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Abstract

Inside the Huddle:
Title IX and Women's Leadership In Intercollegiate Athletics

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Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 is credited for increasing women's participation in competitive sports. At the college level, the number of women athletes competing in intercollegiate sports grew from 30,000 in 1972 to 151,000 by 2001 (Women's Sports Foundation 2002). Although there have been dramatic increases in participation, there has been a sharp decline in the number of women leaders and even fewer women of color in leadership positions. In the years following Title IX, the previously separate women's and men's athletic programs combined into one department. By the 1980s these mergers left the women's athletic director position behind, with men assuming control of the combined programs. Under the separate women's and men's department arrangement, women athletic directors led approximately 90 percent of all women's programs. Today women lead less than 20 percent of all NCAA programs (Acosta and Carpenter 2006). The shifts in leadership of intercollegiate athletics after Title IX cannot be ignored. This dissertation investigates Title IX's impact on women athletic leaders and describes their leadership role in the higher education context. This study focuses on two central questions: 1) Why are there so few women in intercollegiate athletic leadership roles today? 2) How does Title IX policy affect women's participation intercollegiate roles? Three arguments from the history of women's leadership in higher education, literature related to women's athletic leadership, and Title IX policy provide a framework to analyze the empirical data. Using analysis of secondary sources, interview data, and institutional documents, this dissertation presents a set of criteria that explain the most likely woman candidate to be selected for a vacant athletic director position in today's combined athletic program model. In addition, the impact of the Senior Woman Administrator role created after the NCAA takeover of the AIAW in the wake of Title IX is analyzed. Finally, four recommendations to address how institutions can promote greater numbers of women to senior level athletic leadership positions are discussed.