

Chapter 2: Background and Related Literature

This chapter presents a review of literature that relates to the investigation of the issues that are pertinent for athletic directors from the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision universities. The literature is divided into five areas pertaining to college athletics and the history leading up to these issues. The major areas include colleges and universities in the United States, intercollegiate athletics in colleges and universities, the role of the athletic department in colleges and universities, organizational structure of athletics, and current college athletic conference structure. Collegiate athletics has a robust past, present and future.

Colleges and Universities in the United States

The beginning colleges in America were referred to as the colonial colleges (Thelin, 2004). These colleges were modeled similarly to Oxford and Cambridge where the “collegiate system” was adopted to mix living and learning (Thelin, 2004). The variance from these two colleges was the fusion of instruction and certification; Oxford and Cambridge were a federation of colleges where the student pursued their academic instruction and extracurricular activities in the college and the university implemented exams and awarded degrees (Thelin, 2004). The colonial college facilitated only one college to facilitate all these purposes (Thelin, 2004).

The colonial college became the foundation for the American university where the colonial college leadership valued the study of the classics and devotion to God (Gerdy, 1997). The environment of the college also became a social community where attending the institution to acquire social contacts became just as important, if not more than, as accumulating intellectual growth (Smith, 2011). Thus, an institution was born to build the community.

Firsts in American higher education. The first universities in America were sometimes referred to as the ‘alma maters of the nation’ and included Harvard, William and Mary, Yale,