Leading Student-Athletes to Success Beyond the Field: Assessing the Role of Leadership in Adopting High Impact Practices in Intercollegiate Athletics

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Given the current culture and climate on college campuses, it is imperative that all students have the opportunity to participate in deep learning experiences, impacting their time on campus and preparing them for their impending transition into the workforce. While high impact practices (HIPs) are readily available, and participation encouraged, to the majority of the student population, it can be difficult for student-athletes to partake in such endeavors. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the role that leadership plays in the integration (or lack thereof) of HIPs into the student-athlete development process. Through semi-structured, phenomenological interviews with 21 staff members (administration, coaching, academics) of a mid-major Division I intercollegiate athletic program, the researchers were able to further understand the impact of leadership on HIPs in intercollegiate athletics. With this, three primary themes, with multiple sub-themes, emerged. These include Resources, Messaging, and Relationships. While there was a mix of positive and negative aspects of each theme, the general idea was that without a university directive, or a transformational leader, this type of pursuit would not be an overarching priority. Both theoretical and practical implications, as well as recommendations, are discussed.

Keywords: student-athlete, high impact practices, leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership

Across the United States, student-athletes, totaling nearly half a million, compete in 24 sports annually through the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2021a). Combining these students with those participating in National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics and National Junior College Athletic Association sanctioned sports, there are approximately 600,000 individuals participating in intercollegiate athletics in the United States annually (National Associate of Intercollegiate Athletics, 2021; National

Junior College Athletic Association, 2021). These individuals, making up roughly three percent of all students on college campuses, have been sold on the benefits of life as a student-athlete, including the concept that student-athletes are provided with the resources to excel both on and off the field of play. As we have seen intercollegiate athletics shift in both form and function, we must continue to question whether or not student-athletes are being provided with the tools to excel, or even succeed, in ways that will support them on campus and prepare them for the world beyond.

In an evolving academic environment, intercollegiate athletic administrators have been charged with satisfying the interests and desires of a diverse student-athlete population, while simultaneously meeting institutional and departmental objectives. Due to constraints and/or pressure brought on by institutional directives, the needs, goals and desires of student-athletes are often a last consideration, with the focus on athletic achievement surmounting all other priorities. Fortunately, whether required by governing bodies or based on genuinely holistic movements, changes to the athletic and academic landscapes are primed to shift beyond an exploitive environment that made many student-athletes feel like "used goods" (Beamon, 2008). With this, institutions and organizations have begun to rally behind the development of these individuals from a variety of perspectives (e.g., academic, mental health, nutrition, etc.), expanding the definition of student-athlete in a more all-encompassing manner. To wit, several institutions and conferences have either begun or buttressed their Academic Support Services for Student Athletes (ASS-SA), Student-Athlete Mental Health Initiative (SAMI), program specific nutrition (e.g., Giardin, 2020), and even allowing for some semblance of compensation for institutional corporeal labor through the ability to generate income through name, image and likeness (NIL). While this may be the case, student-athletes will always operate within an overlapped plane of existence, attempting to toe the line between their academic and athletic goals. Therefore, as they are under the charge of the institution, more of an effort should be made to ensure that student-athletes' academic and pre-professional pursuits do not fall through the cracks. The challenge here is that many programs, bound contextually by a win-at-all-costs mentality, guide student-athletes to "easy" majors in order to maintain on-field eligibility. Practice time and skill development often comes before off-field growth, and it has been reported that many faculty treat student-athletes differently and less than traditional students (Zagelbaum, 2014). While advances have been made regarding the focus on personal growth, student-athletes remain at a disadvantage when it comes to professional development.

Governing bodies across intercollegiate athletics have launched various programs with the intent to develop the whole student-athlete and prepare them for a diverse, ever-changing world. For example, through the NCAA Life Skills program, the non-profit organization has aligned with the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A) in order to focus on skills that are useful beyond the college experience (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2021b). Additionally, there are opportunities for leadership development through the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) at both the institution and national governing body.

While this is the case, some of these may be limited to just a portion of student-athletes leaving only those selected to develop these particular skills. Since it is an advisory board SAAC, for instance, limits the number of participants to those who have the time, inclination, and willingness to represent themselves and other student-athletes inside and outside the institution, and there are gatekeepers (coaches and administrators) who can choose whether or not to support an individual's interest in participating.

Current literature addresses a number of themes that point towards the development and preparation of student-athletes, noting the role of leadership in this process (e.g., Naidoo et al., 2015; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013). Scholars have pinpointed two contrasting leadership styles, transactional and transformative leadership (e.g., Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996), that dominate both general and athletic administration. Transactional and transformative styles, impacted by internal and external driving forces, provide the foundation for the athletic department's focus. Transactional leadership, or a goal-driven perspective with an emphasis on task delegation and intense employee supervision (Biscontini, 2015), creates an environment where employees work in exchange for benefits and is responsive in nature (Naidoo et al., 2015). In contrast, transformational leaders work to inspire their followers by engaging in effective communication, encouraging trust and commitment (Abelha et al., 2018; Burton & Welty Peachey, 2009). Consequently, transformational leadership involves less supervision, works to inspire employee creativity, stimulates growth, and is proactive at its core (Naidoo et al., 2015; Weese, 1995). In intercollegiate athletics, an administrator's leadership style will inevitably drive the athletic program in a particular direction regarding initiatives for student-athlete success.

As a result, researchers have examined three models focused on the development and preparation of student-athletes, including the Holistic Model (Etzel et al., 2002), Service Model (Etzel et al., 2002) and Triad Model (Stier, 1992). Overall, each of these models addresses the academic, athletic, and personal development of student-athletes. Echoed by DiPaolo (2017) with the Integrated Model of Player Development, a philosophical shift is of interest, moving from a siloed method of student-athlete programming towards a universally-focused approach for personal and professional development. While athletic programs develop their own initiatives, are they adequately pulling from, and encouraging the use of, other programs simultaneously being offered on campus? DiPaolo's model brings to mind cross-campus integration and if all resources are being maximized, or even considered, which may be beneficial for programs with both large and small budgets.

From a broader perspective, colleges and universities are beginning to focus on the use of high impact practices (HIPs) to enhance the learning experience for their general student population (AAC&U, 2021). Non-profit organizations Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), and Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) introduced HIPs to form centralized education programs. Specifically, HIPs have centered on broadening students' experiences and skills using the 11 noted practices (i.e., first-year seminars and experiences, common intel-

lectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, eportfolios, service learning/community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses/projects; Kuh, 2008; Watson et al., 2016).

Themes addressed in HIPs run parallel to many of the development programs that have been created in athletic silos, per the aforementioned student-athlete development models (e.g., Etzel et al., 2002; Stier, 1992). Though there are numerous overlapping factors, many athletic departments have not addressed the likenesses between the two. Similarly, absent from this conversation is the role that leadership, and leadership style, plays in this process. While noted as a primary finding in Ishaq and Bass' (2019) work, leadership's impact on student-athlete participation has not been expanded. Therefore, the purpose of this work is to investigate the role that leadership plays in the integration (or lack thereof) of HIPs into the student-athlete development process. A major goal of this project is to help retain student-athletes by centering the student experience, and, at the very least, helping to create a learning environment more conducive to developing lifelong learners and citizens after they matriculate through their curriculum and athletic careers. In the following section we aim to outline the theoretical lenses around leadership that we are utilizing and briefly address those that we are not, then describe the conceptual framework provided by research on HIPs and student-athlete development from which this project draws.

Literature Review

Current literature addresses many themes in student-athlete development, most notably, the role of leadership in the process (e.g., Naidoo et al., 2015). Transactional and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978) are two styles that dominate athletic administration, each impacted by both internal and external driving forces. Therefore, in order to begin to understand the role of student-athlete development practices in intercollegiate athletics, we must first understand how and why the decisions are made, by understanding the defining characteristics of these two distinct leadership styles.

Leadership is the process by which one individual works to influence other group members to work towards the achievement of group goals (Flynn, 2013). Through years of research conducted by sociologists, two leadership styles (transformational and transactional) were recognized in the 1970's, and are considered to be the most prominently adopted amongst leaders in various fields (Flynn, 2013). Importantly, servant and authentic leadership theories have emerged as useful lenses with which to articulate these dynamics; however, the transactional/transformational dichotomy was the most appropriate for an initial dive. Servant leadership theory with its focus on leadership as a "way of life-a philosophy" (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2013, p. 377) is self-admittedly unwieldy to measure, while authentic leadership theory that "represents a shift away from the larger-than-life perspective of the transformational leader to a more introspective, yet empathetic leader" (Takos et al., 2018, p. 111)

would be a logical next step for this project. Within this structure, the current study has been framed by the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership, seeking to understand the way in which these styles may impact the role and value placed on non-athletic pursuits, particularly HIPs.

Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Originally introduced by James McGregor Burns (1978), transformational, or motivational, leadership is a process through which individuals encourage their followers to attain a higher performance than normally anticipated. This is accomplished through individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Additionally, its foundation involves leaders who are proactive, rather than reactive, and attempt to shape the environment in which they work (Avolio & Bass, 1988), focusing on direction setting, example setting, communication, alignment, bringing out the best, acting as a change agent, and crisis decision making (Hooper & Potter, 1997). Transformational leaders inspire motivation within their subordinates through their charisma, confidence, and assertiveness (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Furthermore, these individuals set higher expectations, typically leading to higher levels of performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

As previously noted, there are four main components regarding transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The first, individualized consideration, is that the leader truly focuses on the individual, which requires the leader to interact with their colleagues in order to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations, all while allowing them to function autonomously. The second component is intellectual stimulation, where the leader galvanizes their followers to utilize creativity to solve problems. Third is inspirational motivation, where the leader motivates and challenges their followers to stimulate individual growth, eventually leading to overall team or organizational heightened levels of camaraderie. Finally, idealized influence is the last component, and describes transformational leaders as active role models, individuals who should be admired, respected, and trusted.

While these character traits may seem ideal, transformational behaviors have been found to be less effective in public organizations, particularly those that have well-defined structure, rules, and procedures (see Danylchuk, et al., 2020; Lowe et al., 1996; Wells et al., 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising that transactional leader behaviors (i.e., structured and orderly), are often found in intercollegiate athletic programs, as they have been hypothesized to both appear more frequently and be more effective in public organizations (Lowe et al., 1996).

In stark contrast to transformational leadership, transactional leaders rely on authority to motivate subordinates (Biscontini, 2015). This type of leader believes that their job solely consists of delegation and supervision, while holding power over their employees. They do not accept a challenge to their authority, nor an individual who fails to accomplish a task. If employees are unable to perform at the required level, they are punished. In turn, if they perform above the noted benchmark, they are rewarded. Within transactional leadership there is the relationship between the

leader and subordinate that is characterized by the exchange, conditions, and rewards (Naidoo et al., 2015). With that, transactional leadership has two behavioral categories: contingent reward and management by exception (Jansen et al., 2009). These overarching categories include a subset of, often tactical, behaviors that include establishing goals, setting expectations, creating standards, providing rewards, distributing punishment, and monitoring daily affairs (Jansen et al., 2009).

While these two theories provide images of dichotomous leadership styles, scholars have also noted that these behaviors are, in turn, complimentary. Specifically, it has been noted that transformational leadership may not be effective if there is a lack of transactional behaviors. (Bass et al., 1987). Therefore, this suggests that peak performance includes an integration of leadership styles and behaviors.

High Impact Practices

A college or university's mission, philosophy, and institutional culture today often include external factors that both encourage and drive student development through out-of-class experiences (Kuh et al., 1991). Therefore, as institutional culture is constantly evolving to meet the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the community's key stakeholders, leadership must be aware of the wants and needs of students, faculty, and administrators in order to ensure that students are successful both during and after their time on campus. If an institution's culture is characterized by school pride and domination in sports, then administrators will make decisions that affect the success of their sport programs. However, if the institutional culture emphasizes an educational experience and career preparation, then the school administrators may insist on providing quality HIPs. An institution's culture that desires a dominant athletic program, but a balance between sports and education, would impact an administrator's behavior by trying to find a balance. This process of thinking led to Kuh's (2008) work regarding curricular and co-curricular campus activities (i.e., HIPs) that could afford leaders, regardless of their style, with the opportunity to create deeper and more impactful experiences for students.

HIPs have been implemented in institutions across the United States and lobbied by non-profit organizations (i.e., LEAP and AAC&U) to continue their development and use. Led by the work of Kuh (2008), 10 academic initiatives were categorized as HIPs, or active learning strategies that result in deeper learning outcomes. The teaching and learning practices, which are adapted based on learner characteristics and institutional priorities/contexts were adapted to include an 11th practice (Watson et al., 2016) and are defined in Table 1.

Table 1

High-Impact Educational Practices (Kuh, 2008; Watson et al., 2016)

HIP – *Name*	HIP - *Definition*
First Year Experience	Formally organized experiences for first-year students, emphasizing critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies.
Common Intellectual Experience	An adaptation of the traditional "core" curriculum, focusing on a set of required courses or a generalized program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or participation in learning communities, often under the guise of a broad theme.
Learning Communities	The grouping of students to encourage integration of learning across courses and assess broader reaching topics that matter beyond the classroom, often addressed in the context of inter-professional education.
Writing Courses	An intentional "repeated practice" style of writing where students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines.
Collaborative Projects	Group work, encompassing a variety of tactics, with two primary goals: (1) learning to work and solve problems in the company of others and (2) sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insight of others. This also encourages the inclusion of individuals with different backgrounds and/or life experiences.
Undergraduate Research	Providing undergraduate students with the opportunity to participate in research activities with the goal of engaging students in the process of actively contesting questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the excitement that comes from working towards a better understanding of important questions.
Diversity/Global Learning	Courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These often explore "difficult differences," such as racial, ethnic, gender inequalities, human rights, freedom, and power, and may be augmented by experiential learning and/or study abroad.
ePortfolios	A tactic that enables students to electronically collect work over time, reflect upon personal academic growth, and then share selected items with others, including professors, advisors, and potential employers.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning	These programs and/or courses include field-based "experiential learning" with community partners as a core instructional strategy. The primary goal is direct application, connecting the classroom to the community while providing places to both apply these skills and/or knowledge and reflect on them at their conclusion. The goal is to create a better understanding of the value of working with partners to prepare for citizenship, work, and life.
Internships	Another oft-adopted experiential learning strategy, internship provide students with direct experience in a work setting that is related to their career interests. This differs from a job in that it should be a mentored learning experience that is an extension of the classroom and should be treated as such by the student, site supervisor, and faculty supervisor.
Capstone Courses	While it may take many forms, the capstone (course, project, etc.) is a culminating experience that is completed at the end of a student's college experience. This integrates and applies what has been learned throughout their time on campus and/or in the program.

Kuh's (2008) work was not novel, as many of these active-learning strategies had already been in place on campuses for generations; however, it was both the focus and composite nature of the recommendations that led to this particular advancement, linking these strategies to student development in a more organic and holistic manner. Additionally, Kuh noted that the inclusion of these activities, in this manner, would help to advance underserved populations (e.g., African American, Latino/a, and students with relatively low ACT scores). Subsequently, Gonyea et al. (2008) suggested that all students should participate in at least two HIPs in their first few years in higher education in order to foster "deep approaches" to learning. Per Brownell and Swaner's (2009) work a year later, this was not the reality of the collegiate experience, as many college students did not have the opportunity to participate in HIPs. In addition to access, both first-generation and African American students were noted to be far less likely to participate as well. More recently, scholars linked back to Kuh's original recommendations, finding that participation in multiple HIPs has impacted student's perception of deep learning, particularly in first generation, transfer, and underrepresented racial or ethnic minority groups (Finley & McNair, 2013), showing the importance of understanding the barriers that Brownell and Swaner addressed. Kilgo et al. (2015) also indicated the benefits of these strategies; however, these scholars noted that some of this work is more impactful in

general areas such as critical thinking, cognition, and intercultural effectiveness (i.e., active and collaborative learning, undergraduate research), while others have a more focused positive effect on student learning (i.e., study abroad, internship, service learning, capstone course/experience).

Student-Athlete Development Models

HIPs are tools that universities and colleges use nationally to develop students into highly functional members of society, while preparing them for their future industry. This methodology is utilized in many variations, however, as previously noted, there are 11 main practices. Regardless of the funding and resources that an institution receives, these HIPs are vital assets to the curriculum offered. However, in a complex environment that encapsulates and glorifies college athletics, the cultural shift over the years has led to a divide between the general student body and student-athletes. This has been exacerbated, for example, by subcultures that have been created by the development of student-athlete (specific) academic centers (Rubin & Moses, 2017). As a school, the entire student body needs special attention, services, and programs that captivate them into their respective careers, while embedding the essential traits for life success. However, current literature (Etzel et al., 2002) has concluded that student-athletes' busy schedules and looming stereotypes disconnect them from the HIPs, programs, and services that are offered on campus. That being said, current literature has called for a better system that provides these fundamental attributes (Etzel et al., 2002; Stier, 1992).

While HIPs might seem focused on practices embedded in the academic affairs landscape, scholars have designed similar models that provide tools for athletic administrators to fit student-athletes' needs and wants. In this, researchers have pinpointed three models focused on the development and preparation of student-athletes, including the Service Model (academics and athletics; Etzel et al., 2002), Triad Model (academic, athletic, and personal/social advising; Stier, 1992), and the Holistic Model (academic, athletic, and social needs; Etzel et al., 2002). Overall, each of these models addresses the academic, athletic, and personal development of student-athletes, aiming to satisfy student-athlete needs and wants. Additionally, they are tools used to (potentially) organize HIPs. These models operate on a spectrum, and can be designed based on leadership style, institutional goals, and other relevant factors.

Services Model

The Services Model is a basic approach to developing student-athletes (Etzel et al., 2002). It adopts the philosophical foundation that recognizes student-athletes will have different needs at various stages in their college career. Its main concern is meeting those needs, while addressing the five main components of services for student-athletes, including academic monitoring, counseling, programs and workshops, consultation, and teaching.

Triad Model

Similarly, the Triad Model aims to address academic and athletic advising in their contribution to student-athlete success. However, this model also incorporates personal advising, providing additional support to student-athletes. All three components are considered to be the aspects of life for student-athletes, and bring additional factors such as problems, opportunities, and challenges. Through these factors, the Triad Model aims to develop student-athletes to become quality decision makers, develop their self-esteem, and establish priorities (Stier, 1992). This model encourages the development of special programs and tactics to create an environment in which student-athletes can flourish (e.g., transition program), resulting in benefits in the areas of selection and retention. Similar to HIPs, Stier's implementation and assessment of this program indicated higher retention rates as a result of exceptional advising, counseling, monitoring, and encouragement.

Holistic Model

Finally, in addition to the traditional factors, the Holistic Model focuses on emotional and mental health by incorporating professionals and/or campus resources such as psychologists and counselors. Etzel et al. (2002) argued that certain barriers such as limited time, high visibility on campus, and student-athlete stereotypes have created a barrier from utilizing services on campus. Therefore, this model was designed for "professionals to work together on behalf of the student-athletes in an effort to develop and implement programs to ensure that student-athletes have a greater opportunity to succeed as people in college and in life once the game is over" (p. 20). Through a fundamental understanding of the diverse needs and desires, the model allows academic support staff to adapt the other factors to have a greater impact on the individual student-athlete.

High Impact Practices within Student-Athlete Development Models

The three models allow administrators to create a system that fits their goals and student-athletes' needs and wants. Doing so not only allows them to build and prepare student-athletes, but also exhibits an overlap between the three models. They are adaptable and interact differently with HIPs.

Table 2 provides a brief overview of the relationship between HIPs and the three aforementioned models, given their overlapping themes. Though the table illustrates which practices have the potential to fit the philosophical foundations of each model, they are versatile and adaptable to fit any needs of any organization (or athletic department).

Ishaq and Bass (2019) assessed HIPs and barriers to implementation in the student-athlete experience, finding limitations as a result of university control of HIPs, differences in attitudes between coaches and academic staff, lack of funding or resources, and student-athlete time commitment. Additionally, while not addressing HIPs directly, Navarro and Malvaso (2015) used Kuh's (2008) framework to address the need for a more holistic approach to student-athlete development, identifying

Table 2

Overlap Between HIPs and Student-Athlete Development Models

	Services	Triad	Holistic
First Year Experience	X	X	X
Common Intellectual Experience	X	X	X
Learning Communities	X		X
Writing Courses	X	X	X
Collaborative Projects	X	X	X
Undergraduate Research	X	X	X
Diversity/Global Learning		X	X
ePortfolios			
Service Learning, Community-Based Learning			X
Internships	X	X	X
Capstone Courses		X	X

campus-level resources to enhance campus and civic engagement to prepare student-athletes for life after college. As a result, one must also consider the student-athlete environment as a whole, noting unique attributes of their time on campus, such as their separation from non-athlete peers, coach-athlete relationships, and athletic/academic staff relationships, as well as the role that these distinct characteristics play in their interest, intention, and ability to participate in enrichment activities both in- and outside of athletics. As previously noted, student-athletes, as with many other groups on campus, have their own subculture. With the addition of academic centers in this mix, they have a different college experience with different resources and influencers (Rubin & Moses, 2017). As a result, student-athletes often view staff members (e.g., coaches, athletic academic advisors) as their primary support and first point of contact for issues (Berg & Warner, 2019). While this may be the case, some scholars have found that this athletic bubble has also been a hinderance, particularly in regards to career exploration and planning (Huml et al., 2014) and that the academic self-concept begins in the first year (Comeaux et al., 2011). Comeaux et al. also noted differences between revenue and nonrevenue student-athletes, indicating further disparities among the group at large.

As with specific academic programs on campus (e.g., Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015), it will benefit athletic programs to move beyond their silos, seeking expertise and opportunities elsewhere. This practice is highly relevant to and applicable in the intercollegiate athletics model. As the overlap in these models indicates, the foundation has been laid, it is now in the hands of leadership to connect the dots and allocate the resources. As previously noted, the purpose of this work is to assess the role of leadership in the integration of HIPs into the student-athlete development process. This was driven by the following research questions:

(1) What impacts athletic leaders, in varying roles, to promote specific types of development initiatives; and

(2) What role does organizational culture and leadership style play in this process?

Method

In order to better understand the underlying themes that influence leaders in intercollegiate athletics to promote specific types of development initiatives, we adopted a qualitative intrinsic case study approach (Mills & Boardley, 2016) to this research. Following Kincheloe (2001), (good) social science has destroyed the notion of the impartial, passive, systematic scholar as anything more than producing value-laden products that operate under the flag of objectivity, its avoidance of contextual specificities that subvert the stability of its structures, and its fragmenting impulse that moves it to fold its methodologies and the knowledge they produce neatly into disciplinary drawers (p. 681).

This project makes no such claims for the data were gathered by a heterosexual cisgender Jewish woman in her early 40s, and a heterosexual, cisgender, white male (former) student-athlete in his early 20s. No doubt, and echoing Kellner (1995), our data collection, interpretive findings, and conclusions were inflected with our social backgrounds, but by foregrounding these potential conflicts of interest the goal is to clarify them in such a way that another could replicate this study and come to similar conclusions (e.g., Altheide & Johnson, 2011). Throughout the following we hope to clearly lay out the methods used to best understand how various forms of leadership shape HIPs and student-athlete development.

Participants

Due to constraints associated with data gathering by a team of two people, with a goal of providing a more broad-stroked study than an in-depth review of a particular team or singular leader for a particular team (e.g., Beissel, 2015, 2018), or a socio-historical "deep dive" (e.g., King-White & Beissel, 2018; King-White et al., 2021), we narrowed our target sample to academic support staff, coaches, and administrators at a mid-major intercollegiate athletics program in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. We were able to recruit 21 participants who consisted of seven administrators, seven academic support staff members, and seven coaches to ensure an equitable (though not equal) distribution of male and female voices supporting and coaching men's and women's teams (Cavalier, 2012). On average, the participants were 39 years old, and the majority were male (52%) and white (76%). Furthermore, the average number of years participants worked in intercollegiate athletics was 16, while 38% participated in leadership training during their career. Of the interviewees, 71% (primarily administrators – 86%) earned a post-graduate degree. A breakdown of participant demographics can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Overview

Name *	Primary Role	Gender	Age	Team	Race	Highest Degree Earned	# Years Working in Athletics	Participation in Leadership Programing
Alexis	Administrator	Female	42	NA	White	Post-Graduate	20	Industry
Brock	Administrator	Male	34	NA	Black/African American	Post-Graduate	8	Industry
Michael	Administrator	Male	39	NA	White	Post-Graduate	14	Campus
Ryan	Administrator	Male	46	NA	Black/African American	Post-Graduate	20	None
Andrew	Administrator	Male	45	NA	White	College	8	None
Kate	Administrator	Female	26	NA	White	Post-Graduate	3	None
Matthew	Administrator	Male	50	NA	White	College	26	None
Meghan	Academic Staff	Female	36	NA	White	Post-Graduate	13	Industry & Campus
Jamie	Academic Staff	Female	26	NA	Asian	Post-Graduate	5	None
Nick	Academic Staff	Male	37	NA	White	Post-Graduate	18	None
James	Academic Staff	Male	32	NA	White	Post-Graduate	10	None

Morgan	Academic Staff	Female	NP	NA	White	Post-Graduate	34	None
Tori	Academic Staff	Female	26	NA	Black/African American	Post-Graduate	3	None
Emily	Academic Staff	Female	41	NA	White	Post-Graduate	16	Industry
Casey	Coach	Female	41	Women	White	Post-Graduate	10	Industry
Austin	Coach	Male	60	Men	White	College	19	Industry
Luke	Coach	Male	32	Women/Men	White	College	10	None
Ben	Coach	Male	48	Men	White	College	26	Industry & Campus
Conner	Coach	Male	38	Women	Black/African American	College	15	None
Julia	Coach	Female	44	Women	White	Post-Graduate	23	None
Taylor	Coach	Female	NP	Women	White	Post-Graduate	NP	None

* Pseudonyms have been associated with all names to remove identifying factors

Note: NA refers to items that are not applicable to the participant; NP refers to items that were not provided by the participant

Procedures

We followed Institutional Review Board guidelines and obtained informed consent with each participant and conducted 21 in-person interviews. We developed an interview guide based on norms in the field of qualitative interviewing (see Patton, 2002 and Appendix), and allowed interviewees to prepare by sharing this prior to our formal meeting. During the actual interview participants engaged in semi-structured, in-depth, 30-60 minute discussions (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, 2012), with prompts focusing on the areas of leadership, organizational culture, and objectives (Naidoo et al., 2015) as well as HIPs, academics, and career preparedness (Kuh, 2008; Watson et al., 2016). Once each question was answered to the fullest of the participant's ability the interviewer would most often move to the next question, but also allowed for periods of exploration by the interviewee whereby they controlled the focus of the conversation. After interviews were conducted, all participants were provided with a brief demographic survey to assess descriptive characteristics of the group and each participant received a pseudonym to ensure anonymity in reporting.

Data Analysis

Data were recorded on two devices depending on which person in the data collection team conducted the interview. These interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded and reviewed by two researchers in order to identify consistent concepts threaded throughout the interviews. The researchers then worked in concert to inductively identify, and agree upon, emergent subthemes that later became contributors to major themes (Resources, Messaging/Communication, and Relationships) (Braun et al., 2006). Most often we agreed that an issue became a theme and/or subtheme when seven or more (~30%) of participants made mention of a particular issue suggesting that we had reached a point of thematic *saturation* (Saunders et al., 2018).

The third author in this manuscript (41 year-old, cisgender, white, heterosexual male) was then recruited for *member checking*. Following Pitney et al. (2020) "member checks are considered the single most important provision a researcher can make to bolster the creditability of the study" (p. 52). We specifically chose him to support in this project for his knowledge of the athletics program (King-White, 2018) and expertise in qualitative research and interviews (e.g., King-White, 2013). Through discussions we were able to (re)shape our themes and critically evaluate ambiguities and inconsistencies in our findings. In so doing we admit that our interpretations cannot be generalized, but they can serve as an exploratory lens with which to help understand emergent themes in leadership and their impact on HIP for student-athletes. That being said, we do believe that the research methodology for this project is based on sound qualitative methodological procedures, is verifiable, and replicable in such a way as to help answer the research questions.

Findings

While independent examples of HIPs were a priority for the university, similar to Kuh's (2008) claim that HIPs are unsystematic on college campuses in general, it

was apparent that HIPs, as a composite idea/philosophy, were not. In turn, the athletic department did encourage participation in them in a holistic manner. What will be addressed is findings that reflect why this might have been and how (as seen in the discussion) this can evolve with minimal investment, given the proven success of HIPs (e.g., Finley & McNair, 2013; Kilgo et al., 2015) in creating a holistic educational environment.

There were examples of academic support and intent for success through tutoring and work with the athletic academic staff; however, there was not an indication of professional development beyond what was required for an individual student-athlete's major. While this was the case, there were a few instances noted where activities were developed for specific teams by an individual academic advisor or coach (e.g., resume development, alumni panels), a program for female student-athletes in conjunction with the Career Center, and significant community work; however, these initiatives often took the backseat to leadership development programming for a select group of student-athletes. With this, attendance was often low at the majority of these events/activities unless required by a coach or authority figure. Additionally, while many of these initiatives had the potential to transition to a HIP, they lacked the key elements to make them so, particularly regarding both consistent feedback and reflection (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013).

Through our analysis, three primary themes emerged including, Resources, Messaging, and Relationships, supporting the findings of Ishaq and Bass (2019). Under these overarching concepts, we determined that there were also a variety of sub-themes, each of which will be addressed below. In addition to these distinct categories, there was some additional sub-text that ran through these conversations, linking back to the primary focus of this work. Though Ishaq and Bass (2019) discussed some of these subthemes, we posit that our exploration of aspects such as the challenges in being creative are unique additions to research in this area. Importantly, subthemes were developed because they were often discussed in relation to and not separate from the major themes that came to the fore. The first of these ideas is that leadership style has a key role in the support (or lack thereof) of HIPs for use in intercollegiate athletics. With this, intercollegiate athletic programs often have transformational intent with transactional execution. There is often the goal of "making waves;" however, due to the hierarchical nature of a college campus, this is easier said than done. And, unfortunately, a focus on HIPs in intercollegiate athletics, particularly in a setting with a stretched budget, was the sort of wave pushed aside. Therefore, within the context studied here, that led to a focus on the "low hanging fruit," or enhancement of current areas of interest and/or excellence rather than branching out with new ideas or initiatives. While this was the case, the University's mission was taken into account, with programming focusing on leadership development and opportunities (both proactive and reactive) for first-generation and at-risk student-athletes. As will be addressed below in Messaging, this ultimately comes down to leadership's expectations of the student-athlete experience and how they define success when the students are on campus and when they leave

their hallowed halls. As Ben (Coach) noted, they define success as someone who leaves the University better than they came:

> I'd say it's two pronged. One the world gets to judge me on professionally and one that's more intrinsic than wins and losses, GPAs (increased GPA), high graduation rates, clearly all goals and should be goals. But for me it's watching them walk in the door when they're 17, 18 years old and playing a part in who they become to be successful human beings after college. When I watch them grow up to be responsible men, good fathers, good husbands, good employees, good leaders. I'm winning, those are the real ones.

Resources

Resources, or the means by which goals can be accomplished, are often highlighted when addressing why an organization can (or cannot) accomplish its goals. There simply are not enough resources to go around. This can certainly be heard around intercollegiate athletic programs across the country and was a resounding cry, noted by all participants in some manner, in this work as well. We found that this theme broke down into two main types of resources: human and financial.

Human

It is often said that within an organization, one's employees are its greatest resources. Without them, nothing will get done, including the support of the student-athlete experience. We found that this was certainly evident; however, there were both benefits and limitations as a result of both time and creativity.

Time. Many participants' comments indicated the importance of intangible resources, including the time it takes to work with the number of student-athletes that are on campus to stay afloat with their basic responsibilities. Emily (Academic Staff) mentioned that

> I feel as though there is a perception on campus that really the University schedule is more like an 8:00-4:00 or 5:00 and everything shuts down. But if you're walking around the facilities and Athletics, we're here before 8:00, there are definitely people here after 5:00 or 6:00. We're here on weekends.

In addition, comments revealed that not only is the time of student-athletes highly structured, but that those working in intercollegiate athletics must be creative in designing developmental programs. Morgan (Academic Staff) highlighted this, noting

> . . . we barely have any time to [expand our initiatives] . . . we have a lot of people to advise and, by the time the schedule posts, they are on spring break, they come back and before they register, we probably don't even have two weeks.

This becomes particularly challenging, as it is not just the staff who is over-scheduled. According to Casey (Coach), this is a constant struggle:

> I also want them to be able to have some down time. And I think sometimes we are on the precipice of over scheduling them because of the optics . . .

because we want to say, look how engaged we are and look how present we are and look how much we're part of the campus and we're doing all these great things. But at the same time, I also think it's important to take a step back and recognize that they are 20-year-olds who need to breathe as well.

Interviewees indicated that student-athletes have limited time and that the interactions with athletic staff members are highly structured, limiting their ability to participate in activities beyond their requirements. This is seen as Michael (Academic Staff) explains "every time I get a chance to talk to folks outside of college athletics at all, I try to let them know, you've got to realize they've got to get up a lot of times at 6:00 and go do this."

Creativity. With these limitations in mind, employees developed creative habits to utilize both their and the student-athletes' time. Meghan, an academic advisor, revealed that there was a need to build a system independently and get creative:

I took it upon myself – after many conversations with current student-athletes and former student-athletes who were wanting some sort of life skills training – and I pitched the idea to the head coach and he was all in because he values those types of learning opportunities and he wants his student-athletes to grow not just academically, athletically, but as well-rounded individuals.

By alluding to the fact that the budget lacks the power compared to larger/FBS schools, Academic Staff member Meghan explained that sometimes it is creativity that provides the platform for productivity, noting that "we utilized all resources, including personnel, on campus and within our athletic department, and we were able to do eight workshops. And all of that on a zero budget." While employees believe the budget is slim, those that interact with student-athletes the most use creativity to not only make ends meet but provide them opportunities to develop and prepare them for their post-collegiate careers. Therefore, for many programs, it comes down to understanding staffing needs beyond just numbers. Alexis (Administrator) confirmed this when discussing the value of partnerships in getting things done, noting that ". . . we had to be creative about that in terms of capitalizing on campus resources, building relationships with folks on campus and in the community."

Financial

Financial resources are often at the root of conversations in intercollegiate athletics. Simply put, with more money, there would be a bit more flexibility for new initiatives, including hiring additional staff (i.e., human resources) to oversee such work. While that is the case, it is not always an easy problem to solve, particularly for institutions in mid-major conferences, where they may be competing against institutions with much larger budgets both on and off the field. Not surprisingly, most athletic staff members indicated the importance of the department's budget, and that it lacks the financial resources for a quick fix. As Alexis (Administrator) noted:

I think having some of those conversations with coaches and staff and folks on campus too in terms of . . . how do we utilize the resources we have. Certainly, we don't have a money tree that . . . can fix a lot of problems if

> you have money to throw at it, which we don't have. And so, we had to be creative about that in terms of capitalizing on campus resources, building relationships with folks on campus and in the community.

While under budgetary constraints, the academic staff and coaches discussed that they used creativity to afford the necessary opportunities for their student-athletes. Similar to the focus with human resources, the staff indicated that it would use its creativity to ensure that student-athletes were not made to feel the burden of less financial resources. Austin (Coach) discussed that "even though we may not have a (Power 5) budget, it doesn't matter. I'm going to get as close to that as I possibly can."

Of the three primary themes, Resources was mentioned most often (i.e., 80% of the interviewees). Both human and financial resources are vital in creating new platforms for student growth and engagement; however, if there is not support, it is often asking a lot of over-stretched staff to go beyond its means to create new platforms for student-athlete growth, particularly as it has been noted that first-year initiatives are the most effective (Comeaux, 2011). Therefore, with initiatives in areas such as HIPs, it often does come down to the directives that are placed upon the staff member.

Messaging

As indicated above, constrained budgets often impact how the athletic staff interacts with each other and with student-athletes. Therefore, Messaging (both formal and informal) emerged as one of the most discussed topics during the interview process, noted in 78% of the conversations. As such, Messaging was viewed as a vital aspect to the work, leadership, and directives when working in this space. The importance of messaging was most apparent when Ben (Coach) noted how the department "wants nothing more than athletics to be top tier in the region and to be the driving force of a spotlight on the institution." While this provided a glimpse into the overarching (and formal) directive, there were underlying messages as well. Specifically, it was noted that some staff members feel that "location causes a siloed effect. I think a lot of times we're not involved in different committees [and conversations] because we get busy in our day to day" (Emily, Academic Staff), causing a communication disconnect. Therefore, the sub-themes that emerged for Messaging include consistency, values, authenticity, student-athlete trust, and communication.

Consistency

With consistent messaging, administrators, coaches and academic staff members indicated the value of consistent messaging vertically and horizontally throughout the organization, with both their co-workers and student-athletes. Julia (Coach) indicated that administrators continue to put heavy emphasis on success, noting that the standard message of "you're getting this, you know, it, you have a little time, but you need to win." In addition to winning, there was an emphasis on the consistent communication with student-athletes in regard to the decision-making process. Austin (Coach) implemented a system where the student-athletes have a voice in

decision making in all team-wide issues, while he "would like to think that other programs other than ourselves include their student-athletes in some of the decision-making process." This thought shows that consistency is an important aspect when interacting with both staff and student-athletes.

Values

This particular sub-theme could stand alone; however, within the context of these conversations, values were often discussed by the manner in which the message of the department's values were disseminated to various audience(s). Within the department, all participants highlighted an acronym that was implemented to describe organizational values. In addition, these values directly represented the focus on student-athlete success. "Much in line with university. We are committed to diversity, and we are student-athlete centric – meaning they are in the core of what we do – the trust and respect values are mandatory" (Ryan, Administrator). Coach Austin reiterated this, stating: "I think if you look at it from the [concepts of] trust, integrity, in those icons, I think we embrace the opportunity to grow the students . . ." Andrew, an administrator, knew the acronym's meaning by heart and Coach Taylor believes the execution of the acronym is done with an emphasis on, " . . . what is best for our athletes, what is best for our students." This message was noted in meetings and posted around buildings, highlighting departmental values and their student-centric philosophy. While this was the case, an interesting point was that upper-level administrators and head coaches were much more familiar with the specifics of the acronym than those further down the chain of command.

Additionally, the values associated with the messages varied, depending upon the participant's role within the Department, which was not unexpected. Specifically, the measure of success differed from unit to unit, including those in upper-level administration. Administrators such as Andrew believe that ". . . championships are the ultimate success . . . I hope that every student-athlete that you would talk to would say the same thing. I want to win." This viewpoint feeds the stigma that the focus of intercollegiate athletics is primarily on athletic performance. However, the perspective is not overarching in nature, as academic advisor Emily believes " . . . that a successful student-athlete is someone who achieves their personal, athletic, and academic goals or has the ability to do that."

Authenticity

The importance of authenticity plays a vital role in messaging. An athletic department's goal is often to grow its reach as Emily (Academic Staff) stated: "I think that the sport brand has gotten stronger, but also in the university, the brand has gotten stronger, that we're really more of a presence." However, this presence and push for building the university brand through messaging has left staff members to question its authenticity. Emily (Academic Staff) believes that the

> . . . athletic department does a lot of things for face value. They want to be seen as a strong mid-major competitor. If other places do it, they want to do it to stay competitive. However, I don't know that there's a lot of substance

behind it.
This was echoed by Casey (Coach):

> I would say our department is very geared towards the optics. Making sure the outward appearance looks good, and I absolutely, wholeheartedly agree with that. I think Athletics is a big part of outreach of the schools. But it would feel, I guess more authentic, if I felt like the expectation was consistent with all of the coaches.

Student-Athlete Trust

Through messaging, it was apparent that the athletic staff tries to cultivate a relationship with the student-athletes. Jamie (Academic Staff) mentioned that she is ". . . able to connect with student-athletes more than admins do . . .", reflecting that student-athletes feel more comfortable with those that they interact with the most. Kate (Administrator) agreed, but focused on the impact of coaches, noting that

> Everything has to be charged by the coaches, as that's who the student-athlete interacts with and trusts the most. They're with their coaches six days a week, they see them all the time. So them promoting HIPs would make student-athletes feel more comfortable to ask about it or participate in them. Student-athletes look to coaches as an authority figure. If it comes from the coach then they'll be more responsive.

This was a consistent note; however, this concept of trust had a reach beyond those with traditional power or authority in Athletics as well, as Morgan (Academic Staff) stated: ". . . they're going to listen to their teammate who has maybe only one more year experience then they do." Therefore, understanding who student-athletes trust, and listen to, is the key to ensuring that the messaging is not only pertinent, but heard. As seen here, this primarily comes from those whom the student-athletes interact with most, including coaches, academic support staff, and the other student-athletes.

Communication

Athletic staff members discussed the importance of communication, and how there are some barriers between different levels within the department. Athletic departments use communication to build the school's image and brand on-campus, as Andrew (Administrator) had a " . . . meeting with one of the Colleges [within the University]." With that, he planned to " . . . talk about next football season and how are we going to get better, bringing in higher attendance and school support." However, internal communication appeared to be an issue, as Emily (Academic Staff) believes "there's really kind of a division between the coaching staff and the support staff. I feel that sometimes in our athletics role we can become a bit siloed." In addition to this concern, there was also the indication that some voices carry more weight than others, with one coach noting that "I don't feel like there is room at the table for everyone's voices to be heard, given the current organizational structure under which we are functioning (Casey, Coach)."

Messaging supported by clear, consistent, and authentic communication was a prevalent principle in conversation with student-athletes, particularly when they

discussed their academic and pre-professional pursuits. Ideally, this refers to an authentic message, most often coming directly from those who have the greatest impact on them (e.g., coaches, academic staff; Berg & Warner, 2019).

Relationships

The theme of Relationships (again, both formal and informal) was addressed in 76% of the interviews, as many participants' comments indicated the importance of trust and being close with co-workers to accomplish the department's short-term and long-term goals. As noted by Julia (Coach), "[our] administrators are very strong and I think as a coach working in an environment where you feel the trust is huge." While this type of praise was often heard at the higher levels of administration, it was not always reflected on the ground level. Here we heard that while lower-level employees felt supported by their superiors, there was often a lack of collaboration amongst the athletic staff. With this, the sub-theme of Relationships includes collaboration, administrative trust, internal support, and place/space.

Collaboration

Many of the participants indicated various issues regarding peer-to-peer collaboration. Nick (Academic Staff) argued that they ". . . don't see how there can be any type of organization in the first place or culture even created. There's too much chaos as you go down levels within the organization. . ." Through a lack of organization and collaboration, the department appears to struggle to execute transformational objectives. With that, Casey (Coach) believes that "we're more focused on the day-to-day, trying to make ends meet, as opposed to the visionary aspects of trying to go higher." To support this, Brock (Administrator) addressed strategy, again focusing on the tactical rather than the strategic:

> We have our sport assessment meetings as well, so we'll sit down with the head coach, sport administrator and they will meet with our Athletic Director Council. They'll go over how the season went, where we think we are headed, ways we think we can improve, ways we did well, and ways we can continue to improve on a day-to-day.

The intention here is for administrators to create a cohesive unit to "govern" each team and provide an all-encompassing assessment of the student-athlete experience; however, this collaboration could be even more successful if it was approached from a strategic/long-term perspective.

Administrative Trust

Considering that individual units within the department felt a lack of collaboration, it is also noticeable that there is a lack of trust with upper administrators. Meghan (Academic Staff) explained: "I was told that my performance review would not be signed by my direct supervisor until I noted that I collaborate or consult the administrator that oversees the [specific] program being discussed." This exemplifies the relationship that the academic staff has with upper-level administrators, as their seemed to be an inherent disconnect embedded in participant responses. However, when addressing a direct report, Nick (Academic Staff) did note that

. . . you might get shot down and maybe it's something you truly believe in that gets shot down on, but so be it. I mean, they've never said, and you'd never get the feel of, I can't ask that, but sometimes it doesn't go in your favor.

Thus, while the support might not be there on all levels, this trust is often present with direct reports. This was also noted with coaches, as Taylor (Coach) noted ". . . when [XX] came, she became my sport oversight, and she was fantastic. She was really the one that helped me (learn to) develop the student first." Through this support, this coach was able to transition and adjust their own style to transformational leadership, understanding that they had the trust of their supervisors to create the ideal environment for their student-athletes.

Internal Support

To accomplish tasks, both large and small, staff members indicated the value that support from administrators play in this. Meghan (Academic Staff) thinks ". . . as a lower-level employee within the athletic department I feel that having the support and backing of my superiors is helpful in order to do my day-to-day operations." When probed further, this included new initiatives or those that go beyond the traditional day-to-day role of academic support staff. While this is true for some, not all staff had this same perspective, as Nick (Academic Staff) stated that "I do not like going to [XX]. Not because I have any problem with [XX] at all, just because I feel like, if I recommended something to you, and you didn't do it, and that becomes a trend, there is a lack of support." On the contrary, Matthew (Administrator), believes that they provide enough internal support, as they " . . . put so much emphasis on student-first student wellbeing . . .". To achieve this, there is the belief that there must be the proper support from upper administrators; however, as was seen from these interviews, these divergent viewpoints may indicate a disconnect in perspectives regarding perceived support from those higher up versus those in the trenches.

Place/Space

Within the athletic department, units are sectionalized based on role and physical location. Within these physical places, philosophical spaces developed, including the unit's own culture and relationships. Kate (Administrator) believes that "there was already a fairly positive culture when I got here, so if anything, I hope that I only benefited that positive culture more and coming in and being a positive role model. . .". Michael (Administrator) supported that idea, noting that " . . . my staff (can) come in if they need to vent. I think that's an important piece of it." Regardless, Conner (Coach) addresses the coaching "space" as ". . . exhausted and I don't think people know who they're working with just because of some of the change. . .". Through consistent turnover in the department, it is hard to solidify a unit culture. Additionally, the place/space dynamic rung true between units in the department. Accordingly, James (Academic Staff) stated that

I think there is a communication disconnect between our unit and the department [across campus]. All communication is done via email or text

messages with coaches making it difficult. For me, I need to contact coaches almost every day, which makes it difficult.

Relationships need to be broad, sweeping, and genuine. These characteristics need to be pervasive throughout the entire organization, matching the mission of the university; however, they need to be true to the mission of athletics as well. This is possible with any type of leadership style; however, if these concepts are not taken into consideration, it will be unlikely that HIPs will go beyond that of a creative coach or academic support staff member if this is not under the guise of the university mission or a transformational leader. Additionally, as student-athletes are most often impacted by the messaging of their coaches and support staff (Berg & Warner, 2019), and those individual's initiatives are driven by their administrators, we hope to see the concept of "leaving better than they came" expand to the types of opportunities that are available to students outside of the athletics bubble.

Overall, we were surprised that there were no emergent themes directly related to the styles of leadership that were the initial foundation for this work. While that may be the case, informal observations do provide evidence of transactional leadership, with pockets of other leadership styles (e.g., transformational) found on the ground level, rather than with those in high-level administrative roles. This could be the result of a number of things, but as the culture in Athletics stems from the campus culture as a whole, the investigation would need to expand further to fully address this. While this was disappointing, our findings do support both theoretical and practical foundations for growth in academic programs through leader-supported initiatives. Therefore, the discussion will focus on ways in which these findings can provide a platform for growth moving forward.

Discussion

For individuals entering the world of intercollegiate athletics, the idea that personal development is a primary goal of sport is intrinsic; however, the concept of professional development of those in one's charge is not discussed quite as often. HIPs, woven into the framework of the collegiate landscape, can provide these opportunities (Kuh, 2008; Watson et al., 2016); however, the findings presented here, aligning with the findings of Ishaq and Bass (2019), indicate that it will warrant an overarching directive, or an insightful coach or administrator, who will encourage the introduction of these initiatives into the intercollegiate athletics lexicon. This is where leadership, and leadership style, comes into play. Given the situational nature of this work, this will be dependent upon the unique attributes of leaders on a given campus or within a specific athletic department. While the primary themes found here can certainly guide any athletic administrator in the future, individuals with varying leadership styles may interpret them different. Unfortunately, without the emergence of a designated leadership style from this work, it is unclear whether the initiatives described were top-down or bottom-up tactics. As previously noted, observation indicates that these are grassroots projects that stretch one's staff, often to the limit, without additional support. Therefore, while the interviews provided an

indication of sincere interest in student-athlete success, both during and post-college, there was a lack of focus on activities that would fall under the umbrella of HIPs. Perhaps that is due to the fact that the organized concept of HIPs were not integrated into the Athletics or University's mission at the time of data collection. As conversations around Messaging alluded to a very hierarchical nature, the fact that this was not a priority is not surprising. Additionally, the leadership style came off as transactional through the majority of the conversations. Therefore, if these were not mandated directives, then it was unlikely that they would take place, save for the rogue initiative by the transformational staff member here or there.

This work adds to the current literature, as it supports the majority of the models that have been developed and implemented in the student-athlete development space (e.g., Etzel et al., 2002; Stier, 1992). Specifically, the Holistic Model (first year experiences, common intellectual experience, learning communities, writing courses, collaborative projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, internships, capstone courses - Etzel et al., 1996) is one that was most reflective in this scenario. While the department did not show indications of focusing on HIPs for their student-athletes, they are already participating in a variety of activities that can be integrated into this space (e.g., community service activities, international trips). This was most often seen on a case-by-case basis, where staff members broke out of their silos to seek opportunities and expertise from those outside of the department (Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015). Finally, the fact that organizational values are directed by leadership style was clearly evident. While there were glimpses of transformational thinking within the interviews, this came from individuals and their own initiatives, alluding to the emergence of the servant-leader role on the ground level (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2013). This is also where there was evidence of HIPs. However, the transformational/transactional divide (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978) certainly put a limit on this.

For those around intercollegiate athletics, there is often the pre-conceived notion that student-athletes "don't have time for . . .". While this might be true for many, it is simply not the case for all, nor should that stand as an excuse for why student-athletes cannot share in developmental experiences that their non-athlete classmates have access to. For example, all student-athletes may not have time to participate in a significant number of pre-professional co-curricular activities (e.g., internships); however, by expanding an emphasis on other types of opportunities, it might give student-athletes greater value, and potentially greater employability, when they do participate. HIPs provide just that platform, expanding the once-rigid nature of "professional development" by increasing its definition through flexibility. However, as seen here, this will likely warrant a well-defined directive, begun through a greater understanding of the value of HIPs, or a leader with vision beyond the typical initiatives built into a student-athletes repertoire. There are many ways to approach this conundrum, but if the intent is to change the culture, this must be a top-down initiative. With this, both leadership style and administrative support must be taken into consideration. All three primary themes were impacted by the decision of organization leaders, as they set the stage (or field) for what is expected. While

athletic departments are often hierarchical in nature, a more strategic, creative, and transformational approach will allow for a tight knit culture, regardless of physical location within the department. Additionally, if place is impacting space and, therefore, relationships, an examination of the physical location of parts of the unit could prove beneficial. If it is not convenient to have that necessary conversation – face-to-face – there is a better chance that the conversation never takes place. Finally, while it is recognized that winning is important, we must go back to what we are selling potential students before they sign that letter of intent. Will they actually leave the hallowed halls of higher education "better" than when they joined us? In order to fulfill this promise, a focus on student-athlete success beyond the field, including pre-professional preparedness into one's life skills/life success programming is a great place to begin. Based on these findings, examples may include peer-to-peer mentoring and alumni panels focusing on campus activities that did – or did not – support their post-academic career.

Implications

As noted by Kuh and O'Donnell (2013), there are a number of quality dimensions that often accompany HIPs, including: 1. Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels; 2. Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time; 3. Interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters; 4. Experiences with diversity, wherein students are exposed to and must contend with people and circumstances that differ from those with which students are familiar; 5. Frequent, timely and constructive feedback; 6. Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning; 7. Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications; and 8. Public demonstration of competence. So, what does this mean for athletic administrators? Ideally, it will mean thinking outside of the box, or giving others the freedom to do so, taking into account not just the activities but the reflection, and feedback necessary to transition an action into a HIP (Kuh & O'Donnell). While resources, both human and financial, may not change dramatically (or at all), how they are being used should be assessed. Within the ranks, low-hanging fruit (i.e., currently adopted practices within athletics) could be transitioned into HIPs. For example, many departments adopt a strong culture of community service. Is there a way that this can be enhanced to meet the guidelines of HIPs so that these are activities that student-athletes see as beneficial for them as well as the community? In addition to resources, who is doing the communicating and how the message is being communicated is vital. Given the closer relationship, perhaps academic support staff or coaches should be encouraging and incorporating these types of initiatives, even if the overarching message comes from above. Finally, relationships, both inside and outside of the department, should be addressed. The value of the campus community should be a top priority, tapping into resources outside of athletics. Therefore, it will be beneficial to investigate academic coursework (e.g., classes on professional development or those with a service-learning component) or general campus offerings (e.g., Career Center programming or

activities through a global or community initiatives office) that can supplement what is taking place in athletics.

A shift in perspective may mean investing more time in one's employees to ensure that they have the ability to provide this type of programming. This could come in the form of education of academic support staff and coaches regarding the types of activities offered on campus that student-athletes can participate in, teaching them ways that they can be integrated into their programming, or it can be transitioning current activities into HIPs. In general, the focus should be on both areas of interest and areas of excellence - both within the department and on campus as a whole. Just as faculty must be aware of how to create an environment that will ensure that students are highly employable, athletics should take that same perspective. These initiatives may not require a shift in strategic thought; however, what may need to alter is the tactical approach to reach these overarching goals. While this may be the case, it could provide athletic departments who are not currently taking advantage of these opportunities with a platform to successfully meet those individual goals promised in living rooms around the world.

Limitations and Future Research

While this work begins to assess the role of leadership in addressing student-athlete professional development activities via co-curricular activities, particularly HIPs, there are certainly limitations that need to be addressed regarding the current study. Specifically, the fact that only one institution was assessed is quite restricting on the generalizability of the work. Additionally, while this institution does have some generalizable characteristics, there are many that are unique, including the type of athletic program (i.e., FCS/mid-major), the fact that the university is situated in a large metropolitan area, the fact that the athletic program resides in a strong athletic conference, the number of sports offered, and that the program has a smaller budget when compared to conference opponents. While all these ideas must be taken into consideration, we believe that this work still provides a platform for growth in understanding the environment in which these types of programs will, or will not, flourish.

While sporadic, research has begun in this area (Ishaq & Bass, 2019; Navarro & Malvaso, 2015). As a result, there is much to consider, including student-athlete perceptions such as defining preparedness from their perspective, how leadership (e.g., administrators, coaches, academic support staff) makes recommendations – including the previously noted concept of authentic leadership (Takos et al., 2018), and faculty (mis)perceptions. Additionally, as the circle would not be complete without understanding how participation in HIPs impacts the perceptions of employers, it would be beneficial to understand what they are looking for when recruiting/hiring student-athletes and how they perceive HIPs, in addition to athletic participation, when hiring. Finally, as has been of interest with the NCAA, can (or should) athletic activities, on their own, evolve into HIPs? If not, then can/should the oft-adopted practice of student-athlete leadership program fit that bill and evolve into a HIP itself?

Conclusion

While HIPs are not new to college campuses, they are not as widely adopted as some other educational practices. Until such a time when individual HIPs become commonplace as a collective, it is up to the insightful individuals who work directly with student-athletes to ensure that the value of these educational activities is included in the messaging that is both provided and received. Ultimately, it is difficult to be transformational in a transactional environment; however, there are many opportunities to do so if an individual, or organization, seeks them out.

As noted, transactional leaders may thrive in a transformational environment as long as they allow for the creativity of others to flourish through task-oriented assignments. This is particular important, as the ideal environment for many organizations is one where there is a melding of styles (Bass et al., 1987). Thus, when we look at both the structure and resources applicable to college campuses and, therefore, intercollegiate athletic departments, all it may take is a bit of creativity to infuse these much-valued experiences into the student-athlete experience.

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Appendix

Interview Prompts (Administrators)

Leadership
1. What do you believe are the key components of organizational culture?
2. How did you learn and assess your organization's culture when you began your position?
    a. Have you had the opportunity to impact it? How?
3. How would you describe your leadership style (provide an example, if possible)?
    a. How does the University's and/or Athletics mission drive your decisions?
    b. Have you changed your style since you were hired by XX University?
4. What is your, and the department's, philosophy about new ideas and initiatives?
5. Are you encouraged to use your creativity/your own ideas? Or do they make the decisions and you must see them through?
6. How do you define success of Athletics? Student-athletes (winning, academic performance, career preparation, etc.)?
7. What role do you play in developing and promoting academic initiatives? (self-directed, contracted, etc.)

HIPs / Academics
1. What is your philosophy on HIPs?
    a. In what ways does the administration incorporate them into athletic programming (or recommendations)?
2. How important is academic success from all programs for the department?
3. What are some HIPs that you think are beneficial to student-athletes?
4. Whose messaging do you believe is most impactful to student-athletes?
5. What would you like to see SA involved in beyond what is required by athletics/academics (e.g., HIPs)

Interview Prompts (Coaches)

Leadership
1. What do you believe are the key components of organizational culture?
2. How did you learn and assess your organization's culture when you began your position?
    a. Have you had the opportunity to impact it? How?

3. How would you describe your leadership style (provide an example, if possible)?
    a. How does the University's and/or Athletics mission drive your decisions?
    b. Have you changed your style since you were hired by XX University?
4. How often do you communicate with the administration?
5. What does that process look like?
6. Do they encourage you to use your creativity/support your own ideas? Or do they make the decisions and you must see them through?
7. Describe how open they are to your ideas or recommendations
    a. So far in your career, has this been successful?
8. What do you think upper administration's goals are for student-athletes and the program?
9. How do you define success of Athletics? Student-athletes (winning, academic performance, career preparation, etc.)?
10. What do you believe your role is in developing and promoting academic initiatives? (self-directed, contracted, etc.)

HIPS / Academics

1. How do you address academics with your team (Through you? Assistant coaches? Academic support staff? Etc.)
2. Are academics important to your athletes?
    a. Do you spend time communicating how important academics are?
3. What are your feelings about the academic services provided to your student-athletes?
4. Do you discuss pre-professional preparedness with your athletes?
    a. Do you encourage participation in any of the events offered through Athletics, on campus or imbedded into classes?
5. Do you believe that your athletes spend enough time participating in career-development programming (through Athletics, on campus, in classes)?
6. Had you heard of HIPs before today? What about the opportunities that fall under these categories on campus?
7. If there are any HIPs you would like to see your student-athletes complete before leaving campus, what would they be?
    a. How do you share this with them?
8. What role do your administrators play in encouraging this, if any?