

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

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Overview

This research examines why there are so few women in intercollegiate athletics leadership and the unintended effect of Title IX policy on women in leadership roles. Historical patterns of women's leadership in higher education described in this study provide some of the explanation of the impact of this policy. An examination of the Senior Women Administrator (SWA) role provides further clarification of how Title IX policy affects women in athletic director positions. This study also describes departmental and institutional structures that developed in the years after this policy was implemented that shape the 'old boys network' and disadvantage women in the athletic director search process. Based on these findings, four recommendations are presented to promote greater numbers of women to senior level athletic leadership.

Recommendations

Since the passage of Title IX, women have yet to advance to the athletic director chair in substantial numbers, particularly at the Division I level. The path to the senior associate level in athletic administration has narrowed for women to the internal area of day-to-day operations. In addition, the SWA designation has created a climate where having only one woman at the senior associate level further limits the pool of potential women candidates who are positioned to advance to the athletic director chair. Women leaders must gain access to responsibility with football and basketball operations and athletic leadership issues that position them with university presidents. To change perceptions of athletic leadership and promote more women to the athletic director position, four suggestions are presented:

- 1. Create athletic department reporting structures and conference responsibilities that position women at the decision-making table with university presidents and oversight of football and men's basketball.*
- 2. Reduce the reliance on search firms to generate the pool of the most qualified candidates.*
- 3. Educate university presidents of the roles and demands of intercollegiate athletic leadership and the skills necessary to meet these demands.*
- 4. Continue offering leadership programs specific to women that foster skill development, but include specific programming for early career women at these seminars to interact with senior level women athletic leaders.*

Chapter Summary

Chapter One, *Introduction*, provides an overview of the study including the background, significance, and research questions related to Title IX's impact on the low number of women in athletic leadership positions today.

Chapter Two, *Methods*, describes the participants, interview methods, institutional data, and history analyzed in this study. The interviews consist of women who currently hold athletic leadership positions at the Division I level. The institutional data consists of contemporary and historical research of institutional decision-making related to Title IX using archival and other primary sources, approximately 1960-present.

Chapter Three, *Historical Analysis of Women in Higher Education Leadership*, explains the historical pattern of women leaders in higher education since the rise of coeducation. This history demonstrates that when women built women-led professions during coeducation from 1890-1972 their strategies were effective in creating leadership roles in feminized sub-fields for women. These strategies broke down with the shift toward gender-equity from 1972-present. Since Title IX, women leaders have been left to rely on individual strategies. These individual strategies have not been adequate to overcome the complex cultural barriers and organizational structures of intercollegiate athletics.

Chapter Four, *Existing Literature on the Current Status of Women in Athletic Leadership*, explains the complex social issues and organizational barriers women have encountered during the gender equity period from 1972-present and why individual strategies have been ineffective in helping women retain leadership roles since the shift from the coeducation era to the gender equity era. Chapter Four describes the factors that shape individual women leaders and describes the barriers to women's access in today's intercollegiate leadership climate and culture.

Chapter Five, *Title IX and Women Leaders in Athletics*, explains the policy and its application in intercollegiate athletics, including its limited application to women leaders. This chapter presents an examination of the relationship between athletics and higher education and demonstrates how efforts to cast Title IX as a way to reform the men's commercial, spectator-oriented model of intercollegiate athletics with the women's "educational philosophy" toward sport, only further marginalizes women leaders in intercollegiate athletics.

Chapter Six, *Inside The Huddle*, presents interview and institutional data that describe the athletic director criteria and search process that help explain why women are so underrepresented in athletics leadership roles today. Findings from this data are used to create a typology of categories that explain the most likely woman candidate to be selected for a vacant athletic director position.

Chapter Seven, *The Senior Woman Administrator aka "The SWA,"* provides interview and institution data that further explain the impact of Title IX on women's access to intercollegiate athletic leadership.

Chapter Eight, *Conclusion*, presents a summary of the findings, makes recommendations for increasing the number of women positioned for in athletic director positions and the Division I level. Chapter Eight presents the limitations of the study, including a discussion of sexual orientation, childcare and family responsibility, and assumptions about masculinity in sport and leadership not under investigation that present additional barriers to women's participation in intercollegiate athletic leadership roles.