



CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Exploring the Process & Procedures of Adding a Sport to NCAA Division I Programs

*Development of The Collegiate Sport Addition Process (CSAP) Analysis
Indicates that a Six-Step Process Exists Despite Diverse Driving Forces*

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The College Sport Addition Process

SUMMARY - The factors, priorities and processes that NCAA Division I Athletic Directors use to make decisions in adding a sport to their institution are often unclear. **The Collegiate Sport Addition Process (CSAP)** emerged from a study designed to understand the factors, priorities, and processes that NCAA Division I Athletic Directors use in determining whether or not to add one or more sports to their institution. The information provided will help leaders recognize the various aspects of the decision-making process and the interdependence of the priority themes – *University Viability, Sport Popularity, Association Membership and Access and Opportunity*.

The following are common themes contributing to the clarity of the individual decisions being made:

- **Athletic Climate Change**- increased accountability in academics, recruiting, gender equity and an expectation of sound fiscal practices.
- **Higher Education Environment**- more complex than ever before as the responsibilities of athletic administrators have become increasingly demanding.
- **Balance Seeking:**
 - diminishing resources available,
 - demanding needs of competitive intercollegiate athletic programs,
 - the athletic “arms race”,
 - increased commercialization of sports,
 - impact of Title IX,
 - potential benefits.



- **Decisions-** must consider the impact on the students, the departments, the institution and the external environment.

The **CSAP process** has roots in Rational Choice Theory imagining that individuals are sensible; they have the ability to think in a logical manner and have different interests, as individuals or as groups, and these interests define their purposes. However, the CSAP has been expanded to fit the needs, stakeholders, culture, environment, and priorities of sports whose governance resides in higher education. This process was informed by Athletic Administrators that recently added a sport or were considering (or committed) to the addition of a sport in the near future, as well as industry professionals outside of athletic administration (e.g. admissions, enrollment, etc.). Providing a tool that considers the whole institution and its various stakeholders puts emphasis on the connectedness that must exist for a sport adoption initiative to be successful.

The CSAP Tool identifies the critical elements of the process (i.e. Driving Forces, Justification, Evaluation, Acceptance, and Authorization) and priority categories (i.e. University Viability, Sport Popularity, Access and Opportunity, and Association Membership). In addition, the tool possesses diagnostic questions about each process and priority, which provides structured guidance to those considering adding a sport to higher education institutions.



RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The athletic climate has changed drastically in the last forty years with an increased call for accountability in the areas of academics, recruiting, gender equity and expectations of sound fiscal practices from both within and outside of institutions. The following describes current trends and strategies used by influential decision makers to address major issues affecting their institutions.

- **Leadership:** Suggs (2009) stresses that the arrangement and structure of some of the largest United States' universities are often more comprehensive than Olympic training facilities in many other countries. In addition, individual schools often spend more money on sports than they do on any other extracurricular activity (Shulman & Bowen, 2001). Leading each university is an administrator (President or Chancellor) whose responsibilities are direction and leadership. They must determine the appropriate level of athletic participation as it relates to the institution's mission and how sports align with academic goals (Bowen & Levin, 2003). Successful athletic administrators show the ability to negotiate and manage the balance between the institution, internal departments and the external environment such as government and NCAA regulations.

- **Educational Opportunities:** Approximately 179,000 student-athletes participate in NCAA Division I Athletics, (Irick, 2016). Between 2009 and 2012, the NCAA provided 5,660 new opportunities for individuals to participate in the student-athlete experience (Zgonc, 2010). Through these athletic opportunities numerous students are able to access a higher education.



- **Gender Equity:** Between 2009 and 2012, 101 sports were added to NCAA Division I (36 men's teams and 65 women's teams). Adding teams often affects gender equity balance, thus compliance issues must be addressed by adding, dropping or providing evidence that the current student's interests are being met.

- **Conference Realignment:** One hundred and twenty institutions have taken part in conference realignment for athletic and academic reasons. As a result, some institutions may feel compelled to add a sport to stay competitive in their conference.

- **Economic Environment:** Institutions are looking for strategies to boost their enrollment as higher education becomes a more competitive arena.

- **Sustainability:** As in most organizations, collegiate athletic departments are expected to be sustainable. They need to be able to adapt to serve the needs of their stakeholders as well as their current and future environments (Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010). In an effort to stay within an available budget while serving various stakeholders, higher educational institutions often decide to restructure their athletic departments by redistributing staff and resources, or by adding or eliminating sports teams from their programs (Hutchinson & Bouchet, 2013).

- **New Endeavors:** Coaches' associations have also taken on a new endeavor to increase NCAA Division I sport minimums from the existing 14 (or 16 for Football Championship schools) sport offerings to 24 as part of a proposed new elite subdivision. These coaches' associations are asking for a minimum of 60 percent of funds based on NCAA financial-aid limits in an attempt to create competitive equity according to Wolverton, 2013 (as cited in Infante, 2013). Their proposal is an attempt to generate more competitive opportunities, and if passed, some institutions would have to add up to 10 sports to be included in the proposed elite subdivision. In such a context, the CSAP tool would be useful to the coaches' associations as well as the institutions, because more sports would have to be added.

- **Diversity Initiatives:** At many higher education institutions, the athletic department represents one of the most diverse areas of the campus (Loughran, Etzel & Schinke, 2008). However, there is still substantial evidence that discrimination based on race, gender and sexual orientation is a very real phenomenon for collegiate student athletes (Atteberry-Ash & Woodford, 2018). The CSAP tool can assist athletic administrators in ensuring that these perspectives are considered throughout the process.

FROM FORCES TO PRIORITIES

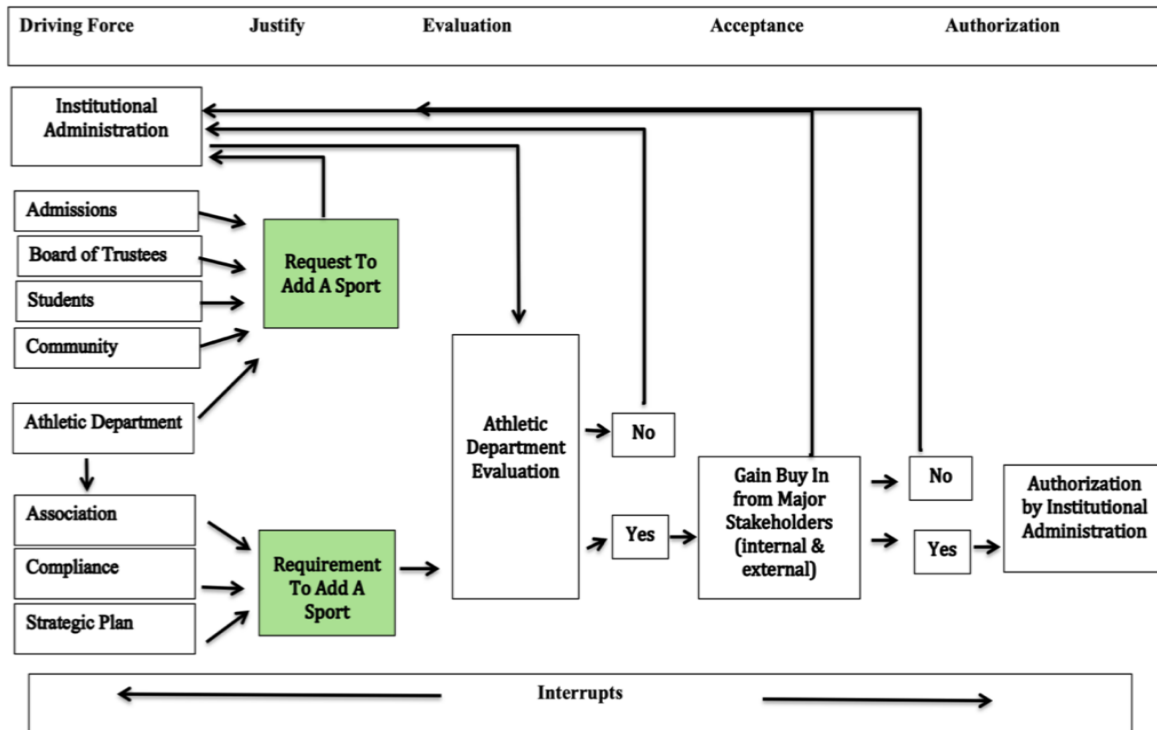
Porter (2008) describes in his article "The Five Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy," how rivalry among existing competitors is often influenced by threat of new entrants, bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of buyers and threat of substitute products or services. Shifts in structural dynamics of an industry create opportunities for growth if a company is knowledgeable of the competitive environment.

Drawing comparisons between Porter's strategic approach for enhancing profitability and the CSAP tool reinforces the need to address underlying factors that influence the collegiate sport industry as a whole. Utilizing a deductive approach, universities can build individualized action plans that correctly identify competitive forces so as to defend against or shape them for personal benefit. Note how the priorities established through the research that informed the CSAP tool may be influenced or affected by the critical forces suggested by Porter.

- Association Membership: Suppliers (NCAA, stakeholders, conferences); Established Industry Rivals

- University Viability: Customers (students, student-athletes, collegiate sports fans); Suppliers; Substitute Products (other universities)
- Sport Popularity: Customers; Potential Entrants
- Access and Opportunities: Suppliers; Potential Entrants

Figure 1: COLLEGIATE SPORT ADDITION PROCESS



Note: CSAP consists of a process model and a tool which helps decision makers consider the whole institution and its various stakeholders by putting emphasis on the connectedness that must exist for a sport adoption initiative to be successful.

Key elements and common paths are identified as it pertains to sport adoption: Driving Forces, Justification, Evaluation, Acceptance, and Authorization) and priority categories (i.e. University Viability, Sport Popularity, Access and Opportunity, and Association Membership).

THE CSAP TOOL

Each of the six distinct sections below highlight a key part of the decision-making process. Read each section and its corresponding questions in regard to adding a sport, ensuring to keep key stakeholders in mind.

#1 DRIVING FORCES: Consider the impact on stakeholders and key internal forces (e.g. Institutional Administration, Admissions, Board of Trustees, Students, and Strategic Plans) and external forces (e.g. community, association memberships, and compliance) from the onset. A formal buy-in (Acceptance) will be necessary for a sport to be added with as little resistance as possible. Consider who is requesting the addition and their connection to the sport as well as the end goal and the impact it might have on the institution.

Practical Advice from Athletic Directors

[Consider Goals] One thing I would say is that there's a wide range of levels that people are going into. Your goals may not require that you try to compete at the very top level. I think, particularly, when the goals are for male enrollment and things like that... Being able to fill the team's not hard to do. You can do it relatively inexpensively. If you want to compete at a higher level, then you got to have to spend some more money obviously but it's not necessary to do that to have a very nice program, I don't think (Interview #10, Men's and Women's Team: Small School).

#2 JUSTIFICATION: Listed below are the four main justifications and whether it is seen primarily when an individual or group requests to add a sport or when a requirement initiates the sport addition process.

- **Association Membership (Requirement Based)**

Is there a shift in NCAA membership or conference alignment that drives the sport addition?

- **University Viability (Request Based)**

Is the sport addition being used as a tool to recruit new students, provide financial benefits or increase stakeholders' support? With what kind of students is the sport popular? Is it offered locally?

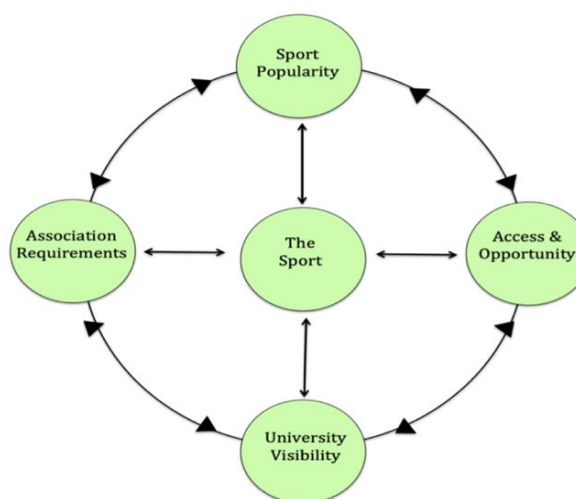
- **Sport Popularity (Request Based)**

Is there sufficient competition, both in quality and quantity? Will it fit with the culture of the institution and the existing sports teams? Is there a sufficient population of eligible athletes? Will stakeholder participation increase with the addition?

- **Access and Opportunity (Request or Requirement Based)**

Is the sport being added to fit an internal or external requirement like a strategic plan, accreditation or gender equity? Does the sport addition provide access to a new population for the institution?

Figure 2: PRIORITY THEMES FOR ADDING SPORTS



Practical Advice from Athletic Directors

[Popularity] I went into an NCAA Website and I pulled demographics. Then I just did a big spreadsheet and I listed every single Division I sport, men's and women's. How many teams are there, what conferences do they compete in, is it a team sport or an individual sport, is it a head count or an equivalency, what's the maximum number of scholarships, how big is the coaching staff, what's the average squad size, how many contests do they compete in, is it a fall, winter, or spring sport. Then I went into High School Activities Association and figured out if they were offered in our High Schools, just from a recruiting and an interest perspective. That was really helpful because ... we just had this list and knew right away when it competed, how many athletes would it involve, how many coaches we just had at our fingertips and that was really helpful (Interview #6, Women's Individual Team: Large School).

#3 EVALUATION: Factors are listed here (in no order). While any institution considers every priority theme (Fig. 2) to some degree, each program will have unique conditions related to their situation and differ in which are most prominent. Consider how each of the factors influences the program and/or the institution as it relates to adding the proposed sport. Use multiple lenses: athletic competitiveness, compliance, financial, community connection, and impact on individual and affiliated stake holding groups. Programs that were able to do extensive evaluation upfront appeared to facilitate programs gaining acceptance.

Sport Popularity

- Competitiveness of the Sport
- Popularity for Recruiting
- Good Fit
- Recruiting
- Add-on to an Existing Sport
- Alumni, Donor, Community & Sponsor Support
- Sport Logistics

Association Membership

- NCAA Membership Status
- Conference Membership

Access and Opportunity

- Compliance Gender Equity
- New Population Access and Opportunity
- Scholarship Management



University Viability

- Academics
- Enrollment Management
- Profile of Student-Athlete
- Popularity & Marketability Related to Geography
- Direct or Indirect Benefits
- Alumni, Donor, Community & Sponsor Support

Process Factors

- Strategic Planning
- Time Constraints
- Internal/External Groups
- Financial Constraints
- Risk of Injury
- Political Influence

Once evaluation is complete, a sport is either moved forward into the acceptance phase, put aside for future consideration, or rejected.

Practical Advice from Athletic Directors

[Seek Outside Guidance] Don't reinvent the wheel. That's the other thing. Talk to your peers. What did they do? What are their budgets like? If you don't have it, what are some budget expectations? (Interview #12, Men's Individual Team: Large School).

[Sport Logistic and Facility] There's a lot of equipment involved. It's not like soccer. It's not like track and field. You really need to make sure that the space that you are providing for storage and locker rooms is adequate" (Interview #1, Women's Emerging Team: Small). From the field standpoint, you have to make sure that you either have enough fields or enough dollars in maintenance and recovery to handle lacrosse practices that's in fall, that's in spring, games in spring, camps in the summertime, so we have definitely have learned on that (Interview #1, Women's Emerging Team: Small School).

[Adding Opportunities] I don't know that people can make mistakes by adding opportunities. As long as you're trying to meet the intent of Title IX and gender equity and working hard to do that; whether with your current allotment of sports as well as anything that may be coming on the horizon. I know that there's some frustration when you're trying to from our seat, when you're trying to do things the right way and the finances just don't support it (Interview #5, Women's Individual Team: Large School).

#4 INTERRUPTION: *There is potential for conflict, politics and other interruptions during all phases of the decision-making process, which could slow down or block the process permanently. The following set of considerations is not meant to be exhaustive but should be utilized to preemptively address possible interruptions.*

- *Resistance to Change:* Anticipate who might be resistant to change. Address as early in the process as possible.
- *Culture:* What are the predominant norms, values, and attitudes that drive the stakeholders that will be affected?
- *Organizational Climate:* Consider perceptions at all levels. What will change with the addition of the sport?
- *Political Resistance:* Who is at risk to lose resources with the change? Are there long-term benefits?
- *Environmental Conditions:* What trends are occurring in regard to society, higher education, and technology? How does the addition interact with the institution's mission and goals?

#5 ACCEPTANCE: *In most cases, a majority of the departments, faculty and staff must be on board prior to any public announcements, followed by collection of community opinion. Consider the key stakeholders here, which may include:*

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| o Students | o Governing Bodies |
| o Student-athletes | o Admissions/Enrollment |
| o Coaches | o Institutional Administration |
| o Support staff | o Community |
| o Faculty | o Board of Trustees |
| o Associations | o Others |

How will each of these stakeholders or groups be affected by a sport addition? What are the positive and negative ramifications? For those groups in which a negative effect may exist, how will the program gain their acceptance?

Practical Advice from Athletic Directors

[Planning] ...prior to any public announcement, the plan needs to be in place. Now, that doesn't mean it has to be solid, but you talk about the phasing in of the scholarships versus doing it all at once, and we are phasing it in, ...how many going to be offered the first year, how many going to be offered the second year, ..., be able to answer any question that the media can throw at you..., a potential booster, a potential athlete, ... We tried to have all our bases covered before the public announcement. (Interview #12, Men's Individual Team: Large School).

#6 AUTHORIZATION: Leaders and administrators involved in the authorization of the decision to add a sport will be looking for “goodness of fit.” It is important to determine who can authorize the initiative and how this will occur. For some programs, this might be an individual director or administrator while at other institutions, there might be a board of trustees. Some questions that may be considered are listed here:

- How well will this sport fit in with the institutional mission and goals?
- Will the sport and the athletes fit in with the institutional, athletic department and student culture?
- How well does the sport addition address the priority themes of University Viability, Association Membership, Access and Opportunity, and Sport Popularity?

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