: Big-Time College Football from the Sixties to the BCS Era*.

As always, contributions to the Journal are welcome. In addition, other Board members and I hope to see you at the Scholarly Colloquium next January at the NCAA convention in Indianapolis. The topic at that Colloquium will be "academic reform." It will include both a historical look at recent reform efforts and a forward looking analysis of future needs. Once again, we hope to see you there.